



# PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

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## Planning, Design and Access Statement

**25b High Street (Methwold Old Butchers Shop Old Cottage), Thetford, Methwold, IP26 4NT**

**Change of use from vacant butcher's shop (class E) to 1-bedroom dwellinghouse (C3) and replace the existing asbestos roof with red tiles.**

**Written and prepared by Planning By Design on  
Behalf of Daniel Reed**

Date: 18 March 2024

## 1. Introduction

Planning By Design (**the agent**) has been instructed to act on behalf of Daniel Reed (the applicant) to submit a planning application to Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk (**the Local Planning Authority**) for the Change of use from vacant butcher's shop (class E) to 1-bedroom dwellinghouse (C3) and replace the existing asbestos roof with red tiles at 25b High Street (Methwold Old Butchers Shop Old Cottage), Thetford, Methwold, IP26 4NT (**the site**).

In support of this application, the following Planning, Design and Access Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy.

## 2. Site Context and Location

The site is situated on the northern side of High Street, Methwold, and comprises the former butcher's shop which has been vacant for some time now. The property is set back from the main road with a shared driveway.

The site lies within the village centre and within the Conservation Area. The property is also classed as a non-designated heritage asset.

Surrounding properties have all been converted into residential use, most notably next door in 2015 which is now being sold as residential property.

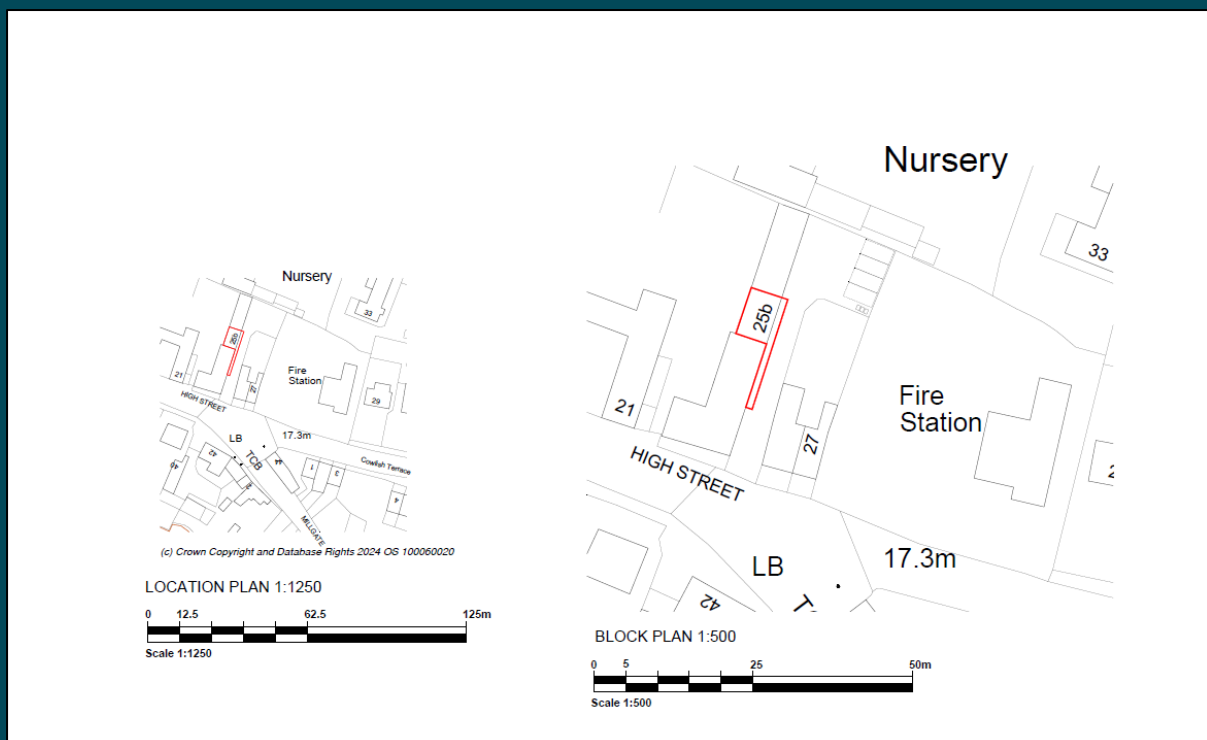


Fig.1 – Site Location and Block Plans

### 3. Planning History

The planning history indicates that there was an attempt in 2021 to change the use of this site into residential but it was withdrawn:

- 21/02344/F - Change of use of a vacant (former) Butcher's shop (E) to one bed dwelling (C3) Withdrawn

For next door:

- 15/01456/F | Change of use to convert existing shop to residential dwelling | 25a High Street Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4NT - Approved in 2015

### 4. Proposed Development

The client would like to change the use of the vacant butcher shop to 1 a one-bedroom residential dwelling under use class C3.

As part of the proposal, there will be only minor changes to the external elevations, such as window changes, a roof material change, and the addition of a rear roof light to support the proposed use. Alterations will also include the reinstatement of the previous old window on the principal elevation of the property. Windows to the rear of the site will also be obscured glazed to ensure appropriate privacy levels.

The specifics of the floor plans proposed, dimensions and design can be found within the accompanying planning drawings.

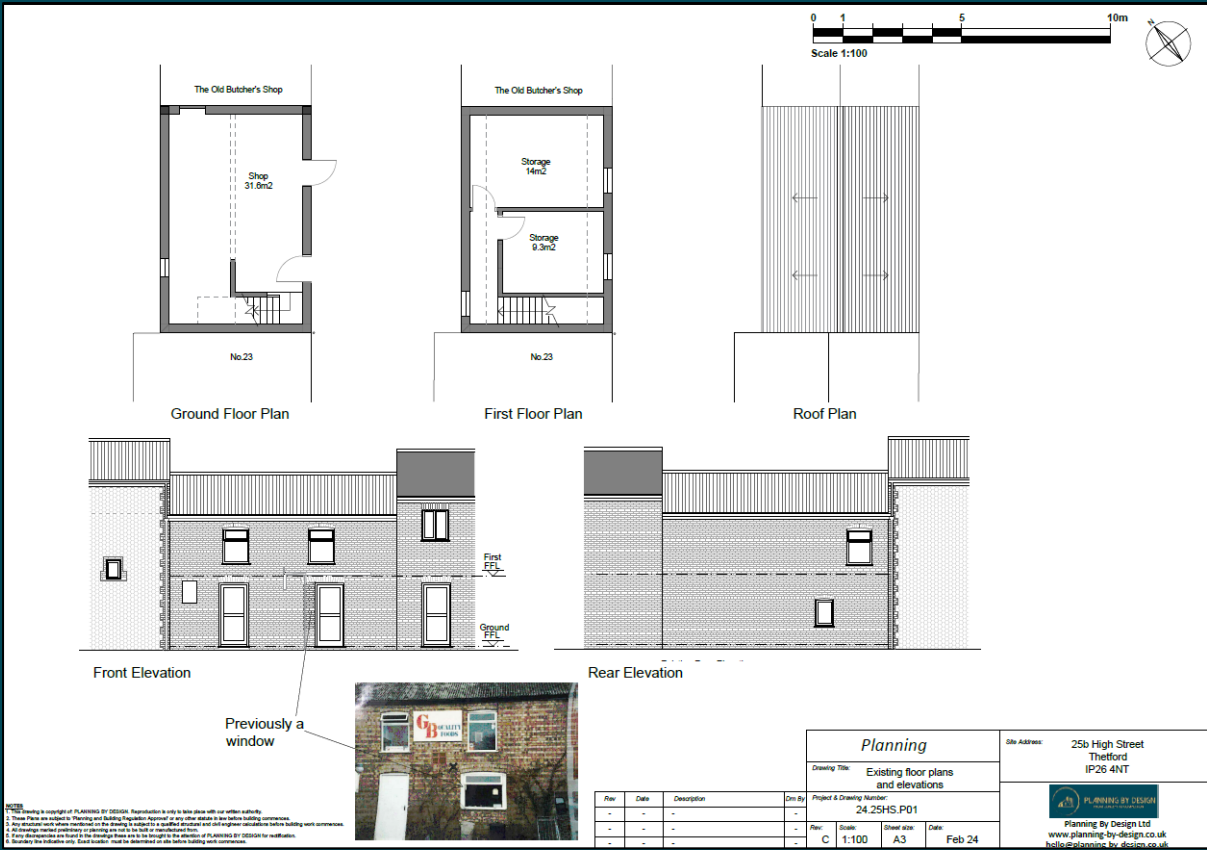


Fig.2 – Existing Floor Plans and Elevations



Fig.3- Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations

## 5. Planning Designations

The following planning policy and guidance documents are recognized as material considerations for the assessment of this application.

- NPPF 2023
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- LDF Core Strategy 2011
- Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016

The following section will evaluate the proposed development in accordance with the relevant policies and design guidance of the NPPF and the Council to demonstrate why the proposal should be considered acceptable in principle and in strict accordance with the Council's development criteria.

## 6. National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Assessment

National planning guidance, which is a material planning consideration, is largely detailed within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). For decision-making, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should look to approve sustainable development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

### Sustainable Development

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF explains that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- 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.
- 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 well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built, and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimizing waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

**Analysis:** The proposal will positively contribute to all three development objectives outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework. From a social perspective, the proposal will provide a much-needed new housing unit to the area. This will ensure that the applicants can maximise the use of the site, providing longevity to its design. From an Environmental perspective, the proposal will not have a negative impact upon nearby occupiers or erode the landscape character, or impact on any protected species or soft landscaping. Economically, the proposal will help stimulate economic activity at a local level as local fitters and suppliers will be sought following planning approval. Accommodation development not only provides an economic benefit to the applicant, but the entire local economy benefits from money spent on accommodation, the jobs this provides, and money spent on local high streets and within local businesses by the occupants.

### **Delivering Sufficient Supply of Homes**

Section 5 of the NPPF states that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for. Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travelers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, and expect it to be met on-site unless:

- a) off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and
- b) the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

Paragraph 70 of the NPPF states that small and medium sized sites can make an important

contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of Sites local planning authorities should:

- a) Identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on Sites no larger than one hectare; Unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved;
- b) Use tools such as area-wide design assessments and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized Sites forward;
- c) Support the development of windfall Sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable Sites within existing settlements for homes; and
- d) Work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large Sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes.

**Analysis:** The proposed development will assist in delivering the housing objectives set out by section 5 of the NPPF through the creation of an additional housing unit to this area and the advancement of a diverse housing mix.

### **Making Effective Use of Land**

Section 11 of the NPPF states that Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

Planning Policies and decisions should:

- a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;
- b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;
- c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;
- d) promote and support the development of under-utilized land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards,

car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure) and;

e) 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.

**Analysis:** The proposal is in line with section 11 of the NPPF as the proposal will maximize effective use of the existing property / land by converting the vacant property into no. 1 housing unit, which will provide one additional housing unit to the councils property market. Arguably, this will be a more effective and sustainable use of the land, contributing to the national and local housing targets.

### **Good Design**

Section 12 of the NPPF relates to achieving Well-designed Places which states that “The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

Furthermore, Section 12 of the NPPF also outlines that:

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 because 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.
- 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.



**Analysis:** The proposal will lead to the creation of a useful and well-designed addition to the site leading to a functional user space for the lifetime of the dwelling. There will be little to no visual impact as the proposal offers no major structural changes, or significant alteration to the external elevations of the site. The character of the proposal also offers an appropriate use class to the area.

## **7. Local Planning Policy and Assessment**

The following policies are considered relevant to the proposal:

### **LDF Core Strategy Policies 2011**

- CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy
- CS06 - Development in Rural Areas
- CS09 – Housing Distribution
- CS08 - Sustainable Development
- CS11 – Transport

### **Site Allocations And Development Management Policies Plan 2016 Policies**

- DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy DM 9 – Community Facilities
- Policy DM 15 – Environment, Design and Amenity
- Policy DM 17 – Parking Provision in New Development

### Principle of Development

This application requests the material change of use of the site to a dwelling under Use Class C3. In principle, this proposal should be supported by the Council. Residential uses are broadly supported by the local plan, provided they accord with other relevant policies in the Local Plan. The site is not located in any of the retail hierarchy centres, so its current use is not protected, Methwold is identified by Policy CS02 as both a key rural service centre and a rural village; policy CS09 AND CS06 note a requirement for new housing provision in these areas, and the proposal will add to market housing and housing mix within the locality.

The principle of the conversion adjacent to this location has received positive feedback from the local planning authority with multiple conversions to dwellings already existing locally, thereby ensuring the proposal is within the character of the area. No major external changes to the elevations of the building are proposed, and the application is simply to change the nature of use at the property to create a complete, residential house. In terms of heritage concerns, the proposal will also restore the ground floor window to the original appearance of the property, therefore enhancing the heritage asset.

Regarding policy CS09, The butcher's shop at the site has been vacant for some time, expressing an unviability or lack of interest in a commercial venture at the site. The site is also set back from the high street itself and does thus not have a presence within the street scene

as a shop. The building itself already has the appearance of a residential property (with no shopfront) and is adjacent to existing (converted) dwellings. Furthermore, there are other existing community facilities within the village within close proximity to the site, including a post office, takeaway and pub. As such, whilst the loss of commercial usage would be regrettable, the proposal offers a sustainable and valuable alternate active usage of the site, which would not have a detrimental impact on the character of, vitality, or viability of the village and can be considered in line with policy DM9.

The principle of development should therefore be considered acceptable in this instance.

### Visual Impact and Character

Only minor appropriate, restorative changes to the external elevations are proposed, as well as small, sensitive alterations to the internal layout. The change of use will not harm the visual amenity of the property or the character of the surrounding area. Therefore, policy DM15 and NPPF part 12 will be complied with.

The accompanying Heritage Statement will assess the impacts of the proposal upon heritage assets and designations related to the application site, concluding the proposal is sensitively designed and no significant harm will not be caused to the site or surrounding conservation area.

### Impact on Amenity

The proposed use of the site as a dwelling complies with local and national planning policies related to amenity. The nature of the proposal will not infringe upon surrounding uses and will provide far less foot traffic locally than the current use as a shop. The street the site is located upon is predominantly residential, therefore the proposal will be within the character of the local area.

With regards to the internal layout of this site, in relation to surrounding properties, the bedrooms do not give rise to severe overlooking due to the obscured windows. Likewise, as previously stated, the surrounding residential properties share common characteristics by virtue of the fact that they are providing living accommodation, thus the introduction of the accommodation will not change the character of the area or affect sense of place.

Regarding waste, as with any dwellinghouse, the applicant will take responsibility for sorting and recycling waste, having regard for the council's residential waste removal services.

Concerning housing quality and amenity for existing and future occupiers, the proposal will result in a suitably sized living space in line with Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards. The dwelling will also have private, appropriately sized communal living spaces for residents within the interior, and a generous kitchen and

bathroom. The bedroom contains windows, providing adequate light and ventilation for future occupiers and are of a good size as per nationally described space standards.

It can be considered that the proposal offers an acceptable level of amenity in line with policies DM15 and guidance within relevant SPDs. We of course welcome any conditions or modifications requested by the case officer to ensure the proposal can be fit for purpose and can exist in this area.

#### Highway/ Parking/ Transport Matters

Whilst parking provision is incorporated into the development and available upon the shared driveway; It is also not expected that the proposal will cause any greater harm to highways than the existing listed usage of the site.

The site is located within the village centre, policy DM17 states: *Reductions in car parking requirements may be considered for town centres, and for other urban locations where it can be shown that the location and the availability of a range of sustainable transport links is likely to lead to a reduction in car ownership and hence need for car parking provision.* This is also supported by policy CS11, which requires development proposals to consider forms of sustainable transport.

The proposal, although located within a village, is within a sustainable location, with some services and amenities locally, and is accessible to destinations such as Kings Lynn, via public transport with local bus routes available (no.88,) with onward destinations to further field available Kings Lynn. As such, highway and parking concerns are not expected to be a significant issue of this proposal, due to its sustainable location.

It is thus compliant with policy CS11 and DM17.

#### Planning Balance

Economically, the scheme supports a mix of housing locally and will economically benefit the local area, economy, and housing market.

Environmentally, the proposal will not affect the character of the surrounding area, heritage assets, or the vitality of the village, and there are only minor appropriate proposed changes to elevations of the site and no anticipated risks to public environmental health. The proposal will also not impact neighbouring amenity in a detrimental manner.

Socially, the scheme will provide a socially sustainable use by providing a new housing unit; Likewise, this proposal will stimulate a diversification of the housing mix within the area and the wider borough it is situated within.

On balance and based on current policy the harm caused would not be significant enough to warrant a refusal in this instance.

## **8. Conclusion**

Overall, the proposal presents an appropriate use, with an attractive, sensitive design that will not lead to any adverse impact on the site or surrounding area. The proposal is in line with local and national planning policy and guidance. The proposal will deliver significant social and economic benefits to the applicants, and the local community, while not resulting in any detrimental harm to the surrounding area.

We kindly request that the Council support this application. Should the Council have any further questions in relation to this proposal, do not hesitate to contact Planning by Design.