



DESIGN, ACCESS AND HEIRTAGE STATEMENT

Construction of additional floor to provide 3 residential apartments and associated works

On behalf of CorePro Build Limited

36-40 High Street, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire, NN9 5TN

Reference: 22959-R06

January 2024



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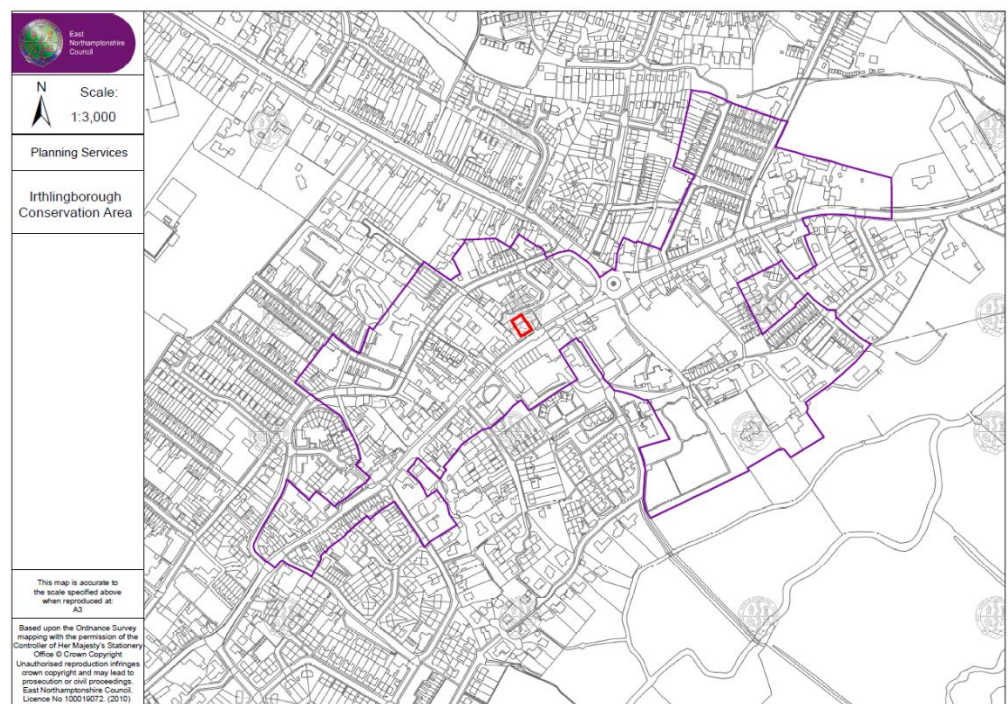
1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning, heritage, design, and access statement has been prepared on behalf of our clients CorePro Build Limited, in support of a planning application for the construction of an additional floor on top of the existing building at 36-40 High Street, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire.
- 1.2 The site is located in the heart of Irthlingborough town centre and was previously occupied as a supermarket, who used the ground floor for retail space and the first floor for storage and staff facilities.
- 1.3 Prior approval has been given to convert the first floor of the building into four residential apartments, under reference NE/22/01552/PDU, dated 7th February 2023. The apartments have their own entrance from the rear of the building, with a parking area, cycle parking and bin store contained within an outside paved area. The site has a change in level, so the rear of the building is at first floor level, with the ground floor below ground. A separate entrance leads to a staircase down to the ground floor acting as a means of escape.
- 1.4 It is proposed to construct an additional floor on the building, which will contain two one-bedroom apartments, and one two-bedroom apartment, each with an open plan living space and kitchen. A staircase leads down to residential access on the floor below.
- 1.5 This is a revision of a scheme submitted in 2023 which sought permission for four residential apartments, reference NE/23/00350/FUL, which was refused planning permission on the 4th October 2023. That refusal is currently subject to an appeal, and a decision is awaited.
- 1.6 The alteration to the internal layout of the apartments is necessary to accommodate plant mounted on the roof, required for the convenience store use on the ground floor. An option was considered to mount the plant to an external wall, but that was not possible with the residential conversion of the first floor, hence the plant being placed on the roof in the same location as it was originally, when Tesco occupied the site.
- 1.7 The planning application is accompanied by plans prepared by MLA Architecture Limited.



2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 The application site is located at 36 - 40 High Street, Irthlingborough. It is on the northern side of the road, set back from the roadway behind a wide pavement. The site is located within the Irthlingborough Conservation Area, as shown on the map extract below.



Irthlingborough Conservation Area boundary and the application site

- 2.2 Access to the rear of the building is from Warrens Close, where there is a large hardstanding parking area.



Planning History

2.3 The planning history for the property is as follows:

Planning reference NE/22/01552/PDU

2.4 Convert the first floor of the building into four residential apartments, including two 2-bedroom units and two 1-bedroom units, prior approval required and granted 7th February 2023.



Approved front elevation



Approved rear elevation to a similar scale, note the rear of the building is just over one storey due to the height difference in ground levels to the front of the building

Planning reference NE/23/00350/FUL

2.5 This application sought permission for an additional floor on the building to provide 4 residential apartments. The application was reported to planning committee with an officer's recommendation for approval but was refused by members and the decision issued on the 4th October 2023.

2.6 The reasons for refusal are stated as follows:

"1. The proposed height, principal elevational design and roof results in an awkward and contrived appearance that is discordant with the existing rhythm of the street scene and constitutes overdevelopment. It compromises and negatively impacts the special character of the Irthlingborough Conservation Area. The public benefits of the development do not outweigh the harm. It therefore has an unacceptable impact in terms of design, visual



amenity, and heritage. It is therefore not compliant with NPPF paragraphs 130 (a-d) and 202, Policy 2 and Policy 8(d) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2016, and Policy EN14 of the Emerging East Northamptonshire Local Plan 2022.

2. Policy 8(b)(ii) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2016 seeks for new development to provide safe access and parking provisions and to not cause harm to highway users. The proposed development would introduce an intensification of vehicle movements into and around Warrens Close. The intensified use of the access would result in harm to residents of Warrens Close and highway users via disruption and on street parking blockage. As such, the proposed development fails to comply with the aforementioned Policy as well as the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework in paragraphs 110(b), 111 and 112(c).

3. The development of extra flats in this location would lead to loss of amenity to residents due to lack of parking. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the proposal would provide an acceptable, sufficient and adequate level of useable parking spaces within a practicable distance contrary to Policy 8 b) ii) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2016 and the Northampton Local Highway Authority Parking Standards (2016)."



3 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 This planning, heritage, design, and access statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application seeking the construction of an additional floor for residential use at 36 to 40 High Street, Irthlingborough.
- 3.2 Prior approval consent has been given for the conversion of the first floor to residential use under Class MA of the General Permitted Development Order. Whilst Class AB of the GPDO allows for new dwellinghouses in commercial or mixed use terraced buildings, through the creation of up to two additional floors, this cannot be used when the development would be above a dwellinghouse approved under Class MA.
- 3.3 Accordingly, a full planning application has been made for the additional three apartments.

Principle of the Development

- 3.4 The application site is a former supermarket situated on the High Street in Irthlingborough town centre. The property was vacated in early 2022. The ground floor has subsequently been refitted as a convenience store, operated by Heron Foods, which opened in October 2023. The first-floor conversion works have commenced following the discharge of conditions in April 2023.
- 3.5 The NPPF encourages at paragraph 90 (f) that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management, and adaptation. This includes in relation to residential development that:

"Recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites."
- 3.6 The additional of a floor on an existing building is supported by paragraph 124 (e) of the NPPF which states that:

"Support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well-designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards) and can maintain safe access and egress for occupiers."

- 3.7 The NPPF continues to say in relation to mansard roof extensions that:

"They should also allow mansard roof extensions on suitable properties 51 where their external appearance harmonises with the original building, including extensions to terraces where one or more of the terraced houses already has a mansard. Where there was a tradition of mansard construction locally at the time of the building's construction, the extension should emulate it with respect to external appearance."



- 3.8 Irthlingborough is identified by the Core Strategy as one of the market towns, where the strategic policy encourages a strong service role for their local communities and surrounding rural areas with growth in homes and jobs to support regeneration and local services, at a scale appropriate to the character and infrastructure of the town.
- 3.9 Joint Core Strategy Policy 29 Distribution of New Homes states that the re-use of suitable previously developed land and buildings in the Growth Towns and the Market Towns will be encouraged.
- 3.10 The emerging Local Plan has been subject to examination and is relatively advanced. Policy EN21 Town centres and primary shopping frontages states:

"Development within the town centre boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map will be supported where this will achieve vibrant and viable town centres. Development should deliver increased vitality, through some or all of the following:

a) At street level, maintaining a balance and mix of main town centre uses, including both convenience and comparison retailing, financial services and/ or food and drink businesses;

b) Opportunities for a mixture of businesses, residential and live-work units, including at first floor level and above;

c) Avoiding an over concentration of a particular Use Class, with the exception of retailing;

d) Retaining a predominantly retail offer for the defined shopping frontages;

e) Enhancing the streetscape, to maximise opportunities for increased footfall;

f) Improving the connectivity between High Streets, town centre car parking and the surrounding urban hinterland with a particular focus on cycling and walking; and

g) Preparing local development strategies to encourage the re-use of vacant and redundant premises for a balanced mix of uses, including where appropriate residential uses, to revitalise the character of the town centres."

- 3.11 Commercial activity at street-level has been retained, which will preserve the vitality and viability of the town centre and offers a greater degree of variety and interest to passers-by.
- 3.12 The policy offers support for a mixture of business, including residential development at first floor level and above. Overall, the proposals comply with the requirements of Policy EN21 and will make the best use of a mixed commercial and residential building in the heart of Irthlingborough, that will support the role and function of the town centre.



Design and Layout

- 3.13 The existing building has a run-down appearance and a broad canopy running along the length of the frontage that over sails the pavement. The shop fronts are plain glass windows, set into modern frames, whilst the doors are modern automatic sliding doors. At the first floor, much of the elevation is a featureless brick wall, with a row of high set windows running the length of the building.
- 3.14 It has been recognised that the existing structure plays a negative role in the character and appearance of the street scene. This was assessed as part of the consideration of the first-floor conversion, under permission reference NE/22/01552/PDU granted prior approval consent in February 2023. The officer's report stated at paragraph 7.23 that:

“However, for comprehensive consideration the following observations are made: The retail character of the frontage and rear of the building is not considered to be integral to this part of the CA nor particularly high quality aesthetically at present. Whilst it is on the High Street, there are other non-town centre uses nearby and a number of residential properties within close proximity. The building itself is likely of ‘80s construction and presents a plain, narrow strip window to the High Street.”

- 3.15 The officer's assessment continued at paragraph 7.2.4 to say:

“The introduction of Sash Windows with stone cills and window heads, with a sensible architectural rhythm and pattern, separated by brick piers and corbels will enhance this elevation and be a more sensitive approach to the Conservation Area. A similar change to the rear elevation is also considered to enhance the appearance of the building.”

- 3.16 The changes to the first floor were found to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and surrounding street scene. It was accepted that the changes being made to modernise and improve the building were seen as positive and did not harm the character of the town centre of the street scene.

- 3.17 In relation to the second-floor extension, the planning officer's report to committee referred to the building on the southern side of the High Street, opposite the application site, which has also been subject to an upwards extension and conversion to residential use. The report stated at paragraph 7.2.3 that:

“Of note, permission NE/21/00421/FUL was granted on 21.07.2021 for the redevelopment of No. 13-19 High Street opposite the site location. This involved the redevelopment of the structure into a 3-storey building, containing 8 residential units on the first and second floor. Notably, as part of that application's consideration, it was concluded that the building was a negative feature in the High Street and Conservation Area, not only because of its unoccupied nature and state of disrepair, but also because of the form and design of the building. The comments of the Inspector on an appeal decision in 2004 on the same was considered to affirm this position.”



3.18 The officers report then likened this to the application site and stated at paragraph 7.2.4 that:

“The building that is the subject of this planning application is considered to be of a similar calibre in terms of quality both in design and architecture. The flat roof and bland elevations are considered to be negative features in the Conservation Area, especially fronting the High Street.”

3.19 Paragraph 7.2.5 of the officer’s report considered the context of the application site, and included the following comments:

“To the east, the block of buildings embodying No. 20 to No. 32 High Street is three storeys in height, with a pitched roof. To the west, No. 44 High Street is of a similar height and scale. As noted above, permission NE/21/00421/FUL would also result in a three-storey building. Notably the proposed second storey would be a ‘roof with box dormers’ storey, occasionally referred to as a ‘half storey’ in planning terms. However, it would have a flat roof behind the pitched roof façade and can therefore be considered a fully storey for the purpose of assessment.”

3.20 The report continues to say at paragraph 7.2.6 that:

“The building would be clearly visible from both directions of the High Street and the addition of a floor would be a prominent feature in a town centre area. The additional massing is relatively limited due to the utilisation of a set-back pitched roof, and use of box dormers. It is considered that the building would not appear unusually tall in the street-scene, and it would not dominate the nearby buildings. In terms of massing and height, the proposal is considered to be sympathetic to the area including the CA.”

3.21 To sum up on design issues, the officer’s report concluded at paragraph 7.2.7 that:

“The sum total of changes made under the prior approval permission and the proposed development for consideration here would result in an improved elevational appearance over that which presently exists. The introduction of improved windows would be a further benefit. The potential occupation of the first and second floor would add vitality to the building as well as put more people in the town centre who will utilise existing businesses.”

3.22 The rear of the building was also assessed, with the officer's report concluding at paragraph 7.2.8 that:

“From the rear of the building the alterations are also considered to be a benefit to the character of the area. The same second floor style being continued would enhance a part of the building which is currently somewhat poor aesthetically. The addition of vitality and activity in the area would also be beneficial from a character standpoint, particularly through the increase in windows overlooking the rear of the vacant commercial property. The alterations at first and ground floor level of the rear façade are also considered improvements, removing industrial commercial elements such as delivery shutters.”



- 3.23 The new additional floor has a sloping slate roof to the frontage, inset with lead clad dormer windows, matching the fenestration of the new windows on the first floor. This would give the building a traditional appearance, appropriate to the setting within the Conservation Area.
- 3.24 To the side, the existing elevation steps in a small amount to the rear of the building, the stepped section would be finished in off-white render as approved by the first-floor conversion prior approval. The new elements of the wall to create the second-floor gable would match the same materials, featuring predominately brick, and render to the rear.
- 3.25 On the rear elevation, the design includes a sloping tiled roof with lead clad dormer windows. A gable feature finished in render sits over the stair well, to ensure sufficient headroom when coming up the internal staircase.
- 3.26 Internally, the flats have been arranged to take advantage of the available light from the window openings, placing the living space closest to the windows, with a dining room and kitchen as part of an open plan space. The bedroom would also have a window, whilst the bathroom is located centrally in the building, and will be ventilated with a fan.
- 3.27 The addition of the roof has the added advantage of screening the roof mounted plant from view, by hiding it within the open air well inset into the roof.

Heritage

- 3.28 The application site is located within the Irthlingborough Conservation Area. NPPF paragraph 203 - proposals affecting heritage assets states:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

(a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

(b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

(c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."

- 3.29 Paragraph 208 refers to the assessment of impact on heritage assets, and advises 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 including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."



3.30 Emerging Local Plan Policy EN14: Designated Heritage Assets states:

"In considering proposals that affect a designated heritage asset or its setting, a Conservation Area or a registered Historic Park and Garden or archaeological remains, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation.

Development proposals that sustain and enhance the character, appearance, and significance of designated heritage assets (and their settings), and that put them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, will be supported.

Proposals that would lead to harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset or its setting will not be supported, unless a clear and convincing justification of public benefit can be demonstrated to outweigh that harm, in terms of:

a) the importance of the asset;

b) the scale of harm; and

c) where the nature and level of the public benefit of the proposal demonstrably outweighs the harm or loss."

- 3.31 The existing building is a modern era flat roofed building, which makes no positive contribution to the character and significance of the Conservation Area. The alterations approved to the first floor and the introduction of regular windows and brick detailing improve the visual appeal of the building significantly and make a positive contribution to the character of the street scene.
- 3.32 The addition of the second floor with the slate roof and dormer windows adds a more traditional character to the building and builds upon the positive contribution made by the first-floor alterations. The changes to the building are considered to be a positive move and would not harm the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 3.33 The proposed height of the building, at 2 ½ storeys is of a similar height to adjacent building to the left on the High Street, which is three storeys with a dual-pitched roof. The building to the right is two-storey but is also of a similar height to the proposed upwards extension. Furthermore, the building opposite has planning permission to add a further two new floors above the ground floor and once the development has been completed, will also be three-storey, the same height as the proposal.
- 3.34 All of these factors were considered in detail by the planning officer's report for the previous planning application, which concluded that the additional floor would be acceptable in design terms, would make a positive contribution to the street scene, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Access

- 3.35 The residential part of the building is accessed from the rear of the property from Warrens Close. There is no direct access to the High Street from the proposed apartments. Behind the building within the



parking area, seven cycle lockers have been provided that can house two bicycles in each one within secure, lockable storage.

3.36 The application site is located within a defined town centre, in a location well served by public transport and with access to shops and services. This is a sustainable location, where new housing is encouraged and where non-car transport options are available.

3.37 There are 5 car parking spaces on site, which can be shared between the apartments on the first floor and the second floor. In relation to the previous planning application the planning officer's report to committee confirms at paragraph 7.3.2 that:

"The Local Highways Authority have submitted comments twice, and have not raised concerns pertaining to the access, visibility splays or parking space placement."

3.38 The report continues at paragraph 7.3.3 to say:

"Whilst narrow, Warrens Close is an adopted road and would be subject to commercial movements associated with the existing rear access point that is to be removed. The removal of commercial movements is considered an improvement in safety terms, and the additional residential movements are not considered to result in unsafe vehicular movements. Given the LHA have not raised safety concerns, it is therefore considered by the LPA that the access is safe in highways terms."

3.39 When operating as a foodstore, the application site had parking spaces to the rear and a goods entrance that allowed for deliveries and servicing to take place from the rear of shop, as well as several spaces for staff car parking.

3.40 As part of the recent alterations and fit out, the convenience store on the ground floor no longer has the use of the rear of the property for car parking or servicing. The roller shutter access will be removed as part of the conversion of the first floor to residential use, leaving only a means of escape emergency fire access from the ground floor to the rear of the building.

3.41 In doing so, the commercial elements of the traffic using Warrens Close have been removed. There would be some residential vehicle movements associated with the new properties converted on the first floor, but these movements would not give rise to any highway safety concerns or issues.

3.42 A highway technical note has been submitted in support of the planning application, which assessed the accessibility of the site by non-car modes of transport, including walking, cycling, bus and rail. This confirms that the site is an accessible and sustainable location in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.

3.43 The technical note then considered vehicle impacts, including trip rates and trip generation. This found that over a 12-hour period during a typical weekday, the development of the three flats could result in an additional 6 two-way vehicle movements.

3.44 At this level there would be no adverse impact on the surrounding highway network



Car Parking

- 3.45 A parking beat survey has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the North Northamptonshire Council methodology. This was updated in October 2023 to focus the survey area within 200 metres walking distance from the entrance of the application site on Warrens Close, as opposed to applying a 200-metre radius in all directions from the development. This takes account of the access to the proposed residential units being from the rear of the building only, and therefore excludes parking that is available on the southern side of the High Street.
- 3.46 The updated survey demonstrates that there are a total of 47 spaces within 200 metres of the application site. Between 38 and 41 of these spaces were in use on the survey dates, showing a capacity range of between 6 and 10 spaces.
- 3.47 Of particular interest are the spaces in Warrens Close itself, where 12 spaces have been identified and between 6 and 7 spaces were available, depending upon the methodology used. This indicates capacity on Warrens Close of between 50% and 58%.
- 3.48 The updated parking beat survey covers a smaller area that is directly accessible from the proposed development. It is a robust survey, which builds upon the findings of the initial assessment, and has been prepared to directly respond to the reason for refusal suggesting that there is a lack of usable parking spaces within a practicable distance. There is parking capacity within 200 metres of the application site, and within the immediate vicinity on Warrens Close itself.

Residential Amenity

- 3.49 A noise assessment has been prepared to support the conversion of the first floor of the building to residential use. This has found that the living conditions within the building will be acceptable with a suitable sound insulated floor.
- 3.50 It follows therefore that the risk to amenity of potential residents on the second floor would be even lower due to the separation distance and shielding afforded by the first floor. A suitable construction method will be used to ensure that there is sufficient sound insulation between the first floor and the proposed second floor.
- 3.51 The proposed second floor dormer windows are set in from the edges of the roof and would not cause any degree of unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring properties. There would be adequate natural light to all of the proposed habitable rooms.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 3.52 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. Therefore, there are no flooding issues to be addressed. It is proposed that water from the roof will feed into the existing building drainage and wastewater will be connected to the existing mains sewer.



Refuse and Recycling

- 3.53 The proposed site plan has a dedicated bin store to the rear of the building, which will house the EuroBin type 1100 litre bins. A lifting lid allows residents access to the bins for easy disposal of waste and recycling.



4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This application seeks to revise the internal layout of the proposed second floor and reduces the proposed number of units to three. It incorporates an open-air plant well within the roof space, which would not be visible from the ground, as it is hidden behind the mansard roof.
- 4.2 The external changes proposed to the building are considered to improve the appearance of the property and would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The additional floor also introduces new residential properties into the heart of Irthlingborough benefiting the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 4.3 The site is a sustainable location where shops and services are readily available within easy walking distance. Furthermore, secure cycle parking has been provided on site, and there is some car parking available shared with the residential properties on the first floor. Bus services are available nearby and there is a large car park at Church Street a short distance away, that is free to use.
- 4.4 The reduced number of units proposed as part of the application reduce the number of vehicle movements and would reduce the parking demands compared to the previous refused scheme for four additional units. The parking beat survey has also been updated to only count spaces accessible within 200 metres of the rear of the property and has established that there is capacity within this area, including on Warrens Close in the vicinity of the site.
- 4.5 This application represents sustainable development, would not conflict with the aims of National Planning Policy, or the Development Plan. It should therefore be positively supported.

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