

Everards Brewery Limited

Change of Use from Café (Class E(b)) and Residential (Class C3) to Convenience Foodstore (Class E(a)), alongside demolition of existing single-storey element to rear of 37 High Street/2A Main Street and store to rear of public house. Erection of two storey side extension to 37 High Street/2A Main Street, alongside two-storey rear and single storey rear extensions. Improvements to existing car park, public house beer garden and associated landscaping

On Land at The Blue Bell Inn (39 High Street) comprising its associated car park, and No's 37 High Street and 2A Main Street, Desford, Leicester, LE9 9JF

PLANNING STATEMENT





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APPENDICES

1. Historic England Pre-Application Advice



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Everards Brewery Limited (“Everards”), working with the Central England Co-operative Ltd (“the Cooperative”), to accompany a planning application on land at The Blue Bell Inn (39 High Street) comprising its associated car park, and No’s 37 High Street and 2A Main Street, Desford, Leicester, LE9 9JF (“the Site”). The proposals comprise the following elements:

- Demolition of existing single-storey element to rear of 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Demolition of store to rear of public house;
- Change of use from Café (Class E(b)) and Residential (Class C3) to Convenience Foodstore (Class E(a));
- Erection of two-storey side extension to 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Erection of two-storey rear and single-storey rear extensions to 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Improvements to existing car park and beer garden, including access and parking; and
- Public realm and landscaping improvements.

1.2 The proposed convenience store will have a net sales area of 276m², below the threshold of 280m² established by the Sunday Trading Legislation and will therefore be able to trade on an unrestricted basis on Sundays. Such a limited scale of retail development is defined by the Government as constituting a “small shop” (www.gov.uk/trading-hours-for-retailers-the-law).

1.3 The following drawings, prepared by Corporate Architecture Limited (unless otherwise noted) have been submitted electronically via the Planning Portal as part of this application and should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement:

- Location Plan, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/001 rev. P1
- Existing Site Plan, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/002 rev. P1



- Existing Floor Plans, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/003 rev. P1
- Existing Elevations, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/004 rev. P1
- Proposed Site Plan, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/005 rev. P1
- Proposed Floor Plans, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/006 rev. P1
- Proposed Elevations, drawing no. 5166/JP/21/007 rev. P2
- Proposed – View 1, drawing no. 5166/APB/22/VIS001 rev. P1
- Proposed – View 2, drawing no. 5166/APB/22/VIS002 rev. P1
- Proposed – View 3, drawing no. 5166/APB/22/VIS003 rev. P1
- Landscape Masterplan, drawing no. 2301-PL1-02
- Planting Plan, drawing no. 2301-PL1-03

1.4 The following technical reports and drawings should also be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement:

- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, prepared by Abrams Archaeology;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Origin Environmental;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, prepared by Arbtech;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Corporate Architecture Limited;
- Environmental Noise Report, prepared by Sharps Redmore
- Further Roost Activity Survey, prepared by Arbtech;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Cogent Heritage;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment, prepared by Arbtech;
- Transport Statement, prepared by ADL Traffic & Highways Engineering Ltd;

1.5 A BACS payment for the sum of £3,234.00, the correct fee for an application of this type, has been sent to the Planning Portal alongside the £64.00 administration fee.



- 1.6 In accordance with the guidance set out at paragraphs 39 to 42 of the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”), the applicant has engaged in pre-application discussions with both Historic England and Desford Parish Council in order to establish the key considerations and the composition of the proposals. A summary of these discussions is provided at Section 3 of this Statement, assisting the Council in understanding how the proposals are a positive response to the considerations raised by both of these consultees as part of the pre-application discussions. The Historic England full pre-application response is attached at Appendix 1 of this Statement.
- 1.7 This Planning Statement identifies the relevant planning policy framework against which the application proposals should be assessed, and demonstrates that the proposed development wholly accords with the policies of the development plan.
- 1.8 As such, the application proposals benefit from the presumption accorded to such development by S.38(6) of the Act. It is considered that there are no material considerations that indicate that the application should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan and that planning permission should therefore be granted.
- 1.9 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- In **Section 2** we describe the site and its surroundings
 - In **Section 3** we set out the relevant background to this application, including the existing retail offering within Desford, the planning history for the application site, alongside a summary of the consultation with the local community and Historic England;
 - In **Section 4** we describe the proposed development;
 - In **Section 5** we identify, address and assess the relevant planning policy considerations against which the proposed development should be considered; and
 - In **Section 6** we set out our conclusions

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

i. Site Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises the car park to the west of The Blue Bell Inn Public House and associated store, alongside a pair of semi-detached properties at 37 High Street and 2A Main Street. The site is located wholly within the settlement boundary of Desford and is previously developed land.
- 2.2 The site is prominently located within the core of the village of Desford and is located within the Neighbourhood Centre, ref: DES14N within the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD (adopted 2016, hereby “SADMP”). The site is directly opposite the Desford Library community facility, ref: DES22. The extent of the Neighbourhood Centre designation, and the location of the library is shown in **figure 1** below.



Figure 1: Extract from the SADMP showing the allocations for the Key Rural Centre of Desford. The settlement boundary is marked by the black line, with the Conservation Area boundary marked by the dashed



red line. Community facilities are marked in pink. The Neighbourhood Centre allocation DES14N and DES22 is marked in red, demonstrating the site is within, or at least adjacent to, this allocation

- 2.3 The site is also wholly within the boundary of the Desford Conservation Area. The extent of the Conservation Area is shown in **figure 1** above, with the notable buildings of the Conservation Area shown in **figure 3** below and at **figure 1** of the accompanying Heritage Statement, prepared by Cogent Heritage.
- 2.4 Both 37 High Street and 2A Main Street are identified as “Significant Local Buildings” within the Conservation Area and were built in the period between 1866 and 1886, as confirmed within the accompanying Heritage Statement at **figure 3**. No. 37 High Street is currently within residential use, whilst No. 2A Main Street is used as a small café at ground floor level. The bedrooms associated with No. 37 extend over the cafe at first floor level. There is a single storey flat roof extension to the rear of these buildings that, whilst functional, is of no architectural or historic merit.
- 2.5 Historically a small row of cottages was built to the rear of 37 High Street and 2A Main Street, along the southern boundary of the application site as identified at **figures 4 and 5** of the Heritage Statement, but these cottages have since been demolished. The application site has therefore historically had a continuous built frontage along its southern boundary, adjacent to Main Street.
- 2.6 The existing store to the public house is a 20th century single storey structure that resembles a garage in appearance, being constructed from pre-formed concrete panels and painted cream that, whilst functional, is of no historic nor architectural merit and has since become redundant.
- 2.7 Vehicle access into the application site is taken from two locations along the southern boundary from Main Street, providing direct access to the car park for the Bluebell Inn Public House. Located between both access points is the hanging sign for the Blue Bell Inn Public House. A small information plaque is also located next to this hanging sign which provides passers-by with historic information pursuant to the site and the public house.

- 2.8 There are a limited number of trees within the application site, located upon the northern and western boundaries. The accompanying Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by Origin Environmental confirms that none of these trees, nor the clusters of vegetation onsite are more than category C1 trees/groups of vegetation and are not individually worthy of retention, being largely self-set. The existing on-site vegetation is identified in full at appendix 3 onwards of the aforementioned Arboricultural Impact Assessment.
- 2.9 The application site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 as identified in **figure 1** below. The site is also not at risk of surface water flooding.

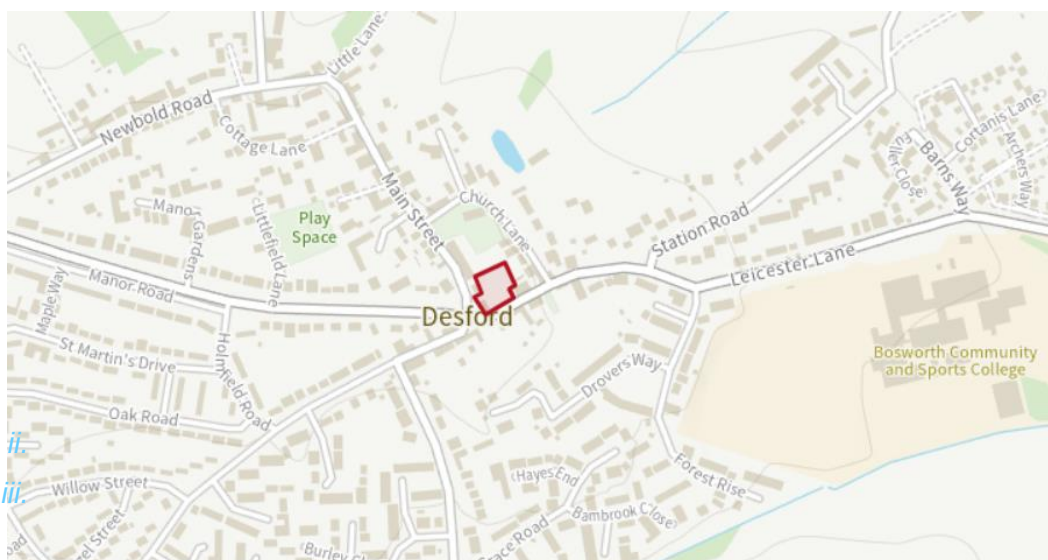


Figure 2: Extract from the Flood Map for Planning demonstrating the site is located wholly within flood zone 1

ii. The Surrounding Area

- 2.10 Desford is designated as a 'Key Rural Centre relating to Leicester' under Policy 8 of the adopted Core Strategy (2011). These settlements are identified within the adopted Core Strategy at paragraph 4.31 as villages with populations of over 1500 people, having a primary school, local shop, post office, GP, community/leisure facilities, employment opportunities and a 6 day a week bus service (hourly).



- 2.11 Key Rural Service Centres are the most sustainable villages for new development within the rural area of the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth. The Core Strategy seeking to protect and support services within these villages by improving employment, services, facilities and public transport provision.
- 2.12 As identified at paragraph 2.3 above, the application site is wholly within the boundaries of the Desford Conservation Area, first designated in January 1981. The Conservation Area boundary is shown in **Figure 3** below, and there is a Grade II* listed building directly to the south of the site, on the other side of High Street known as The Old Manor House, No. 32 High Street, List UID: 1074078¹. To the south-west of the application site is a Grade II listed property known as Ivy House, List UID: 1074077².
- 2.13 Within the Conservation Area Appraisal High Street is acknowledged as a distinct Character Area, “Area A” due to its sense of enclosure. The predominant building material is red brick, some with Flemish bonding, with render, timber framing and painted faces also used. Roof materials include red and blue clay tiles, Swithland and Welsh Slates, and thatch.

¹ [historicengland.org.uk](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074078). (n.d.). OLD MANOR HOUSE AND ATTACHED BARN AND SERVICE BLOCK, Desford - 1074078 | Historic England. [online] Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074078> [Accessed 31 May 2023].

² [historicengland.org.uk](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074077). (n.d.). IVY HOUSE, Desford - 1074077 | Historic England. [online] Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074077> [Accessed 31 May 2023].

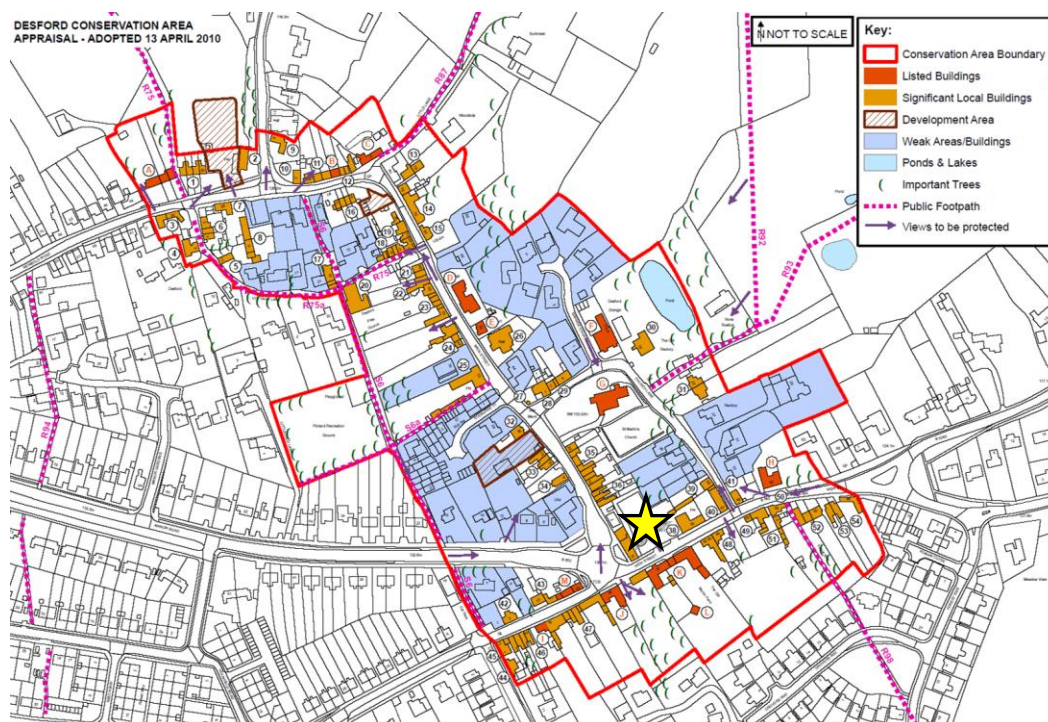


Figure 3: Extract from the Desford Conservation Area Appraisal (2010). The centre of the application site is marked by the yellow star. Listed buildings are indicated in red, with significant local buildings shown in orange. Weak areas and buildings are shown in blue and are clustered to the north of the application site, between the northern boundary of the application site and the Grade II* listed Church of St Martin

2.14 Due to the site's location at the core of Desford, the site is surrounded by existing built-form to all aspects. Adjoining the application site to the north is the residential curtilages of No. 30 Church Lane and No. 4 Main Street, beyond which is the Grade II* listed Church of St Martin, List UID: 1361378³. The residential curtilage of No. 30 Church Lane comprises part of a wider cluster of 20th century residential development that is identified as "weak area buildings" within the Desford Conservation Area Appraisal, as demonstrated in **figure 3** above.

³ [historicengland.org.uk](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074078). (n.d.). OLD MANOR HOUSE AND ATTACHED BARN AND SERVICE BLOCK, Desford - 1074078 | Historic England. [online] Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074078>.



- 2.15 As demonstrated within the accompanying Heritage Statement at **photo 1**, only the upper portion of the Church of St Martin is visible from the application site, notwithstanding the intervening modern residential development.
- 2.16 The residential curtilages of No's. 32-36 Church Lane are to the east, alongside The Blue Bell Inn Public House and the Blue Bell Inn Lodge. The Blue Bell Inn public house is identified as a "Significant Local Building" within the Desford Conservation Area Appraisal at page 10, with its significance identified as below:
- "...This timber framed structure has retained its original window openings on the street frontage although a new third gable has been added replacing the earlier eyebrow dormer. The rubble stone building has also been recently rendered and a bay window added to the south-east elevation. The car park was the site of a row of thatched cottages which were demolished in the early 20th century"*
- 2.17 For the full heritage context for the application site, please refer to Section 2.0 onwards of the accompanying Heritage Statement, prepared by Cogent Heritage.



3 BACKGROUND

i. Existing Cooperative Retail Provision within Desford

- 3.1 Desford is an important Leicestershire village for the Central England Cooperative Ltd, with the village currently served by two Cooperative stores located at 1 High St and 23 Newbold Road. These stores function as “top-up” convenience stores, with residents undertaking their main shopping trip elsewhere, using the Desford stores to “top up” their weekly shopping as required.
- 3.2 Despite this existing provision, the Newbold Road store is out-of-centre in planning policy terms whilst also being significantly undersized in terms of available sales floorspace. The High Street store is on the western boundary of the Neighbourhood Centre designation and suffers from its peripheral location in the village.
- 3.3 1 High Street is an insecure leasehold site and there is no secure long term tenancy in place for the Cooperative. Trading (sales) floorspace at 1 High St is limited to just 1195sqft, 110sqm. The store does not have a dedicated parking area for customers, with vehicles required to park either in the small car park adjacent to the western boundary of the store, or park upon High Street itself.
- 3.4 23 Newbold Road is owned by the Cooperative, however the trading floorspace is only 915sqft, 85sqm. As with the Main Street store, 23 Newbold Road does not benefit from a dedicated customer park, nor does it have a dedicated delivery area, with vehicles required to park on Newbold Road.
- 3.5 The constraints of operating two disaggregated stores in the same settlement, effectively competing against each other despite common ownership has a significant adverse impact on the choice available to locals when compared to a larger, modern convenience store, notwithstanding the improvements that come with a more modern store in terms of its internal layout and overall functionality. Presently 1 High St performs better as a local “top-up” convenience store, no doubt due to its more central location within the village, but due to the limited



trading floorspace only provides for 3,654 product lines. This is only 59% of the 6,200 product lines which are otherwise provided for in a typical local Cooperative store. A similar range of products trade out of the 23 Newbold Road store, further limiting the overall product range available within the village.

- 3.6 In addition to the factors identified above, present day economic conditions, including the cost of fuel and general convenience goods inflation has meant it has become unviable for Cooperative to run two separate, competing convenience stores within Desford, neither of which is individually capable of providing the range of retail goods for local residents that the Cooperative would expect to provide within a village the size of Desford.
- 3.7 The Cooperative has long sought a site in Desford that will be able to provide a larger and improved convenience store, providing a better product range, customer services and customer parking facilities in a more sustainable, central location that is easily accessible by the residents of Desford.
- 3.8 The existing stores units will be able to attract other alternative retail uses, further enhancing the retail offer of Desford for local residents, in accordance with adopted planning policy. Other services to be introduced into the proposed convenience store would include a substantially improved retail offer and facilities, including parking, and a robust, tried and tested delivery management plan.
- 3.9 The Cooperative, in conjunction with Everards has instructed a consultancy team to assist in the delivery of a highly sustainable convenience store proposal within Desford which meets adopted planning policy, whilst ensuring a significant net public benefit through an improved local retail offering, local employment retention and creation and public realm benefits.
- 3.10 As discussed in further detail at Chapter 5 of this Statement, the proposals will not adversely impact the retail environment of Desford in anyway, with the two existing Cooperative stores becoming vacant upon occupation of the proposed convenience store, allowing for another independent retailer to operate within the village in an existing class E (previously Class A1/A2) premise.



ii. Planning History

3.11 The planning history of the application site is summarised in Table 1 below, as available on the public access.

Application No.	Description of Development	Date of Decision	Decision
<i>The Blue Bell Inn Public House</i>			
77/01768/4M	Extension to car park	24/01/1978	Permitted
89/00614/4	Change of use from part residential and part sub-let to bank to part commercial let 5 bedrooms and part sub-let to bank new access from pub car park	20/06/1989	Permitted
91/00837/4	Change of use to bedroom accommodation in connection with adjacent public house	22/10/1991	Permitted
07/00493/FUL	Formation of new patio area	19/06/2007	Permitted
07/00708/FUL	Erection of a pergola to rear garden	06/08/2007	Permitted
15/00623/FUL	Proposed canopy porch to western side entrance	28/07/2015	Permitted
19/00162/FUL	Demolish existing garage, new timber boarding, lean to canopy and sliding door to west elevation, extension of existing kitchen into external courtyard with replacement extraction system and 2 new patio doors to north elevation	02/05/2019	Permitted
<i>37 High Street</i>			
90/00637/4	Extension to public house	24/07/1990	Permitted
<i>2A Main Street</i>			
75/00990/4	Conversion into office from antique shop	23/09/1975	Permitted
91/00414/4	Change of use to hot food take away Class A3	25/06/1991	Refused
94/00190/COU	Change of use to coffee shop	27/04/1994	Refused
95/00087/ADV	Illuminated sign	17/03/1995	Permitted

Table 1: Planning history of the wider application site



iii. Pre-Application Engagement with Historic England

- 3.12 As identified at paragraph 2.5 of this Statement, the High Street frontage of the application site, currently the car park for the Blue Bell Inn Public House was historically developed. Map and photographic records dating from the early 20th century show that there were several aged, thatched cottages on this area of the site, facing The Grade II* Old Manor House. At some point prior to the issuing of the OS Map for 1959 however, these cottages were demolished, and the site maintained as it can be seen today.
- 3.13 Given the heritage context to the application site, being located within the Desford Conservation Area and the proximity to the aforementioned Grade II* listed Old Manor House, noted within the Desford Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) as the most important none secular building in the village for several centuries, the applicant was keen to engage Historic England as part of the pre-application engagement process. The Applicant approached Historic England on 25 October 2023 and a full copy of the pre-application advice received from Historic England on 17 November 2022, ref: PA01197574 is attached at **Appendix 1** of this Statement.
- 3.14 Regarding the impact of the proposals, the Historic England advice at page 2, *section a) setting of Old Manor House* recognised that the scale, design and materials of the pre-application proposals was considered to not be overly prominent in the setting of the Old Manor House. It was the view of Historic England that the Old Manor House would remain the dominant building within the street scene and there would be limited impact to the significance it derives from its setting.
- 3.15 Regarding the impact upon the Desford Conservation Area, no issue was found regarding the impact of the proposal given the historic pattern of built development at the site, with the proposals re-instating to some degree the historic sense of enclosure along High Street.
- 3.16 After detailing the predominant characteristic built form for the Desford Conservation Area at *Section i) Design*, the response noted that the proposed



flat roof of the proposals was not a feature prevalent within the Conservation Area and such, would fail to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. The response confirmed that if the scale was necessary to accommodate the proposals, then it may be possible to decrease or omit the area of flat roofing by providing additional gables and other architectural features of merit.

- 3.17 With regards to the other aspects of the design put forth, Historic England welcomed the efforts made to break up the massing of the proposals and recognised the roof pitch replicated existing steep slopes, which was welcomed.
- 3.18 Historic England considered that more active openings should be included where possible, with additional detailing and brick patterns / bonding incorporated to break up the massing and create a more active elevation. Regarding the fenestration, it was considered the proposals put forth were innocuous and would match existing windows on the building, with the potential for an enhancement on the existing arrangement. The windows at first floor level were also considered to not be in keeping with the host building or conservation area and should be amended with a better design.
- 3.19 Regarding the proposed materials, the pre-application proposals put forth a convenience store proposal that would make use of red brick, with the existing building re-rendered in white. The most appropriate roofing materials were confirmed as being Welsh slates.
- 3.20 The Historic England response noted the additional hard landscaping to accommodate the car park in the north-eastern corner of the site, but recognised that this could be justified via further planting and introduction of better quality materials. A boundary wall could also be considered.
- 3.21 The Historic England response confirmed at page 5, section: Next Steps that subject to the addressing of the issues outlined within the pre-application response, Historic England were broadly content with the proposals

iv. Parish Council Engagement



- 3.22 The Applicants also approached Desford Parish Council on 25 October 2022 as part of pre-application discussions. To confirm, the proposals put forth to the Parish Council were the same as those presented to Historic England.
- 3.23 The Applicants subsequently met with the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk of Desford Parish Council on 10 November 2022 to discuss the proposals in further detail. During this meeting, the Applicant set out to the Parish Council the aforementioned retail context and issues faced by the Cooperative in operating two separate stores within the village, including the issues arising from the low level of sales floorspace and inconvenient delivery arrangements.
- 3.24 During the meeting the intentions of the Applicants in delivering the proposals was put forth, with the key aim of improving the retail offer for Desford through an appropriately scaled, suitably functional convenience store that reflected the surrounding area in terms of scale, site layout and orientation, materials and overall design also relayed. The heritage context and scope of technical reports undertaken was also set out in full for the Parish Council.



4 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The proposed development comprises the following elements:

- Demolition of existing single-storey element to rear of 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Demolition of store to rear of public house;
- Change of use from Café (Class E) and Residential (Class C3) to Convenience Foodstore (Class E);
- Erection of two-storey side extension to 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Erection of two-storey rear and single-storey rear extensions to 37 High Street/2A Main Street;
- Improvements to existing car park and beer garden, including access and parking; and
- Public realm and landscaping improvements.

4.2 To facilitate the creation of a convenience food store in this location, the existing single storey extension to the rear of 37 High Street and 2A Main Street will be demolished, alongside the store for the public house.

4.3 The proposed convenience store will have a gross area of 564m², with a sales area of 276m². This is below the threshold of 280m² established by the Sunday Trading Legislation and will therefore be able to trade on an unrestricted basis on Sundays as it constitutes a “small shop”. The associated ground floor back of house area extends to 120m². A first floor back of house / storage area will extend to 180m².

4.4 A two-storey side extension is proposed to the northern elevation of 2A Main Street, whilst a single-storey rear extension is proposed across the width of both buildings as demonstrated within the Proposed Floor Plans, drawing no. 006 rev. P1. This extension will house the delivery area, alongside part of the back of house area where goods are stored and staff facilities location.



- 4.5 The two storey side extension will be finished in red brick, incorporating a roof dormer and faux shopfront to provide a more active frontage and visual interest when viewed from Main Street. Flemish brick bonding will also be used, in a positive response to the Historic England comments received regarding the materials and design to be used in the proposals. The height of the eaves of the proposed side extension is 3.615m, below the roof ridge height of the existing buildings of 4.336m. The roof ridge height of the extension is confirmed as 6.879m, below the roof ridge height of the existing buildings, confirmed as 7.399m. The pitch of the roof will also reflect the existing roof pitch at 2a and 37 Main Street.
- 4.6 A limited element of the proposed rear extension will be two-storey, towards the rear of 37 High Street. This will serve to reinstate a level of the historic sense of enclosure along High Street, with the extension set only slightly further back from the pavement edge than the existing building. The roof eaves and ridge height has been set below the height of the existing buildings, as shown on the Proposed Elevations, drawing no. 007 P1 and two roof dormers with pitched roofs are also proposed..
- 4.7 The extensions will be constructed from red brick, and the existing buildings re-rendered in white to preserve their existing appearance and distinguish between the old and new built elements. In response to the design considerations raised by Historic England as part of the pre-application engagement process, the south-eastern elevation of the rear extensions facing onto High Street have been redesigned, incorporating more brick detailing, flemish bonding and barn ties and barn door features as shown in **figure 4** below.



South East Elevation



South East Elevation

Figure 4: Extract from the pre-application proposed elevations (above) and the current proposals (below) of the proposed South-East Elevation. In response to the design comments received from Historic England, the roof pitch and overall roof ridge height have been retained, with more interesting design features incorporated to provide for a more visually interesting and active frontage. A small planted area to the front of this elevation will allow for a small soft landscaped area, further improving the setting of the Desford Conservation Area.

4.8 The flat roof element of the rear extensions has been set behind the gable end of the proposed north-eastern elevation, limiting views of this part of the proposals when viewed from High Street in an attempt to respond positively to the



comments raised by Historic England. Other roof arrangements do not work structurally, or lend to a cluttered and visually unattractive roof arrangement. It is within this proposed gable end that the main pedestrian entrance into the convenience store is located.

- 4.9 The windows at first floor in the aforementioned gable end have also been changed to a more appropriate casement window, in response to the comments received by Historic England as part of their pre-application advice. All rooflights to be used within the roof space will be conservation grade.
- 4.10 Internally, the store has been designed to function as a modern Cooperative store, with the till area overlooking the main pedestrian entrance to aid security. The aisles will be 1.5m wide to ensure for good levels of circulation and to promote a hassle free, welcoming shopping experience. “Grab and go” and ready meal items are also provided in proximity to the tills and entrance, allowing for passing visitors to enter and exit the store quickly, not blocking the entrance or the ends of the aisles for other customers.
- 4.11 The back of house internal arrangement provides unhindered access for delivery trolleys and goods to pass through a continuous corridor to the general goods, chiller and freezer areas, with no doors blocking access once the delivery trolley is inside the building. The chiller and freezer will be accessed via a sliding door which will also regulate the temperature of both of these areas. An office and canteen area for staff are also located in proximity to the staff lobby and toilets.
- 4.12 The Proposed Site Plan, drawing no. 005 rev. P1 confirms that 38 car parking spaces are to be provided on-site. The site layout has been reviewed by the appointed Transport Consultant, ADL Highways to ensure that the site is fully accessible by all vehicles and their associated users. X2 of the proposed car parking spaces will be accessible, provided in the area of parking closest to the main pedestrian entrance. A bicycle stand is also provided within the site boundary to encourage more sustainable methods of transport.
- 4.13 The car park will be extended in the north-eastern corner to accommodate the proposed layout, with the increase in hardstanding off-set at the site boundaries

by an increase in soft landscaping, including the planting of x5 specimen trees and natural hedges. This additional planting has been provided in response to the comments raised by Historic England regarding the extension to the hardstanding area on-site discussed at page 4, paragraph 1 of their response. A comparison of the proposed site plans at the pre-application stage and the current proposals is provided in **figure 5** below.



Figure 5: Extract from the Proposed Site Plan for the pre-application proposals (above) and the current proposals (below)



demonstrating how the soft landscaping on-site, comprising native and specimen hedgerows and trees has increased in response to the comments received by Historic England, and to deliver on-site biodiversity net gain

- 4.14 The beer garden and the main pedestrian entrance to the Blue Bell Inn Public House will be resurfaced with resin bound gravel and brick paving, bringing continuity to the wider site whilst also providing a safe and level means of access into the public house. The beer garden will be bounded by newly planted native hedgerows and specimen trees, increasing on-site biodiversity and softening the impacts of the proposed areas of hardstanding when viewed from High Street. An area of low level, lush planting is also proposed on the beer garden side of the vehicle entrance, mirroring the shrub planting present on the northern elevation of the Grade II* listed Old Manor House.
- 4.15 The bin store and service yard is located away from the public realm, to the north of the proposed extensions. The bin store will be located behind 2m high closeboard fencing, containing this element of the proposals and limiting their visual impact upon the wider site and surrounding area whilst also protecting surrounding residential amenity. Deliveries will be made via the service yard, providing direct access from delivery vehicles into the back of house area described above. Additional plant and machinery will be located on the flat roof, further protecting residential amenity.



5 POLICY CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

The Development Plan

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) requires that applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Development Plan for the application site consists of the relevant policies of the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2006-2026, which comprises the Core Strategy DPD (adopted December 2009) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (adopted July 2016). The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021, hereby “The Framework”) will also be a material consideration, as are SPD’s such as ‘The Good Design Guide’.
- 5.3 The Core Strategy DPD adoption significantly predates the original Framework, whilst the adoption of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD predates the latest three revisions. In accordance with Annex 1, paragraph 219 of the Framework, due weight will be given to the policies contained within the Development Plan according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

i. Core Strategy (adopted 2009)

- 5.4 The following policies from the Core Strategy are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- Policy 7: Key Rural Centres
- Policy 8: Key Rural Centres Relating to Leicester

ii. Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (adopted 2016)



5.5 The following policies from the SADMP DPD are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- Policy DM1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy DM6: Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest
- Policy DM7: Preventing Pollution and Flooding
- Policy DM10: Development and Design
- Policy DM11: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- Policy DM12: Heritage Assets
- Policy DM13: Preserving the Borough's Archaeology
- Policy DM17: Highways and Transportation
- Policy DM18: Vehicle Parking Standards
- Policy DM21: Locating Sustainable Town Centre Uses
- Policy DM22: Vitalising District, Local and Neighbourhood Centres
- Policy DM23: High Quality Shop Fronts and Advertisements
- Policy DM25: Community Facilities

iii. Desford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2009)

5.6 The following policies from the Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- Policy H1: Settlement Boundary
- Policy H6: Housing Design
- Policy ENV5: Local Heritage Assets
- Policy F1: Retention of Existing Community Facilities
- Policy F2: New or Improved Community Facilities
- Policy T1: Traffic Management

iv. The National Planning Policy Framework (adopted July 2021)

5.7 The following sections of the Framework are considered to be relevant to the determination of this planning application:



- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 6 – Delivering a strong, competitive economy
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Planning Policy Assessment

i. Principle of Development

5.8 Policy DM1 of the SADMP and Section 2 of the Framework set out the principles of sustainable development within the Development Plan. Paragraph 8 of the Framework elaborates upon the definition of sustainable development, and states that the planning system has three overarching objectives:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.



- 5.9 Central to the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which means that proposals which comply with an up to date Development Plan should be approved without delay, unless *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits”* when assessed against the policies within the Framework. In this case the Development Plan policies are broadly considered to accord with the objectives of the Framework, save for Policy DM12 of the SADMP as discussed in the heritage sub-section of this letter. In overall terms, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policy DM1 of the SADMP and section 2 of the Framework.
- 5.10 Section 11 of the Framework seeks to ensure that development proposals make effective use of land. Paragraph 119 highlights that the re-use of previously developed land should be encouraged; the proposed development is evidently in accordance with this. The location of the application site within the centre of Desford is demonstrably in accordance with Policy H1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which seeks to locate development within the settlement boundary.
- 5.11 Within the preamble to the Policies within the Core Strategy, there is a sub-section stating the issues facing the Borough (from page 13 onwards). The economy is the first issue listed, with paragraph 3.14 stating that *“the high proportion of outward commuting from some settlements also presents challenges in maintaining shops and other rural services, as well as a sense of community”*. At paragraph 3.33 of the Core Strategy, Desford as a ‘Key Rural Centre’ is specifically mentioned as needing to provide the *“necessary day-to-day services to ensure rural communities have the choice to shop...close to where they live”*. This reflects Spatial Objective 3: Strong and Vibrant Rural Communities of the Core Strategy (page 20, paragraph 3.39), which seeks to ensure that *“...rural communities have access to a range of shops, education, community, leisure facilities and employment opportunities in the Key Rural Centres to support, enhance and improve the sustainability, vibrancy and vitality of our rural areas”*.



5.12 Policy 7 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that rural centres can meet the needs of their residents, and states at bullet points 4 and 5 that the Council will achieve this by:

- *“Support[ing] new retail development to meet local need within defined local centre boundaries in the Key Rural Centres providing it will have no detrimental impact on the Hinckley town centre; and*
- *Resist[ing] the loss of local shops and facilities in Key Rural Centres unless it is demonstrated that the business or facilities can no longer operate in a viable manner. Initiatives to establish local stores and facilities will be supported.”*

5.13 The application site is located within the centre of the village of Desford, upon a mini-roundabout which effectively functions as the village core, being the location where Main Street and High Street meet. The boundary for the High Street Neighbourhood Centre (ref: DES14N) is unclear, appearing to be drawn upon the road itself only, and does not incorporate any buildings bar the Library. It is therefore reasonably assumed that the Neighbourhood Centre incorporates the buildings on either side of High Street, including the existing Main Street Cooperative Store, the existing café at the application site, the remainder of the application site, and the Blue Bell Inn Public House.

5.14 The location of the application site, and the associated proposals for retail development can therefore be considered sustainable, in accordance with Policies 7 of the Core Strategy. Policy 7 specifically supports retail development within the defined local centres of Key Rural Service Centres provided that there is no retail impact upon Hinckley Town Centre. This is discussed in further detail at paragraph 4.14 below. Opportunities to establish local stores and facilities will also be supported by the Council.

5.15 Policy DM21 requires a Retail Impact Assessment to be submitted for applications where over 2,500sq.m of floorspace is proposed for such uses outside of Hinckley Town Centre. The proposed development does not exceed this threshold, and therefore does not conflict with this objective of Policy DM21.



- 5.16 Policy DM21 continues, stating that the Council will seek to locate town centre uses within sustainable locations, following a sequential approach. Sites within the defined Hinckley Town Centre, District Centres or Local Centres will be considered first, and if no appropriate sites are identified, edge of centre sites will then be considered. As discussed at Section 3 of this Planning Statement, the existing Cooperative stores within Desford are inadequate for the present day retail operations of the Cooperative, with both stores de-facto competing against each other despite being in common ownership. Only 59% of the typical product lines typically available in a small sized community Cooperative store can be provided for in either store. In planning policy terms, the existing Newbold Road store is out-of-centre in planning policy terms, with the Main Street store occupying a peripheral location within the village of Desford. Both stores further suffer from dedicated on-site parking and a lack of appropriate delivery arrangements.
- 5.17 Due to the nature of the High Street Neighbourhood Centre boundary drawn, the only site to be considered as part of the sequential test for this proposal would be the Library (a designated Community Facility under Policy DM25 of the SADMP), and is clearly not a site available for development. The loss of the library community facility would not be supported by Policy 7 of the Core Strategy, nor would it be supported by Policy F1 of the Desford Neighbourhood Plan. At the time of the writing of this Planning Statement, no other commercial properties were available, nor of a suitable size to reasonably accommodate the proposals (utilising a $\pm 10\%$ buffer) within Desford.
- 5.18 Of key significance to the proposals, as discussed at Section 3 of this Statement is the salient fact that neither of the two existing Cooperative stores within Desford will guarantee the long term presence of the Cooperative within the village. In the case of the Newbold Road store, the site is too small to extend and the on-site delivery arrangements, which involve parking on pedestrian footways would only be exacerbated by any expansion. As discussed at paragraph 4.15 above and at Section 3, this store is also out-of-centre in planning policy terms. The High Street store is insecure to the retailer with no long term tenancy guaranteed.



- 5.19 The proposed development would result in a consolidated and enhanced retail offering for Desford, improving the product service lines available, from 3,654 product lines currently to over 6,200 products. The proposals will secure a larger, modern, sustainably located Cooperative convenience store is a more sustainable site within the village centre. This will encourage linked trips into the village centre, enhance the appreciation and enjoyment of the Desford Conservation Area, and result in less trips for “top-up” convenience shopping to surrounding villages, resulting in less car journeys and therefore less environmental impacts.
- 5.20 The principle of development at the site is demonstrably in accordance with criterion c) of Policy F1, which states that development proposals that lead to the loss of a Community Facility will not be acceptable unless *“the proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the existing community facility to an equally or more appropriate and accessible location within the Parish which complies with the other general policies of the Neighbourhood Plan”*. Policy F2 of the Neighbourhood Plan continues, stating that *“proposals that improve the quality and/or range of community facilities will be supported”*. All dwellings within Desford are within 1 mile of the proposed new store, in clear accordance with the sustainable location requirements of Policy F1.
- 5.21 Policy 8 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will *“support traffic management measures and additional car parking to encourage people to shop locally, improve Desford village centre and create a true centre for the village”*. The proposals include the provision of a redesigned car park with delineated bays and the provision of two disabled spaces, at the core of Desford. A safe and convenient car park will encourage residents to shop locally, and increase footfall within the Neighbourhood Centre in accordance with Policy 8 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.22 Similarly, Policy DM22 of the SADMP aims to maintain the vitality of defined centres, and states the following:



“Neighbourhood centres will be retained and enhanced wherever possible. The change of use or loss of A1 or A2 uses within these centres will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the loss would not reduce the community’s ability to meet its day to day needs within a reasonable walking distance.”

- 5.23 Whilst the existing Co-Operative stores on both High Street and Newbold Road would be consolidated into this one new, larger store, there is policy support for this consolidation under Policy F1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, as identified at paragraph 5.18 above, and under Policy DM22 of the SADMP. The proposals will be effectively replacing the Main Street Cooperative store, and as detailed at paragraph 5.16 above there are no suitable alternative existing premises within the Neighbourhood Centre that could accommodate the proposals. The other existing store on Newbold Road is approximately 380m (or a 5 minute walk) from the nearest Neighbourhood Centre of High Street and is therefore out-of-centre in planning policy terms. The proposals would therefore not result in the loss of any Class A1 or A2 units (now Class E) within the Neighbourhood Centre, in accordance with Policy DM22. An appropriately worded planning condition, placing a time limitation upon the vacancy of the Main Street and Newbold Road stores upon occupation of the proposed convenience store would ensure further compliance with Policy DM22. These stores would then become available for other retailers to occupy.
- 5.24 Policy DM22 states that retail proposals will be supported where the retail frontage is retained and / or enhanced, and would not result in a break in the continuous retail frontage. The existing café store on-site is an isolated retail outlet within this area of Desford and the High Street elevation of the proposals (the north-western elevation on the Proposed Elevations, drawing no. 007 rev. P1) have been designed to resemble a Cooperative store of high design quality. A faux shopfront design has also been incorporated, retaining and enhancing the understanding of the Desford Neighbourhood Centre as the primary retail location within the village.



5.25 The proposed development is further supported by paragraph 84(d) of the Framework, which states that planning policies and decisions should enable “*the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops...*”. The proposed development is for the provision of a new, larger convenience foodstore that will provide a larger net floorspace compared to the existing two stores, and will consolidate their offerings; the existing two stores have a combined sales floorspace of 196sq.m, whilst the proposed store has a sales floorspace of 276sq.m. This is a clear benefit for the residents of Desford, and will provide an enhanced shopping experience.

ii. Design

5.26 Paragraph 130 of the Framework reads as follows:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the*



fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.

- 5.27 This notion is supported within local policy under Policy DM10 of the SADMP and Policy 8 of the Core Strategy. The proposed development is for the restoration and change of use of the existing buildings on site (37 High Street and 2A Main Street), alongside extensions to the side and rear to provide a functional level of convenience retail floorspace at ground floor level. The proposed extensions have been sympathetically designed, with the external works intended to reflect that of the historic form and appearance of other buildings within the Conservation Area (in further accordance with Policy 8 of the Core Strategy). The overall scale of the proposed extensions to the side and rear is wholly justified by way of the proposals providing a highly legible and accessible internal layout, offering a much improved, modern retail experience for customers.
- 5.28 The design features noted as positive by Historic England in their pre-application response (**appendix 1**) have been retained by the proposals and additional visual interest on an appropriate scale and character has been included to positively respond to the design concerns raised during those discussions. Features such as gabled dormers and conservation-style rooflights are proposed to provide visual interest to the elevations of the proposed extensions. Feature brickwork and Flemish bonding is also proposed to further activate the elevations and provide visual interest and high quality design to the surrounding area.
- 5.29 The extensions will make use of red brick with appropriate brick detailing, reflecting the predominant building material within the Desford Conservation Area. The existing buildings on-site, 2 High Street and 37A High Street will be re-rendered by the proposals and their sense of place within the streetscene will be retained and enhanced, in accordance with Policy 8 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM23 of the SADMP.
- 5.30 The two-storey rear extension proposed to the rear of these buildings, incorporating the retail floor space will reinstate the historic sense of enclosure along this stretch of High Street, recognised as a positive response within



Historic England's pre-application advice, and will aid the restoration of the former character and appearance of the application site. Historic images of the former thatched cottages on site have been studied, and the proposed ridge height and roof pitch designed to reflect those of the former cottages.

5.31 Policy DM23 of the SADMP is specifically concerned with shopfronts and advertisements, and states that new and refurbished shopfronts will be approved where:

- a) *"They reflect the local style and materials of the host building and immediate area; and*
- b) *The fascia is of an appropriate scale in relation to the shop front and upper floors; and*
- c) *Signage illumination is of an acceptable luminosity and does not lead to obtrusive light in the form of sky glow, glare or light intrusion; and*
- d) *Shop security features are appropriately designed to complement the host building and street scene. Shutters and grilles must allow for a degree of internal visibility; and*
- e) *The design of blinds and canopies leave the street scene uncluttered, particularly out of hours; and*
- f) *The main public entrance adds interest to the street scene and is on a human scale; and*
- g) *Additional industrial devices, such as air conditioning and/or filtration units, are integrated with the design and placed in the most visually unobtrusive location, and are away from the public and neighbouring properties which may be affected by the noise and extracted fumes. Such devices may be situated on the primary elevation only where there is no other reasonable alternative".*

5.32 The faux shopfront proposed on the north-western elevation, facing High Street has been designed to utilise existing openings, whilst promoting an active frontage in accordance with Policy DM22. Whilst details such as signage illumination can be secured under a separate advertisement consent application, the accompanying 3D Visualisations demonstrate that the fascia will be in



proportion to the scale of the building, with existing openings utilised where possible to maintain the character and appearance of the locally significant buildings.

- 5.33 Whilst reference is made within Policy DM23 to shopfronts within Conservation Areas and those affecting locally significant buildings, the reference is to existing shopfronts only. The states that replacement or altered shopfronts will *“only be found acceptable where it would preserve or enhance the character of the heritage asset and wider area”*. The main pedestrian entrance to the site will be located on the south-eastern elevation in the two storey gable ended extension, and will utilise a sliding door for ease of access. The materials to be used in the shopfront will include a mix of red brick, powdered aluminium frames and wooden barn doors, reflecting the design features of the proposed two storey elevation along High Street.
- 5.34 The colour scheme for the shopfront will also be the modern, muted colours of the Central England Cooperative Group, a mix of muted greys, browns and greens, appropriate to the surrounding area in accordance with the overarching objectives of Policy DM23.
- 5.35 In amenity terms, the immediate surrounding land uses are predominately residential in nature. The proposed convenience store is located on the south-western and south-eastern boundaries of the site, and the accompanying Environmental Noise Report recommends that plant noise can be controlled by an appropriate condition, and that the noise from car parking will be no greater than the existing site. The Delivery Management Plan presented within the accompanying Transport Statement confirms that deliveries could be received during daytime, and therefore will not cause undue impacts upon residential amenity due to appropriate spacing throughout the day.
- 5.36 The proposals will not have an adverse impact upon the existing amenity levels of nearby occupiers. Notwithstanding the current commercial use of the site as a car park, the installation of 2m closeboard fencing is proposed around the bin area to further aid in noise mitigation. The proposals are therefore in accordance with Policy DM10 of the SADMP and Section 12 of the Framework.



iii. Heritage

- 5.37 Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP and Section 16 of the Framework are all concerned with protecting the historic environment. Whilst Policy DM11 is broadly in accordance with objectives of the Framework, Policy DM12 does not allow any harm, no matter the level of harm identified, to be weighed against public benefits arising from a development proposal as required by paragraph 202 of the Framework. Policy DM12 also exceeds the statutory provisions by requiring enhancement to the heritage asset, contrary to the objectives of the Framework which places no such requirement upon development.
- 5.38 Policy ENV5 of the Desford Neighbourhood Plan is also of relevance to the proposals and is in accordance with the requirements of the Framework, stating that any benefits arising from a development proposal, or a change of use requiring planning approval, will need to be balanced against the scale of harm or loss and their significance as heritage assets.
- 5.39 The full heritage context and background to the proposals is set out at Section 2.0 of the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Cogent Heritage. The application site is located within Desford Conservation Area and is adjacent to the Grade II* listed The Old Manor House. No's. 37 High Street and 2A Main Street are also identified as locally significant buildings within the Conservation Area Appraisal (2010), and the Bluebell Inn adjacent to the eastern boundary of the application site is identified as an unlisted building of local importance. Due to the heritage context of the site, the proposals will need to be assessed against section 16 of the Framework.
- 5.40 As set out within this Statement at section 2, the present appearance of the site is an under-utilised large expanse of architecturally unremarkable tarmac and hardstanding, with boundaries comprising self-set trees and hedgerows which are confirmed as having no particular ecological value. The rear elevation of 2A Main Street and 37 High Street are generally dilapidated and suffering from neglect, with the single storey flat roof extension to the rear of these buildings being an anomalous and architecturally unremarkable feature within the Conservation Area. The sense of enclosure along the remainder of High Street is



also absent from the application site by virtue of the previous cottages on-site being demolished during the 20th century.

- 5.41 The Historic England pre-application response provided at **Appendix 1** and summarised at Section 3 of this Statement confirms that it was the view of Historic England that the Old Manor House would remain the dominant building within the street scene and there would be limited impact to the significance it derives from its setting should the proposal be brought forth. It was also confirmed that there would be no issues arising with regards to the impact upon the Desford Conservation Area given the historic precedent at the site, and the proposals reinstating a historic sense of enclosure along Main Street.
- 5.42 The accompanying Proposed Elevations, drawing no. 007 rev. P2 demonstrates that the materials to be used will reflect those materials prevalent within the Conservation Area, and will therefore reflect the surrounding appearance and character of the area. The proposed windows, iron cross bars and wooden lintels are a further positive response to the comments raised by Historic England during the pre-application process, which when combined with the scale of the proposals and the internal site layout, results in attractive elevations that capture the character of this historic area of Desford whilst being respectful to the sensitive heritage setting.
- 5.43 Figure 3 of this Statement is an extract from the Conservation Area Appraisal, and indicates that there is a 'View to be protected' across the application site from High Street. As discussed within the accompanying Heritage Statement at paragraph 2.17, the only plausible explanation for identifying the view as important is that the spire of the Grade II* listed Church of St Martin can be seen in filtered views when the trees are not in leaf. The photographs of this view provided within the Heritage Statement demonstrate that it is not a view in which the significance of the building can be appreciated or understood, but just a view in which the spire can be seen across the car park in certain seasons. This view cannot therefore be reasonably considered as important in terms of the significance of the Church, nor the Conservation Area itself.



- 5.44 Reference should also be made to the appearance of the rear of 37 High Street/2A Main Street, as depicted at Photo 2 of the accompanying Heritage Statement. The cottages that were previously on site predated the construction of 37 High Street/2A Main Street, indicating that the rear of the latter buildings were not designed with public realm visibility in mind. The predominately blank rear elevation supports this theory. The properties are suffering from neglect, and closer inspection of the buildings shows them to be in a visual state of tiredness and a general lack of continued maintenance. The proposed development would ensure the sensitive repair of these buildings, which are noted as of local significance, and can therefore be considered non-designated heritage assets.
- 5.45 In terms of The Old Manor House, the role of the application site upon the setting of this Grade II* listed building must be considered. The Heritage Statement states that *“the application site in its present state represents a poor quality fragmented townscape gap that bears no resemblance to the tight historic townscape. Instead, it is an unfortunate gap site that markedly detracts from the character, quality and coherence of the setting of the Old Manor House”*. The proposed development would restore the sense of enclosure along this stretch of High Street, which is noted as an important characteristic of the Conservation Area within the Appraisal. The proposals have been designed to be subservient to 37 High Street/2A Main Street through the reduced ridge height and the stepped distance from the pavement, whilst also ensuring that the design of the extensions do not compete with, or distract from, the significance and imposing nature of the Old Manor House.
- 5.46 The appearance of the wider application site would be improved by the proposals by virtue of their scale, overall design and design features of visual interest, and the implementation of soft landscaping scheme that softens the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the application site and introduces an increased extent of appropriate, native soft landscaping into this part of the Conservation Area.



- 5.47 As set out at Section 3.0 of the accompanying Heritage Statement, the proposals are considered a positive response to the key heritage considerations at the application site, including the single storey rear extension to accommodate the proposals which makes use of a pitched roof, again being subservient to the existing buildings on-site whilst providing an active frontage in proximity to the southern boundary and the Grade II* Old Manor House. The proposals would reflect the historic character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.
- 5.48 The Heritage Statement records at paragraph 3.6 that, given the current use of the site and the fact that the application site is located within the Neighbourhood Centre and High Street, a location where commercial uses are found, the proposed use of the under-utilised and somewhat unattractive car park as a convenience store is considered to be appropriate for the location.
- 5.49 As set out at paragraph 3.9 of the Heritage Statement, when compared against the existing appearance of the site and surrounding area, the proposals are considered to enhance the setting of the Grade II* listed Old Manor House and the wider Conservation Area by improving the setting and character of the application site.
- 5.50 Elsewhere, the Heritage Statement records that the *Important View to be Protected* identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal, across the application site of Church of St Martin, whilst of questionable heritage significance for the reasons given at paragraph 2.16 of the Heritage Statement, will be retained when viewed from the south-eastern corner of the application site. The Heritage Statement also considers the proposed replacement of the poor quality existing shopfront at 2A Main Street with a more appropriately designed shopfront to be an enhancement to the appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed two storey side extension is also considered an improvement upon the existing poor quality gable.
- 5.51 The Heritage Statement concludes that due to the design, scale, materials and layout of the proposals, alongside securing the long term use of 2A Main Street and 37 High Street as part of a community facility, retaining the external fabric of these buildings, there will be no harm arising from the proposals upon the



aforementioned designated heritage assets. The proposals would encourage footfall into the heart of the Desford Conservation Area and retain an active frontage facing out into the centre of the village, resulting in a greater appreciation of the Conservation Area. The proposals meet the objectives of policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, which requires proposals to contribute to the wider vibrancy of the Borough and contribute to the distinctiveness of the areas in which they are located, whilst also according with Policy ENV5 of the Desford Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.52 If the Council were to disagree with the findings of the Heritage Assessment and conclude that less than substantial harm arose from the proposals upon the heritage assets, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals. It cannot reasonably be argued that substantial harm arises from the proposals due to the existing appearance of the site, the historic built form and context, and the comments made by Historic England as part of pre-application discussions. There is no such allowance for this sequential approach as identified within the Framework within Policy DM12 as identified above, which predates the adoption of the latest version of the Framework and the heritage balance considerations set out under paragraphs 202 and 203:

“202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”

- 5.53 The public benefits of the proposals are clear, and are considered to far outweigh any potential harm identified. The public benefits of the scheme are considered to be as follows:



- Securing the long term retention of 2A Main Street and 37 High Street, identified as significant local buildings within the Desford Conservation Area Appraisal, contributing towards the appreciation and overall vitality of the area;
- Improving the appearance of 2A Main Street and 37 High Street through an appropriate scheme of re-rendering and replacing of windows, improving the appearance of the Conservation Area and encouraging footfall;
- Re-instating the historic sense of enclosure along High Street, reflecting the historic built form of this part of Desford, allowing for greater appreciation of the Conservation Area;
- Significantly enhanced retail provision for the residents of Desford, allowing the Cooperative to display their full range of product lines within one centralised location and thereby reducing the need to travel to surrounding villages and towns for “top up” shopping;
- Increased footfall within the Neighbourhood Centre and within the Conservation Area, assisting with achieving the economic objectives within Policy 7 of the Core Strategy;
- Encouraging visitors to the historic core of the village, which will allow for greater appreciation of designated and non-designated heritage assets, meeting the objectives of Policies DM11 and 12 of the SADMP regarding the appreciation of Heritage Assets;
- Significant improvements to the public realm, including the introduction of soft landscaping along the southern boundary of the site, improving the setting of the Grade II* Old Manor House, allowing for a greater appreciation of the heritage asset;
- Short term construction jobs; and
- Securing of long term employment opportunities for local residents by retaining the Cooperative presence within the village, and the allied supply chain economic benefits.

5.54 As such, it has been demonstrated that any harm arising, which can only reasonably be considered to be less than substantial, to be outweighed by the



significant public benefit arising from the proposals. As such, the proposals are considered to accord with paragraph 202 of the Framework, whilst meeting the criterion of policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, leading to an improved setting of, and appreciation of the nearest heritage assets to the application site.

iv. Highways & Access

- 5.55 Policy DM17 of the SADMP and Section 9 of the Framework are both concerned with sustainable transport and highways matters. Policy DM17 states that there should be no significant adverse impact upon highway safety arising from development proposals, and that a convenient and safe access should be provided for all users.
- 5.56 Policy DM18 of the SADMP relates to vehicle parking and states that all proposals for new development will be required to provide an appropriate level of parking provision justified by an assessment of the site location, type of housing, other modes of transport available (e.g. public transport and cycle provision) and appropriate design. Any development will be expected to provide disabled parking provision.
- 5.57 The application site is located within the 'Key Rural Centre' of Desford, immediately adjacent to a Neighbourhood Centre. The consolidation of the two existing stores in the village into one, larger unit will be beneficial for the residents of Desford, as it will allow a greater range of products to be stocked. Residents would therefore have a reduced need to travel outside of the village for their day-to-day needs, resulting in an associated reduction in reliance on the private motor vehicle.
- 5.58 All dwellings within Desford are within 1 mile of the proposed new store, with all but the new build dwellings upon Shericles Way and Tumblin Fields Close within 800m, in accordance with the Manual for Streets and what is considered to be a 'walkable neighbourhood'⁴. In addition, the site is well served by public transport,

⁴ Section 4.4, page 45

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1072722/Essex_Manual_for_Streets_Redacted.pdf



with two bus stops to the west within less than 60m of the site boundary. These bus stops provide access to regular services to Market Bosworth and Leicester via the Arriva 152 and 153 services. 5 cycle parking spaces are also provided within the site red line, allowing for sustainable travel to and from the site in accordance with paragraph 105 of the Framework and Policy MD17 of the SADMP.

- 5.59 The Association for Convenience Stores “Local Shop Report 2020) demonstrates that 54% of customers will get to the store by foot. 41% of customers will drive, with 4% using public transport. In terms of the “new trips” generated by the proposals (the majority of trips to and from the store will be existing trips, with customers already having undertaken their main shop/other activities), the proposals will result in an additional 13 two day trips during the AM peak between 08:00 - 09:00, and 18 two way trips during the PM peak between 17:00 – 18:00. An additional 11 two way trips will occur during the Saturday peak between 12:00 - 13:00. This increase in trips is negligible considering the prevailing traffic flows of between 1,000 to 1,500 surveyed at the nearby roundabout.
- 5.60 The permitted use of the site is Class E(b) and C3, whilst only a Class E(a) use is proposed. The parking survey provided at paragraph 2.6.2 of the Transport Statement demonstrates the level of existing parking demand at the site, confirmed as a maximum of 24 spaces between 21:00 – 22:00 on a weekday, and 33 spaces between 19:00-21:00 on a Saturday. The proposed convenience store will require 9 parking spaces, using the requirement of 1 parking space per 30m² of retail floorspace. 2 accessible spaces have been provided in accordance with the required minimum standard.
- 5.61 The Transport Statement sets out at paragraph 6.2.3 the average duration of a visit to a Cooperative store, this being 10 minutes. The Overall Parking Demand Table provided at Table 6B confirms that there would be a maximum parking demand of 26 car parking spaces on a weekday, and 35 car parking spaces on a weekend, below the 38 car parking spaces provided on-site. This allows for fluctuations in peak demand to ensure that there is no overspill into the public



highway. The proposals are therefore considered to fully accord with Policies DM17 and DM18 of the SADMP and section 9 of the Framework.

v. Ecology

- 5.62 Policy DM6 of the SADMP requires development proposals to demonstrate how they conserve and enhance features of nature conservation and geological value including proposals for their long term future management.
- 5.63 From an ecology and biodiversity point of view, the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment prepared by Arbtech confirms the site has very little ecological value. There is a small section of grass (utilised as a pub garden), and an 'L' shaped hedgerow to the northern boundary and north-eastern corner of the site.
- 5.64 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal notes that the site is disconnected from any protected wildlife sites and there are no habitats on-site that are noteworthy, or worthy of retention. The existing hedgerow is proposed for removal, but a significant tract of new hedgerow and low level planting is proposed within the site, generating new hedgerow habitat and improving the ecological value of the site. The hedgerow will be a mix of native hedgerow and specimen planting. 5 new trees are also proposed.
- 5.65 The Further Roost Activity Survey has confirmed that bats and birds are not nesting within the roof space of the existing buildings on-site and as such there will be no adverse impact arising from the proposals upon protected species.
- 5.66 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal recommends that x2 bird boxes are installed and an appropriate low level lighting scheme, should one be required be installed on-site. These details can be secured by appropriately worded planning condition. The increase in soft landscaping on-site and the implementation of suitable plant species brings the proposals into accordance with Policy DM6 and section 15 of the Framework.

vi. Other Matters



- 5.67 The car park is previously developed land, in that it had previously been host to some old thatched cottages prior to these being demolished and hard surfacing laid. The proposed commercial use is a low risk use from a contamination point of view, with any potential contaminants likely to be localised. The proposals are considered in accordance with Policy DM7 of the SADMP and paragraph 183 of the Framework, and a standard pre-commencement condition could be attached to any future planning permission ensuring that a Phase 1 Contaminated Land Report is submitted to the Council prior to any groundworks taking place.
- 5.68 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1, and is therefore at low risk of flooding. The proposals are therefore considered to be suitably located with regards to climate change and flood risk, as required under Policy DM7 of the SADMP.



6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been submitted in support of the proposed development at Land at The Blue Bell Inn (39 High Street) comprising its associated car park, and No's 37 High Street and 2A Main Street, Desford, Leicester, LE9 9JF, for the proposed demolition of existing single-storey element to rear of 37 High Street/2A Main Street and store to rear of public house. Erection of two-storey side extension to 37 High Street/2A Main Street, erection of two-storey rear and single-storey rear extensions and change of use from Café (Class E(b)) and Residential (Class C3) to Convenience Foodstore (Class E(a)) with associated access, parking and landscaping.
- 6.2 As outlined within Chapter 5 of this Planning Statement, it is demonstrably the case that the proposals comply with both national and local policies whereby:
- The principle of development within this location meets Spatial Objective 3 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to ensure that “...*rural communities have access to a range of shops, education, community, leisure facilities and employment opportunities in the Key Rural Centres to support, enhance and improve the sustainability, vibrancy and vitality of our rural areas*”;
 - The principle of development is also supported under policies DM21 and DM22 of the SADMP. The site is located within the designated neighbourhood centre of Desford, and it has been demonstrated within this statement that there is no sequentially preferable site for the proposals within the settlement boundary of Desford, nor within the designated neighbourhood centre. The one site that could reasonably accommodate a similarly scaled proposed is the community library, a designated community facility within the SADMP and the Desford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2019) and this site is neither available, nor suitable for the development proposed. The loss of this neighbouring community facility would, in any event axiomatically result in the



proposals being in conflict with Policy DM22 of the SADMP and Policy F1 of the Desford Neighbourhood Plan;

- The site is located within the heart of the village, in proximity to another community facility, the aforementioned Desford library. This Statement demonstrates that the scale of the proposals is wholly appropriate given the context of the surrounding areas and how the site has historically been, and is currently experienced;
- The proposals are a direct improvement on the existing retail convenience offer within Desford, and will retain the character and the function of the site and the neighbouring Blue Bell Inn Public House as an area of the village where there has historically been commercial uses, bringing increased footfall and vitality to this area of Desford. As the proposals will effectively be consolidating two existing convenience stores into one larger, more modern store, the proposals will have a *de minimis* impact upon the retail convenience offer elsewhere within the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, and will simply reinforce existing retail patterns experienced in Desford, in two convenience stores that are less favourably located in planning policy terms, being “out of centre”;
- The proposed development will retain the majority of the existing built fabric of 2A Main Street and 37 High Street, and through an appropriate scheme of repair will enhance and generally improve the appearance of these locally significant buildings. More appropriate design features, including improved windows will also be installed, improving the appearance of the buildings and the surrounding area. The single storey rear extensions, and the public house store to be demolished to accommodate the proposals are considered to have no historic value.
- The proposals have been sensitively designed to be of an appropriate scale and appearance given the sensitive heritage context to the site, set out within the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Cogent Heritage. The proposals have been redesigned from the pre-application



enquiry with Historic England to respond positively to the comments raised regarding the proposed materials, elevational treatments and design features appropriate to the surrounding area. The scale of the two storey side extension results in this part of the proposals appearing as visually subservient to the locally significant No. 2A Main Street and No. 37 High Street, with the proposed rear extension also being of a lesser scale than the adjacent Grade II* Old Manor House, retaining its appearance and visual hierarchy within the streetscene;

- The setting of this important heritage asset will be improved by the proposals, with an increase in the quantity of soft landscaping and the historic sense of enclosure along High Street reinstated by the proposals. The proposed roof pitch and overall height of the rear extension is also considered to accord with policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, whilst meeting the high quality design objectives of Policy DM10 of the SADMP;
- A scheme of soft landscaping is proposed upon the site's northern, eastern and southern boundaries, assisting in assimilating the proposed development into the surrounding streetscape and helping the proposals reflect, and respond positively to the key characteristics of merit of the surrounding settlement, in accordance with policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, and Policy ENV5 of the Desford Neighbourhood Plan;
- The proposals will provide an updated, fit for purpose community convenience retail facility for the settlement of Desford, providing short term construction jobs alongside longer term employment opportunities and continuing to support the supply chain associated with the provision of convenience goods in this location (the economic role);
- The proposals will secure biodiversity benefits, and is located wholly upon previously developed land, reducing the reliance upon undeveloped greenfield sites (the environmental role);
- The proposals will improve upon the existing convenience retail choice for local resident within the village of Desford, encouraging trips into the village centre to better allow for an appreciation of the high quality built



environment and provide the opportunity for linked trips to other local services and facilities within the village (the social role);

- Paragraph 105 of the Framework identifies that the opportunity for sustainable transport differs in urban and rural areas, and that this should be reflected in planning decisions. The proposals can be readily accessed by pedestrians within Desford, by private vehicle and by public transport by the bus stop directly adjacent to the application site. A cycle stand is also provided. The level of traffic generated by the proposals can be accommodated via the existing highways network, with an appropriate level of car parking provided on-site;
- The proposed development is respectfully considered to constitute sustainable development and therefore benefits from the presumption in favour of such developments, as set out at paragraph 11 of the Framework.

6.3 It is therefore concluded that the proposal accords with the relevant national and local policies and constitutes sustainable development. The proposal complies with paragraphs 11 and 47 of the Framework, and there are no material considerations that indicate that the forthcoming application should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the Development Plan, as required by Section 38(6) of the Act.

Historic England Pre-Application Advice



Historic England

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Direct Dial: 0121 625 6870

Our ref: PA01197574

Your ref: N/A

17 November 2022

Dear Ms Simpson

Pre-application Advice

ON LAND AT THE BLUE BELL INN (39 HIGH STREET) COMPRISING ITS ASSOCIATED CAR PARK NO'S 37 HIGH STREET AND 2A MAIN STREET , DESFORD, LEICESTER, LE9 9JF

Significance

The application site is located in the Desford Conservation Area and opposite the grade II* listed Old Manor House.

The application site (i.e. the red line boundary) contains The Blue Bell pub, and 37 High Street/2a Main Street, both of which are identified as "Significant Local Buildings" on the conservation area map.

Old Manor House is a farmhouse built circa 1630- 1640 for Thomas Muxloe, a member of a well known Leicestershire family. It is built from red brick with sandstone dressings and quoins. The buildings height (Two storeys plus attics), its position close to the edge of the road and the high boundary wall makes it a key building in the street scene. The Swithland slate roof having three raised stone coped gables and two square ridge stacks with strapwork decorations. Between the second and third is an impressive two storey gabled porch with jetty above. Attached timber frame along the street frontage. Three light stone mullioned windows. To the left is an attached brick barn with a 17th Century timber framed wall of square panels.

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal details its status in the village "*This building had been the most important none secular building in the village for several centuries*". The house's more than special interest are reflected in the grade II* listing which places it in the top 5.8% of listed buildings in the country.

Impact of the proposals

The proposals would convert and extend the adjacent properties; 37 High Street and



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2a to form a convenience food store.

37 High Street and 2a are identified in the conservation area appraisal as “Significant Local Buildings”. We defer to the Local Planning Authority on the assessment of impact on the Significant Local Buildings. Our advice relates to the impact on the setting of Old Manor House and the Desford Conservation Area.

a) Setting of Old Manor House

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal states; *“Of particular note is the elegant frontage of Manor Farmhouse on the northern side of the street. The additional height of this three storey building is intended to set itself apart from other properties in the street. This is emphasised by refined detailing and the use of iron railings rather than low brickwork to separate it from passersby”*.

The scale, design and materials of the proposed extensions would not make them overly prominent in the setting of the Old Manor House. In our view Old Manor House would remain the dominant building in the street scene and there would be limited to impact to the significance it derives from its setting.

b) Desford Conservation Area

We have no issue with development in this location given the historic precedent as demonstrated in the Heritage Statement. This would to some degree re-instate the historic sense of enclosure along High Street.

i) Design

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal gives details of the characteristics of the existing built form; *“These buildings are normally two rooms deep with steeply pitched gabled roofs parallel to the street broken with occasional projecting gables onto the street. Decorative features include dentil eaves courses, polychromatic brickwork, applied gable framing and patches of render. Openings are vertical with segmental arched or flat stone lintels with keystones and projecting brick sills”*.

The proposed extension is large in scale and would include a large area of flat roof hidden behind a small mono-pitch on the north-eastern and north-western elevations. This detail is not prevalent in the conservation area and would fail to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. Is this scale of extension necessary or could it be reduced? If it cannot be reduced it may be possible to decrease or omit the area of flat roofing by introducing further single storey gable extensions.

With regards to design we can see effort has been made to break up the massing and reflect that of the local character. The proposed roof pitch replicates the existing steep slopes, we welcome this.



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Blind openings have been used to break up the expanse of masonry, they would be more successful if they were active openings. Additionally, more could be done in terms of additional detailing and brick patterns/bonding to break up the massing and create a more active elevation.

The majority of the fenestration is innocuous and would match existing windows on the building, there is the potential for an enhancement on the existing arrangement. We note that the windows proposed on the north-east elevation at first floor are not in keeping with the host building or conservation area. These could be amended to better reflect the host building and preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In sum, while the design efforts made to reduce the building's impact and assimilate it into the Desford Conservation Area go some way we consider changes to design and detailing would better preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

ii) Materials

The Conservation Area Appraisal states; *"The principle building material in the conservation area is brick.... The brickwork has generally been laid in Flemish bond which was common in the 19th century. In a number of instances the brick walls have been finished in rendering which appears in recent times to have been used to cover disguise or protect poorer quality brickwork. This is not unpleasant but it is not a traditional material. The roofs of several older buildings are covered in swithland slate in diminishing courses which is important to retain. There is also widespread use of Welsh Slate particularly along Main Street and the High Street. Clay tiles and thatch are not characteristic roofing materials in the settlement although there are isolated examples. (The Old White Cottage (thatch), Priory farm (clay tiled) and The Old Bluebell Inn (clay tiled).*

Natural materials, particularly Welsh slate, should be used on all new development. Imported or reconstituted slates or concrete roof tiles are not part of the historic palate and are inappropriate in the conservation area".

The supporting letter details that the extensions will be constructed from red brick, and the existing buildings re-rendered in white. We consider this would be appropriate to the character and appearance of the Desford Conservation Area. The information we received does not detail the proposed roofing materials. Inline with the Conservation Area Appraisal, to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area the pitched roofs should have welsh slate.

iii) Landscaping



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The area between the proposed convenience store and public house is proposed for car parking, bike store, play area and beer garden along with a potential beer garden on the edge of High Street. We note there is an additional area of hardstanding in the north-east corner of the car park. While this is at the rear of the site and is not prominent in views the addition of hardstanding in this area would cause additional negative impact to the conservation area.

The proposals bring about an opportunity to enhance the appearance of this part of the conservation area which could justify the additional hard standing. The current proposals for planting and the introduction of better-quality materials would improve the appearance of this area but further enhancement, particularly to the character and appearance of the conservation could be achieved through the introduction of a boundary wall.

Legislation, policy and guidance

Our advice reflects guidance in the good practice advice notes produced by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum in GPA 2; Managing Significance in Decision- Taking in the Historic Environment, GPA 3; The Setting of Heritage Assets.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out clear guidance for decision-makers, including chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

We also refer you to paragraphs 197, 199, 200, 202 and 206.

Paragraph 197 encourages local authorities to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 199 outlines that 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)'.

Paragraph 200 details that 'any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification'.

Paragraph 201 states that 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal'.

Position

Historic England have considered the proposals in accordance with Legislation, policy and guidance.



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We do consider that improvements could be made to the application to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, as detailed in our advice above.

Next Steps

Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We are broadly content with your proposals, subject to you addressing the issues as outlined above before any statutory approval is sought.

Yours sincerely

Janine Dykes

Janine Dykes
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
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Information Provided

Existing Elevations
Proposed Elevations
Existing Site Plan
Proposed Site Plan
Heritage Statement
Cover letter dated 25 October 2022
Location Plan
Proposed Visualisations 1-4



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