DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT incorporating Planning Statement and Heritage Statement

Erection of 21 apartments (amendment to original scheme).

Warminster Police Station
Station Road
Warminster
BA12 9BR

For Gainsborough Group Construction Ltd

1. Introduction

This is an amended submission to the original scheme that was submitted under reference PL/2023/02942.

The application has undergone extensive discussion with Wiltshire Planning Department to arrive at a scheme that is considered more appropriate for the application site.

Apex Planning Design Ltd has been instructed to submit amended drawings to the planning application, initially for the erection of 24 apartments in two 4 storey blocks and a separate two storey building at the rear of the former Police Station on Station Road in Warminster. The revised scheme is for **21 apartments in 4 blocks of varying scale and design. Design discussions have been ongoing with the Council's Urban Design Officer and it is hoped that the resultant scheme is now more acceptable in all aspects.**

The initial scheme was considered to be too overbearing on the existing properties in the vicinity as well as inconsistent with the setting of the conservation area through its design and choice of materials.

The Police Station was sold by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire in 2022. The site was put up for sale with the benefit of a pre-application response from Wiltshire Council that considered favourably a development of up to 50 flats on the site.

The site currently contains the former Police Station and offices as well as former police dwellings, that have latterly served as offices for DHSS and the Ambulance Service. These buildings form a row of two terraces along Station Road, an important group of properties within the Warminster Conservation Area. The pre-app response supported the demolition of these buildings and replacement with modern flats.

However it is the opinion of the current owner that these buildings form a valuable contribution to the estate in their own right and therefore should be retained and converted to residential use. That process has been ongoing, with 2 applications for conversion to residential on the two separate blocks. The former ambulance office has recently received prior notification approval for conversion to 4 dwellings. The Police Station also received similar approval.

This application therefore does not concern the existing buildings on the site, other than the former clubhouse, but only the yard to the rear.

Pre-application enquiry response

A pre-application enquiry was undertaken on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire for 50 flats. The response was generally favourable. The scheme included the demolition of the existing Police Station and adjacent buildings to make way for the new build scheme. It should be highlighted that the current proposal seeks to retain those buildings, in line with comments received from conservation at the pre-application stage.

Conservation comments:

Whilst the police houses are unlisted I consider them to be undesignated heritage assets which are an important element of a designated heritage asset (the conservation area). They were built probably in the 1930s (British History online says 1932) and are of an attractive appearance utilising good quality materials (an attractive brick, portland stone detailing, local stone front wall with attractive metal railings, good eaves detailing, quoining, stone porches, articulation of the street facing elevation etc). I consider that they make a strong positive contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area. Indeed, the adopted Warminster Conservation Area appraisal identifies the terrace as of 'local interest':

[Buildings of this character and nature should be retained and 'converted' to residential (they are already set up as residential units so this should involve limited work). Given their embodied energy, and the limited works likely to be required to rehabiliate them for residential, it cannot be sustainable to demolish them and replace them with something new (setting aside the loss of a heritage asset issue).]

We agree with the Conservation Team that these buildings provide a fine introduction to the eastern side of the conservation area. For this reason they are not part of this application for redevelopment. Two separate applications have been submitted to change these offices to residential use. The 4 units to the northeast of the site have been given approval for this conversion and works are underway to make these readily available to local tenants. The development of 8 flats at the Police Station itself is also underway.

Urban Design Officer comments:

Supports the idea of conversion over replacement.

Additionally the UDO asks for consideration of pedestrian connections through the site. As the Station Road buildings will now be retained this severely restricts the opportunities for pedestrian access along this frontage, due to the necessity to retain some occupant privacy. The two blocks are close together. Any public pedestrian access to the south of the row would impact on privacy for the residents at that end of the development.

Additionally the UDO asks that the solid vertical boundary wall along the street be retained. This is the intention as much as possible. Where it cannot be achieved the enclosure created by the wall will be supplanted by the two blocks of flats themselves.

It was suggested that private gardens would be useful. It is intended that private gardens will be provided for the former police station buildings where possible.

Adequately sized cycle and bin stores should be provided on the site. We are currently investigating options for secure cycle parking provision including cycle hangars and dedicated storage areas within the flats for those who consider their cycle too valuable to leave in public parking.

Highways

The original scheme developed by the Police's agent proposed 50 new build flats with 86 bedspaces. 30 parking spaces were proposed and this was accepted by the highway department as adequate in the circumstances:

[The proposal] *would result in a total of 30 car parking spaces being proposed for a 50-unit development, which is far below the normal minimum car parking standard. However, the officer does note that the site is located in area where access to facilities, services and employment opportunities is extensive. Furthermore, the opportunities for the use of public transport are good and whilst he would prefer to see at least 1 car parking space provided for each unit, he would accept a minimum of 30 spaces for these proposals in this instance.*

This equates to 35% of bedspace provision and 60% of provision per unit.

The current scheme proposes 21 flats, and 20 parking spaces. This is almost 100% provision of parking spaces per unit, comfortably within the minimum considered appropriate at the pre-app stage.

2. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is framed as a positive, responsive and enabling document, seeking to facilitate sustainable development and growth, supporting and securing, rather than impeding, sustainable economic growth and ensuring the planning system operates to this end; indeed, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. Applications for sustainable development should be approved wherever possible, consistent with an overarching approach that demands 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It advocates a proactive, creative and solution-seeking approach to planning.

This proposal optimises the development potential of the site, whilst taking into account the density of the site surrounds and will provide a well-designed scheme that sits comfortably within the plot and will be in keeping with the appearance and massing of surrounding buildings and as such, is considered to be consistent with National Planning Policy.

Warminster Neighbourhood Plan

Section 7.0 of the WNP is concerned with the town centre and the fundamental question of what is the future of the large car park open space and adjacent areas. One of the sites mentioned in the Section 7.0 is the old police station and yard, the subject of this planning application.

POLICY TC1 – TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The regeneration of the town centre, including the area of the Central Car Park and the site of the old police houses along with their service yard, will be supported.

Justification:
Wiltshire Council initiative
Revitalisation of town centre
Aids economic regeneration of surrounding area
Makes best use of central site in support of an expanded population.

Policy TC1 is concerned with the regeneration of the town centre, including the old police houses and service yard, which will be supported. Central to the ambitions that the neighbourhood plan has for the area is the revitalisation of the town centre, aiding economic regeneration of the surrounding area and making best use of the central site in support of an expanded population. The town centre should retain its position as the retail hub of the town and be enhanced so as to provide a range of facilities that draw a wide demographic into the town centre.

This proposal should be considered in accordance with the WNP and its ambitions for the town centre of Warminster. The applicant has already taken the step of retaining the existing police houses and police station with the intention of providing quality local housing for local people. This alone will provide more footfall for retail units and facilities in the town centre. The additional flats proposed in this application will further enhance the viability of the local area. The applicant feels this approach provides the town with the best of both worlds by combining the benefit of regeneration of an area of local historic interest with the need to tackle the national housing shortage.

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Of particular relevance to this application are the following local policies;

CP1: Settlement Strategy identifies the settlements where sustainable development will take place. The proposal sits within the centre of Warminster, within the development boundary and on a brownfield site. It is therefore considered to be in accordance with this policy.

CP2: Delivery Strategy outlines how development within the life of the pan will be spread throughout the sustainable settlements. Again, considering the location and nature of the site it is considered that this proposal is policy compliant with regard to CP2.

CP31 Spatial Strategy for the Warminster Community Area requires commitment to developer contributions for local community facilities such as fire and ambulance services, schools and the wider environment.

CP41: Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy. As per latest building regulations requirements the development will be constructed using sustainable techniques and materials, which can be first referenced in the retention of the existing police housing buildings, thus negating the loss of captured energy from their construction.

CP50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity; Due to the brownfield nature of the site there is very little by way of geo- and bio-diversity. However this does not mean that the situation cannot be improved and effort will be made to do so.

CP51: Landscape; Efforts will be made to negate any negative impacts on areas covered by this policy.

CP57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping requires a dialogue with the local context in order to ensure that development will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire. This is covered in more detail in the relevant section further on in this document.

CP58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment; '*Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and*

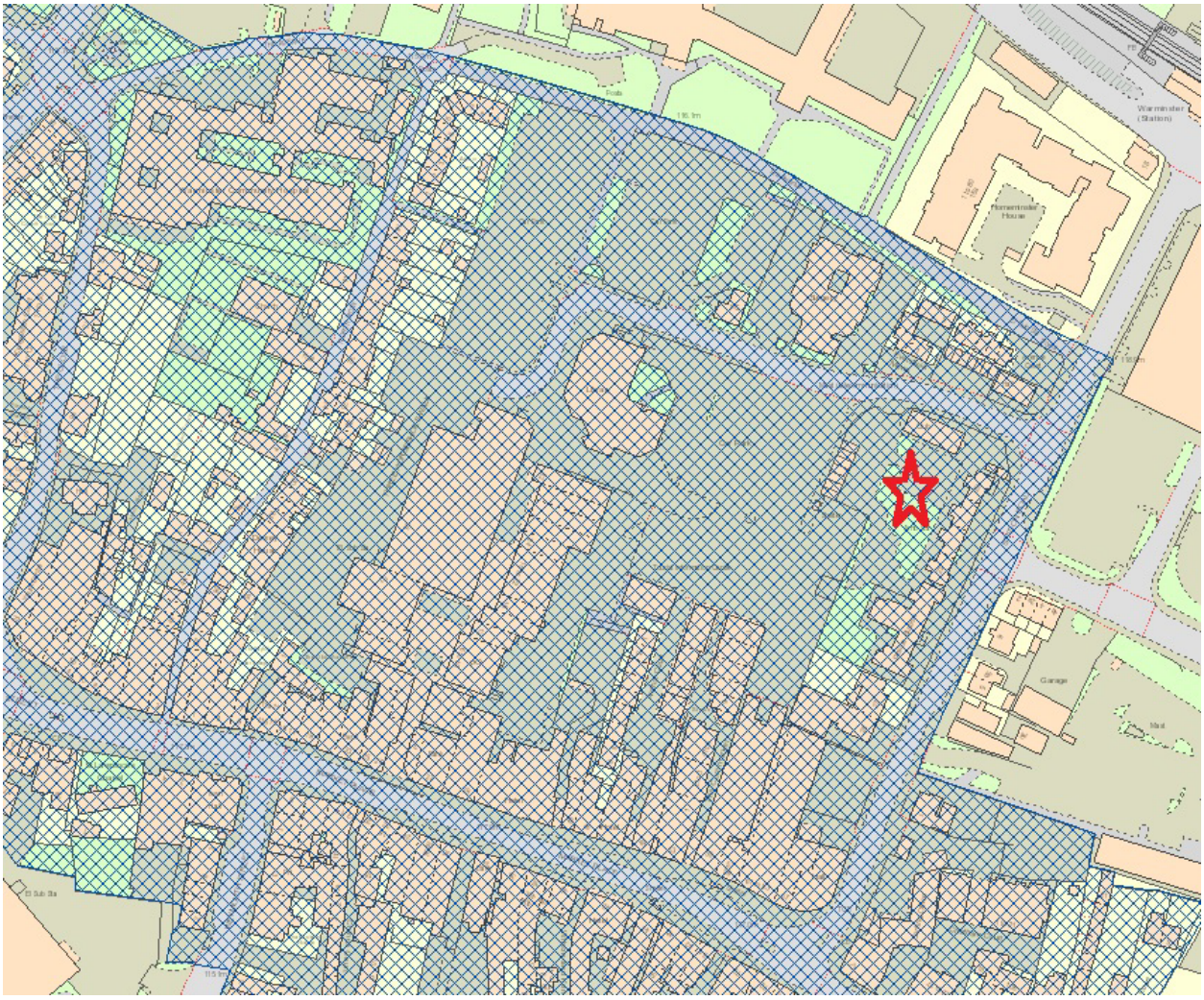
identity will be conserved and where possible enhanced'. Unlike the original pre-app, this proposal seeks to work with the existing police house and station to retain this excellent set of buildings for the future.

CP60: Sustainable Transport. The site is located in close proximity to local facilities and the Warminster railway station, providing public transport opportunities practically from the doorstep. In addition the provision of cycle storage both within and outside the flats will offer a range of options for those who prefer to get about under their own power.

Wiltshire Design Guide has been adopted during the life of this application and whilst the LPA has undertaken extensive liaison on the proposal. IT is consider that the proposed scheme meets the aims and aspirations of the design guide in bringing higher quality development to Wiltshire's towns and villages.

3. Heritage Statement

The former police station yard is situated on the edge of the Warminster Conservation Area.



The conservation area covers the historic town core, including the area that was typified by burgage plots, as discussed in the Archaeological Desktop Appraisal that accompanied the initial application.



Currently the eastern end of the conservation area is characterised to the south by the eastern end of Market Place with its listed buildings with retail units on the ground floor.



The north east area has been taken over by modern residential development in the form of a terrace of five dwellings from the early 90s, 5 townhouses and the doctors surgery, all in local brick.



In between these two areas sits the former police station. The existing station building and police houses form a fine and important element of the conservation area. Applications are progressing for the retention of these buildings in residential use, so conserving the view of the entrance to the conservation area from this direction.



Behind the station yard, which appears to respect the burgage boundaries in this area, one is faced with a large area of open tarmac in the form of the central town car park. Surrounding the car park are various communal facilities such as retail units and the library. These structures are typically hip roofed brick

buildings of a modern utilitarian nature. It is considered that this area provides little of value to the setting of the heritage asset.



From the car park looking east the existing police station buildings provide a definitive bookend to the conservation area and provide a feeling of enclosure for the open space. Views toward this area, whilst being of the less formal and more private rear of the buildings, are perhaps some of the most favourable in this sector of the conservation area.

This view will be largely retained from the southern area of the car park open space. Most of the proposed development will be generated at the northern end of the site and will have less impact on the setting of the conservation area as a result, being further from the historic central core of the town and respecting the last of the existing burgage boundaries found in this area.

The demolition of the poor quality clubhouse for the police station and the garages within the service yard, plus the retention of the existing police houses and station and the erection of new contemporary interpretations of the existing large brick buildings that can be found in this area of the conservation area, to the rear of Market Place, all contributes to an enhancement in the setting of the heritage asset.

A four storey scheme was acceptable at the pre application stage and it is considered that the design that has been brought forward accords with requirements to align with local tradition whilst still providing a high quality modern interpretation of local vernacular.

Retention of the existing station houses and the erection of the proposed flats will screen the interior of the conservation area from the large commercial expanse that sits immediately adjacent to it on the eastern side.

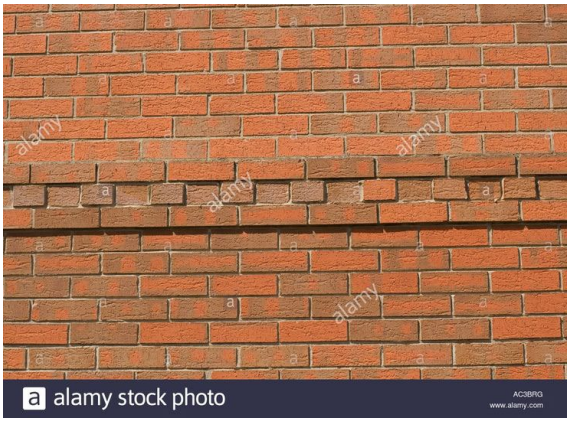
4. Layout, Scale & Appearance

Two separate blocks of apartments will flank the existing entrance to the Old Police Station yard, where a central common area will provide parking and turning space as well as the introduction of a further block of three flats which has been designed so as to provide space for parking on the ground floor through car ports with accommodation above. The dwellings themselves have been designed so as to respect the amenity of the occupants of the existing houses on Station Road to mitigate any overlooking. A further block of two apartments sits at the southern extent of the site.

A total of 21 flats will provide a mixture of 1 and 2 bed properties that will provide modest urban homes for individuals and young families alike. The large proportion of bedsits and subdivided properties within easy reach of the town centre highlights the need for modest accommodation in this area and this proposal answers a clear need.

The interiors of the flats have been designed to provide the most efficient use of space with open plan living/dining/kitchens, large bedrooms, en-suites where possible and family bathrooms. Also there are a number of flats with study facilities that are a core requirement in the modern age of working from home. These rooms can also provide storage facilities for cycles for those who do not wish to rely on the shared facilities outside.

Blocks A & B Design Features

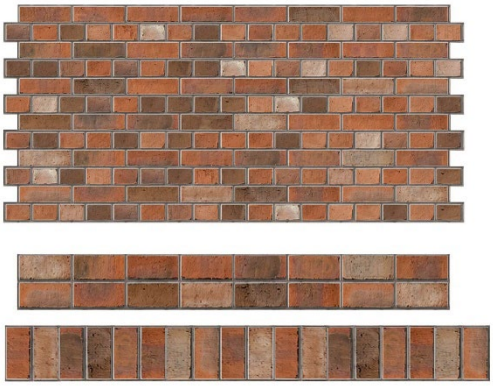


Both blocks feature raised band courses at first floor and second floor levels



with a ‘dog tooth’ brick detailing design at eaves level and to feature gables.

Splayed soldier course design over window openings with reconstructed stone cills to reflect the detailing on Station road, together with a brick plinth around the perimeter of the building.



Feature brick panelling details in ‘English bond’ to the staircase tower will provide interest and give the building character and reflect the heritage of the area.

Block A sits on the northern boundary of the site along the approach road to the central Warminster car park. It is proposed that this block will house 9 apartments, a mix of 1 and 2 beds. The main section of block A contains three storeys, providing 2 flats per main storey, with the attic room in the roof. Two further flats are provided within the subservient extension which has its own entrance door. This section abuts onto Station Road, thus respecting the height of the existing former police houses adjacent.

Exterior

The flats are accessed from the central courtyard area within the site through a central staircase for the taller section of the building. External walls will be constructed of local brick with brick detailing including a raised brick band detail at eaves and mid height, headers and stretcher design in red engineering brick with a brick plinth. The principal elevation, to the north facing onto the car park approach road will feature further brick detailing up the central column that accommodates the staircase and lobby areas. Second floor flats will benefit from French doors with a black metal railed balcony, whilst the north west elevation overlooking the access to the site will feature balconies on both first and second floors.

The roof is proposed as red pantiles with artificial slate to the subservient roof. The attic flat will be served with dormers with lead/zinc finish and velux windows.

Interior

The majority of flats in Block A provide a dual-aspect open plan kitchen/diner/living room with a bedroom, bathroom and where possible a second bedroom/office. Ground and first floor flats have a dedicated cycle storage are which can adequately accommodate 2 cycles. Further cycle storage is provided within the ground floor of Block B and to the rear of Block C. Primary room windows have been faced outward from the site, with secondary room windows facing into the courtyard, so as to protect privacy as much as possible.

Block B sits on the western boundary of the site facing into the public car park. It is proposed that this block will contain 7 flats, a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom properties with a bin and cycle store on the ground floor. As with Block A the building will be formed of a three storey main section with an apartment in the roof plus a lower two storey section that will house the bin/cycle store and two apartments.

Exterior

As with Block A the flats in Block B are accessed from the central courtyard area within the site through a central staircase for the taller section of the building. External walls will be constructed of local brick with brick detailing including a raised brick band detail at eaves and between floors, headers and stretcher design in red engineering brick with a brick plinth. The principal elevation, to the west facing onto the car park will feature further brick detailing up the central column that accommodates the staircase and lobby areas. First and second floor flats will benefit from French doors with a black metal railed balcony, whilst the north east elevation overlooking the access to the site will feature balconies on all floors above ground floor. Apartment 4 on the first floor above apartment 2 and the cycle/bin store features a long balcony which will provide generous external space for a flat.

The roof is proposed as red pantiles with artificial slate to the subservient roof. The attic flat will be served with dormers with lead/zinc finish and velux windows.

Interior

The majority of flats in Block B provide a dual-aspect open plan kitchen/diner/living room with a bedroom, bathroom and where possible a second bedroom/office. Ground and first floor flats have a dedicated cycle storage are which can adequately accommodate 2 cycles. Here, as with Block A, windows for primary rooms face outward and secondary windows face inward to reduce overlooking issues.

Block C will provide three 1 bedroom apartments above 9 parking spaces and room for cycle storage, with a dedicated secure cycle store to the rear.

Exterior

Block C consists of 3 single storey flats above parking with stairs at the rear (east elevation). The east elevation is comprised largely of a sloping roof to accommodate the staircases and entranceways, with only velux windows in the roof to ensure privacy is maintained toward the houses adjacent. The west elevation will give the impression of a coach house and provide windows and juliette balconies to the living accommodation.

External materials for Block C include timber weatherboarding to emphasise the subservient nature of the block in comparison to those around, with brick wall and plinths with timber posts and brick plinth supports to carport entrances. The roof is proposed as red pantiles.

Interior

The living accommodation will be provide in the form of three 1 bedroom apartments with a fairly efficient layout making the most of the available space.

Block D will provide two 2 bedroom flats, one above the other.

Exterior

Block D consists of 2 single storey flats providing 2 bedrooms each with dormer windows at first floor level to reduce the height of the overall building and reduce impact on the surrounding buildings. Window and door detail will consist of reconstructed stone heads and cills with matching jambs to the front elevation.

Also the building will give the impression of a single property with the second entrance to the first floor apartment positioned on the side.

External materials consist of stone coloured render with artificial slate to the roof, with a brick plinth to tie the building into the scheme's detailing philosophy.

Interior

The living accommodation will be provided in the form of two 2 bedroom apartments with a fairly efficient layout making the most of the available space.

5. Access

Highway access to the site is proposed to continue from the existing access. This will be designed as a pedestrian crossover rather than a bellmouth as per the comments provided by highways on the pre-app for 50 apartments.

Due to the reduction in housing numbers from that proposed in the original pre-app enquiry for the site it is considered that the existing access will be appropriate for the level of traffic that will be created by this development.

Visibility can be achieved to the right whilst exiting at the required level of 43m for a 30mph zone. To the left visibility can be achieved to the exit road from the car park and other units at the same level. It should be noted that the car park operates a one way system, so that there should be no traffic exiting the car park from the immediate left of the existing access, negating a need for visibility to cover this area to the normal required 43m.

Parking is provided for 20 vehicles. This provides a near 100% of parking space per apartment and surpasses the accepted minimum standard from the advice given at the original pre-app enquiry of 60% provision. All spaces are the standard size of 2.4m x 4.8m and turning can be achieved from all spaces to allow vehicles to access and exit the site and the immediate proximity of the space in forward gear.

Swept path analysis for refuse vehicles shows that the layout is acceptable as the turning head has not changed from the previous iteration of the scheme.

Cycle parking at a rate of 1 per bed space has been provided within the site. Considering that 20% of spend on cycles is for e-bikes, which retail for in excess of £3000 it is considered that in-home storage options will prove popular and will dovetail with ground floor secure parking proposals to cover more of the cycling demographic. Where cycle provision within the flats is provided it is dedicated cycle space, as can be seen on the plans and not just utilisation of existing circulation space, or use of second bedroom/home officer for cycle storage.

6. Landscaping

The current site is made over to hardstanding and a small area of grass. It is proposed to enhance the biodiversity of the area surrounding the hard landscaping and the proposed as best we can.

Space is limited due to parking and turning requirements, however these have been kept to a minimum and should allow for more soft landscaping to be provided on site.

7. Conclusion

It is considered that this amended proposal improves considerably on the initial scheme in terms of its relevance to the site in question and its scale and design within the local context. It provides an excellent opportunity to provide a number of modest homes on a brownfield site at the centre of the town within easy walking distance to local facilities and public transport in a sustainable location to the enhancement of the local conservation area and retention of historic buildings, namely the police houses.

Affordable housing provision will be made in accordance with local policy to be discussed with the LPA.

This scheme will provide a quality modern housing development that will fit well within the existing context and provide a timely adjunct to local housing provision and the town centre built environment as the dialogue over the future of this area of Warminster enters a new phase.