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FAO: Debra Inston
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RG14 5LD

5 December 2023

Dear Debra

Planning Application: Eagle Quarter II, Kennet Centre, The Mall, The Kennet Centre, Newbury, RG14 5EN

Planning Reference: 23/02094/FULMAJ

I write in response to the letter from Historic England dated 27th October 2023.

In brief, Historic England are concerned that the proposed redevelopment of the Kennet Centre would be out of scale with the historic town centre and adversely affect two views (namely the distant views 1 (Clock Tower) and 8 (the wharf). However, it is made clear in the letter that this *'harm could be meaningfully reduced by relatively minor improvements to the facades of the elements of the scheme which interface most closely with the historic townscape'*.

Responses to this letter have been prepared by the scheme architects, Prof Robert Adam and Roy Collado of Collado Collins, as well as that of our Heritage Advisor, Tim Miles of Montagu Evans and are attached to this letter.

In addition, following your workshop with Prof. Robert Adam, we are submitting, alongside this letter, amended plans that incorporate the agreed revisions to the elevations that front onto Market Place and Bartholomew Street, specifically in response to Historic England's comments. These changes (and generally commentary) are as follows:

1. General

- Sections have been prepared showing typical window reveals for the brick and rendered buildings. The reveals are deeper and will add more depth and interest to the elevations.

2. Block C

- The balconies to the central windows on the second and third floors have been removed and the archway has been lowered on the **left hand building**.
- The widths of the pillars at the base have also been widened to provide a sturdier base. Agreed that the rustication helps to reduce the height of the building.
- In respect of the **right hand building**, it was agreed that the windows set above the projecting string course (rather than a soldier course) helps to add visual interest to the building by breaking up the brickwork and helping to define levels.

3. Block E

- Agreed no changes required but would provide window detailing (see point 1 above).

4. Block F

- The **central hipped roof building** now comprises the same brick rather than a different brick on the second floor.
- The recessed canted porch with offset door has been removed and replaced with a central doorway and sidelights that are both set back slightly from the front elevation producing a more balanced elevation.
- A brick corbeled eaves has been introduced to accentuate the eaves and add interest to the elevation.
- A deeper string course has been provided up to the sill of the oriel.

5. Block G

- Agreed no changes required.

6. Block H

- The balconies have been removed and the second floor windows have been reduced in size so that they better reflect the traditional hierarchy of the openings in the town centre.
- A larger eagle sculpture is proposed.

As we discussed, these amendments address the comments made by Historic England and as their letter points out, should be sufficient to '*significantly reduce the harm*' alleged.

I would be grateful if you could share this information with Historic England and I look forward to confirmation that they have reassessed their position in respect of this application positively.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Ballantyne-Way
Planning Director

Enc: Robert Adam response
Roy Collado response
Tim Miles response

**RESPONSE TO HISTORIC ENGLAND'S COMMENTS ON THE MALL, THE KENNET CENTRE, NEWBURY, RG14
5EN, Application No. 23/02094/FULMAJ**

PROFESSOR ROBERT ADAM PhD, NOVEMBER 3RD 2023

1.00 CONTEXT OF RESPONSE

1.01 Historic England's comments refer to both the higher central buildings and the Market Street elevations, which, although I am thoroughly in support of them and have designed in conjunction with the architects, Collado Collins, are not my design and I will not address any comments with regard to them.

1.02 While the Historic England consultation comes under this organisation's banner, it is very clear that the comments are of a quite personal nature by the officer concerned. Comments such as:

- 'begins to look absurd';
- 'look very odd';
- 'look peculiar';
- 'Newbury deserves better'
- and above all, 'unlikely to become a cherished part of the townscape' (I will comment on this last point in 3.05 below)

are all of a very personal nature and do not fall into the canon of objective design comment. The status of the comments must, therefore, be seen in the context of the commentator. I will make no observations on the qualifications and experience of the officer but it will be germane, however, to see both the design and the comments below in the context of my own experience and qualifications. Lest it be considered that this is only in defence of a design where I have been constrained by commercial or other factors, I must record that I was given complete freedom by the developers.

2.00 EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF ROBERT ADAM

2.01 I am a director of Robert Adam Architectural Consultancy. Until 2019 I was a director of ADAM Architecture and ADAM Urbanism with offices in Winchester and London. I had been in practice with this firm and its predecessors in name since 1978, it was and remains the largest firm in Europe specialising in traditional design.

2.02 My work is recognised in the field of traditional design. I have designed a significant number of houses, housing schemes, commercial buildings and urban extensions. I have won 24 awards. I have published numerous articles and papers and four books on architectural, urban design and conservation theory and history including a textbook on classical architecture: *Classical Architecture: a complete handbook*, that is today the standard textbook on that subject.

2.03 I am a member of the RIBA. I have served two terms as an elected councillor in 1999 to 2002 and was honorary secretary from 2001 to 2003. I have also served on various other committee roles. I am an Honorary Fellow of The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. I am a senior fellow of the Prince's Foundation for Building Community.

2.04 I founded the International Network for Building Architecture and Urbanism (INTBAU) in 2001. I founded the RIBA Traditional Architecture Group in 2002.

2.05 I teach in summer schools on architecture and urbanism in the Netherlands and Belgium. I established an architectural summer school in Sweden from 2016 to 2019. I have set up a part-time course, the 'Classical Design Workshop', from 2022 and have set up a summer school on Composition and Symbolism in Classical Architecture at the University of Oxford.

2.06 I have been an RIBA Awards Assessor at various times for eleven years. I am an Arts Council CABE

'Design Council Expert'. I served on CABE design review from 1999-2004. I was on the London Advisory Committee of English Heritage from 1996-2001. I currently sit on two design review panels: South Downs National Park and Test Valley Borough Council.

- 2.07 I am a visiting Professor of Urban Design at the University of Strathclyde. I received a PhD for studies of modern architectural history from Oxford Brookes University in 2021.
- 2.08 In 2019 I was on the panel that drafted of the National Design Guide. In 2020 I was on the consultative panel for the drafting of the Secretary of State's National Model Design Code. I am currently on the interim board of the Office for Place, an Arm's Length Board under DLUHC.

3.00 COMMENTS IN LETTER OF OCTOBER 27TH 2023

17-19 MARKET PLACE

- 3.01.1 *"The one part of the site which is worthy of note is 17-19 Market Place. This dates from the late 20th century but replicates the appearance of the 18th century building that previously stood on this site. It is a handsome Georgian style building with a pilastered front that relates very well to the older buildings around it. For these reasons it should be judged as making a positive contribution to the conservation area."*
- 3.01.2 This is a three-storey seven bay building with heavily attenuated Tuscan or Doric columns on the first and second floors and a heavy five bay Tuscan or Doric ground floor. The upper floors have large six-by-three vertical sliding sash windows. The ground floor shops are set behind the square columns and do not relate to the setting out of the columns. One bay comes forward to the face of the building with a quite different entrance treatment.
- 3.01.3 While there are many examples of classical buildings, Georgian or otherwise, with unconventional proportions, there is a distinction between these being used literally or without an understanding of some of the key design conventions of classical design.
- 3.01.4 The ground floor is relatively straightforward with squat Tuscan or Doric columns and full entablature, the latter appearing to support the walls above, but with four bays above supported on two bays below.
- 3.01.5 The first floor has exceptionally slender Tuscan or Doric columns with conventional bases and capitals. The entablature above is also heavily reduced in depth. This is not unknown but there are certain conventions when this is done, generally the architrave and cornice remain complete but the frieze is omitted. In this case it seems as if the entire entablature has been compressed and the cornice mouldings do not follow conventional proportions.
- 3.01.6 All of these details might be found in a not-entirely-literate artisan-designed provincial Georgian or Victorian building but these would not really be described as 'handsome'. What is more significant are the aspects of the building that show ill-considered design and a level of illiteracy usually avoided by even artisan designers relying on contemporary pattern books.
- 3.01.7 In architecture of any period, one of the signs of a good design is that the plans and elevations relate to one another positively and the elevations are not just casually applied to a plan without consideration of how they correspond. In this building there are extensive floors cutting across windows. While this does occur historically, it is relatively rare and largely for particular features such as stairs.
- 3.01.8 The application of pilasters and a projecting cornice creates a problem when the corner of the façade is adjacent to a party boundary. As pilasters represent notional or symbolic structure, they are often taken up to the outer corner. One of the most important conventions of the relationship between the column and the entablature is that the line of the latter follows the line of the column shaft behind.

When this is not done, it is one of the key indicators of a misunderstanding of classical conventions.

3.01.9 In order to solve the problem of a projecting cornice at the corner, the convention is to angle (usually with a cyma profile) the whole entablature back from the corner and return the cornice back to the outer corner of the building.

3.01.10 To summarise, this is not an entirely inappropriate building for this location but it is not a fully literate classical design and could not be described as a good or handsome design. As a not-entirely-literate modern classical design it could be said to have a harmless and neutral contribution to the Conservation Area, this does not mean that this could not be improved by a better and more literate classical design. I will comment on the replacement building in 4.06.1 below.

3.02 ISSUES OF DESIGN

DESIGN APPROACH

3.02.2 *"The design approach adopted takes features from historic building plays with them: for instance, elements are enlarged or greatly simplified. While this approach can be playful it unless done with the utmost sensitivity these paraphrases of historic buildings can become parodies, which erode the significance of the real thing."*

3.02.3 This comment assumes a design approach without any reference to the stated design intention. To invent design objectives and then criticise a project on the basis that these have not been achieved is not a valid critical framework. All design should be judged on the intention and how successfully this has been addressed.

3.02.4 In the Design and Access Statement, Architectural Approach, Street Facades, 6.5.4, the design approach is described: *"Each building is designed as a complete structure rather than just a façade and the window patterns relate directly to the uses behind. Each building is also designed individually, with character and detail taken from, rather than directly copying, buildings in the historic centre and each related to its immediate context and restoring the rhythm of the street."*

3.02.5 Additionally, the Design and Access Statement, Existing Detail Analysis, 2.14.18, the design approach to detail is described: *"It is not the intention to produce exact copies of these [historic architectural] details. The proposed design will use similar principles of wall to window ratios, window proportions, depth of reveals and cills and so on to ensure that the proposals harmonise with the existing town centre buildings."*

3.02.6 There is no suggestion that these design objectives are *per se* wrong and is no intention and there is no evidence that the design "takes features from historic building plays with them". The intention is to design new traditional buildings, "with character and detail taken from, rather than directly copying, buildings in the historic centre", not imitations, enlargement or simplification of features. The design needs to be assessed in these terms.

3.02.7 These designs are, therefore, not 'paraphrases of historic buildings' but modern classical or traditional buildings that take the genre into the 21st century. They cannot, therefore, be judged as 'parodies' and are in themselves, 'the real thing'. Indeed, this idea that there is a 'real thing' of an historic nature and that modern designs in the same genre will 'erode the significance' of these buildings is a statement that the new buildings are not 'real' and so are false or 'parodies', is a particular theoretical stance, not any part of the design intention, an implied denigration, and not a judgement on quality.

THE ARCH ON BLOCK C

3.03.2 *"the rusticated archway in Block C. A feature found in many old buildings has been enlarged to a point far beyond any historic precedent and begins to look absurd. The span of the arch is such that it is obviously a piece of scenery, reliant on steel and concrete for support. This approach gives the facades*

the air of a stage set rather than real buildings that erodes the significance of the real historic buildings around them, thus causing harm."

- 3.03.3 The claim that the large arch, which acts as an important vehicular entrance, is 'far beyond any historic precedent' and it is this that would make it 'look absurd', is simply factually incorrect. See Appendix I.
- 3.03.4 Examples include the Clock Warehouse in Nottingham and, when fire stations were built for large fire tenders in the late nineteenth century, large arches were often included in the traditional Arts and Crafts manner.
- 3.03.5 The use of steel for the support of traditional designs has a well-established precedent. This does not give the historic buildings so constructed, 'the air of a stage set rather than real buildings'. Appendix II shows the construction of 55 Broadway, at the time London's tallest building. The traditional façade could not have been supported without its steel frame. This does not make it 'obviously a piece of scenery'.
- 3.03.6 Once again, there is a reference to 'real buildings', implying that these buildings are, in some historic sense, not 'real'. This is logically fallacious but also reveals a particular theoretical stance as noted above in 3.02.07.

DETAILS

- 3.04.2 *"The exemplar design details supplied by Adam Architecture are excellent examples of classical detailing but do not address the principal issue, which is the way elements, such as doorways, cornices and windows are handled rather than the precise moulding profile selected (though this too will be important)."*
- 3.04.3 It is clear from the 1:5 details that what is shown is more than precise moulding profiles but include precisely 'the way elements are handled'. For example, the details of 139-144 Bartholmew Street shows not only profiles but the detailed treatment of the arches and oriel windows.
- 3.04.4 These are not details from the firm, ADAM Architecture, but from Robert Adam Architectural Consultancy, this being the independent firm of the founder of ADAM Architecture and is not the output of one part of a firm but of Robert Adam as the sole proprietor.

FUTURE APPRECIATION

- 3.05.2 *"If built these frontages are unlikely to become a cherished part of the townscape."*
- 3.05.3 This is a criticism based on the commentator's prediction of the how future people will regard this design. In the first place, we have no idea how people will think of this in the future and, indeed, which future – ten years, a century? In the second place, this is far from any objective assessment of a design and is simply a gratuitous insult. A consent or otherwise can only be on the current view of the design.

4.00 DETAILED COMMENTS ON DESIGN

- 4.01 Much of this comment is simply a matter of taste and I cannot comment on quite unprofessional epithets such as, 'absurd', 'look very odd', or 'not so successful'. There is no objective basis for any of these and it is just as legitimate for another observer to find the relevant designs as, consecutively, 'appropriate', 'attractive' or 'successful'.

BLOCK C

- 4.02.2 Block C south building. This has been addressed in 3.03.1.
- 4.023 Block C centre building. This comment seems to be based on a comparison with one type, a London town house with a mansard and its diversion from that type is seen as a basis for criticism. In the first place, it is not and was never intended to be London town house. In the second place, the full height

related to the south building, which in turn relates to the existing buildings to its south. If precedent were to be the only basis for assessment, which it seems to be, there are many classical town houses of five stories and many with off-centre oriels or other features.

- 4.02.4 Block C north building. I note that there is a question that the detail might not be of a high quality but these are shown on the 1:5 drawings of which the comment is made in the letter of October 27th, "The exemplar design details are excellent examples of classical detailing". The windows on the first floor do not, as asserted, sit under a soldier course but a projecting string course, which is quite another thing. The ground floor windows sit within an arch, within which there is a soldier course, which is again another thing.

BLOCK E

- 4.03.2 There is nothing that can be said to an entirely subjective critique of composition. 'Look very odd', 'look peculiar', are entirely a matter of personal opinion and have no substantive content. Obviously, I cannot agree with them as the compositions have been carefully considered.
- 4.03.3 It is worth noting that the only positive comment on this block, the northern building, is more clearly derived from precedent than the other buildings. In the letter of October 27th, the comment was made, "these paraphrases of historic buildings can become parodies, which erode the significance of the real thing." According to this principle, as a 'paraphrase' (which it was never intended to be), that is a version of an historic building, it would erode the significance of the existing buildings. Clearly, however, it is simply more to the taste of the officer.

BLOCK F

- 4.04.2 Notwithstanding the conditional praise for the north and south buildings in this block, there is nothing that can be said to the subjective points, 'looks muddled' or 'confusing rather than harmonious'. This building was a carefully considered composition.

BLOCK G

- 4.05.2 The comments on the 'triumphal arch' ignore the logic behind it, to terminate the street view down Bear Lane, thereby mitigating a long view of the higher buildings behind.

BLOCK H

- 4.06.1 *"the design of the replacement building now proposed features a high central entrance looks awkward, as if it has been driven through an existing shopfront. Furthermore, the overly large windows on the upper storeys and the crude shopfront detailing are still a step backwards when compared to the existing building."*
- 4.06.1 I have commented on the, at best, average and illiterate existing building in 3.01 above.
- 4.06.2 The comment ignores the fact that this building is a key part of the street pattern of the scheme and enhances the permeability of the entire development. On this basis it will have a pedestrian entry point. It can only be said to look, 'as if it has been driven through an existing shopfront', if it is considered as an entirely different building, with a continuous shop front, which is not what is proposed. Indeed the entrance is an important part of the design of the building, emphasised by a segmental pediment capped with relevant public artwork (more on this below). Whether this is seen as 'awkward' is entirely a matter of personal opinion and seems to be based on the principle that it should be an entirely different building.
- 4.06.3 I do not know on what basis the comment that the windows are 'overly large' is based. They are of a similar width and pattern to 16-18 Market Place, opposite. Rather smaller and narrower than the first floor oriels on 32 Market Place and smaller than the ground floor windows of the White Hart Inn.
- 4.06.4 I am surprised by the assertion that the shop front details are crude. The fascia and its brackets (the only fixed aspect of the shop fronts, the window arrangement will be for any tenants) is entirely in a traditional manner as shown on the 1:5 details. Indeed, it is more detailed and more traditional than

many in the Market Place and more suited to shop facias than the existing building, where the inappropriateness of a full entablature is made evident by the clumsy imposition of a fascia and canopy in the south restaurant entrance.

- 4.06.5 It is disappointing that an apparent enthusiasm for the questionable qualities of the existing building have led, not only to incorrect or ill-observed criticism, but also ignore the benefits of the permeability of the new street complex to the Market Place and, in particular, the inclusion of public art with an identifiable relationship with the history of the site (an eagle for the old Eagle Works) and original column capitals with the Newbury coat of arms in an original but literate modern classical design.

5.00 RESPONSE TO CONSERVATION OFFICER

- 5.01 Following a discussion with the Conservation Officer a number of amendments were agreed.

- 5.02 Generally: a large scale detail of typical render and brick window reveals has been provided to indicate the depth intended.

Block C

- 5.03.1 South Building: the arch has been dropped in height and gates added.

- 5.03.2 Central Building: the piers on the centre of the shop front have been increased in width.

- 5.03.3 North Building: a detail has been provided of the first-floor string course indicating that it was never intended to be just a soldier course.

Block F

- 5.04.1 Central Building: elevation corrected to show single brick type; brick corbel indicated on eaves; string course increased in depth; entrance doors centralised on larger arches.

Block H

- 5.05.1 Balconies removed; second-floor windows reduced in height to provide typical upward window hierarchy.

RESPONSE TO HISTORIC ENGLAND'S COMMENTS ON THE MALL, THE KENNET CENTRE, NEWBURY, RG14
SEN, Application No. 23/02094/FULMAJ
ROY COLLADO, NOVEMBER 29TH 2023

- HE notes that we are intending to replace the Kennet Centre with a much larger group of buildings, and that the Kennet Centre knits into Newbury largely because of its scale. This is a somewhat simplistic view of a place and suggests that anything larger than its context cannot, by definition, be acceptable. It also denies the fact that a ground scraper is not also a large building. Scale is not simply a matter of height.
 - The Kennet Centre is in fact an extremely large building that disregards completely the patterns and grains of Newbury. It is a homogenous infill with no natural permeability, that makes little outward facing contribution because it is an internal focused mall, and that takes none of its design cues from Newbury. The Kennet Centre is very largely without relief in roofscape, Conversely Newbury is defined by its variety in roofscape, its streets and spaces, and the rich detailing on many of its buildings. These are the qualities that we have referenced, none of which are evident in the design of the Kennet Centre. The Kennet Centre is in fact a VERY large building. When viewing a nollie plan of the centre comparing our proposals to the KC, it is immediately evident which is the large building. Our debate is a much narrower one around the acceptability of A and B
 - The Kennet Centre is a generic mall – we see them all over. They were the product of the retail fashion of the era, no longer suitable for modern day retailing, and leaving many town centres with the challenge of their replacement.
 - The relationship of the Kennet Centre with the listed buildings on the edges of our site is crude and makes little attempt to ‘fit’. The best that can be said of the Kennet Centre is that it is low – though I do not consider that as a good as it is without visual relief and delight.
 - Our proposals are wrongly described as a larger group of buildings. This is deliberately misleading. Most of our buildings are low and contextual. In particular we have taken great care with the massing to place lower buildings to the edges of the site where we engage directly with the streets that we become a part of, and toward the conservation area, with any larger buildings carefully buried within the site so as to manage carefully their relationship with townscape. This fits with the historical pattern of Newbury’s growth, with the more sensitive character buildings radiating from the River Kennet and diminishing toward the train station.
- HE notes that the character of Newbury largely derives from is 17th century buildings and the conservation area. It might be an unwelcome point to make, but whilst we recognise fully the importance of the historical centre, its fabric and listed buildings, Newbury extends to a wider area, much of which is suburban, industrial, modern retail and so on. Many of the more recent buildings, in particular the inter and post war batch, are of mediocre design, of scale, and far from the character of the central area. This is not to say we look to those for our cues, but it is fair to consider Newbury in the round, rather than only through the rose tinted specs.
- 17-19 noted as a good 20th century building.
 - It is an average quality façade replication of what might have been there before. The section and façade are totally disconnected as can be seen from the elevations, with floors running across the double height windows. The detailing is poor, and the building is weathering badly. It is odd on the one hand the HE praises this approach and at the same time criticises Adams. Are we not essentially doing a better version of what that building set out to achieve?
- It is encouraging to note HE welcome the reduction in height. I do think it important to note that we do not seek to be invisible but to curate the relationship between new and old. There are parts of the existing fabric, the Catherine Wheel for example, that are very low buildings, and so anything of modest scale will be viewed in its backdrop. In developing the massing, we have taken care to articulate the roofscape, consider material choices and patterns, and to work with Robert Adam so that the overall scheme does not appear as a single development. The inherent variety in forms, materials, designs and approach that this approach to the design of the site creates makes it a naturally better response to the variety of buildings and spaces within Newbury

**RESPONSE TO HISTORIC ENGLAND'S COMMENTS ON THE MALL, THE KENNET CENTRE, NEWBURY, RG14
5EN, Application No. 23/02094/FULMAJ
TIM MILES, NOVEMBER 29TH 2023**

Existing Centre

We note that Historic England comment that the design and detailing of the existing Kennet Centre is 'disappointing' and they also suggest that it successfully integrates into the historic town centre and is 'reasonably successful' where it surrounds the enveloped listed buildings. We note that their letter does go on to state under the sub-heading 'The Impact of the proposals on the significance of the town centre' that *'the majority of the buildings that currently form the Kennet Centre are not of architectural quality or interest'*.

The HTVIA submitted with the application identifies the existing Kennet Centre buildings as detracting from the character and appearance of the CA. The Council's draft Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) similarly identifies the Kennet Centre buildings as detracting. We note that this does not include the run of buildings to the south of 17-19 Market place, which are poorly detailed in modern brick with modern shop fronts at ground floor and windows that do not reflect the rhythm above. The roof form is expressed as a large single plain which similarly detracts.

Nevertheless, the existing Kennet Centre cannot be said to make a positive contribution to the CA, and the poor detailing, the obliteration of historic grain and lack of activation means that the influence on the conservation area is a negative one. A proper identification of the Kennet Centre as making a negative contribution (as per the draft CAA), is clearly material in assessing the effect of the development.

The letter from Historic England goes on to identify 17-19 Market Place as a late 20th Century building that contributes positively to the Conservation Area.

17-19 building is poorly detailed. The building dates from the late 20th Century and is generally poorly executed. The pilasters and entablature are the wrong proportions, corner detail to pilasters unresolved and not according to precedent, cornice and entablature employ wrong mouldings and unresolved floors cross the windows, which are inappropriately proportioned. The windows are also inappropriately detailed with no sills. The HTVIA submitted with the application addresses the loss of the building at paragraph 6.204 and concludes that no harm arises from its loss and replacement with a well-designed building.

The Council did not identify harm arising from this element of the proposals in relation to this element, and there is no material change in the scheme that should result in the Council now coming to a different conclusion.

Scale of Proposals

We welcome HE's acknowledgement that the reduction in height is welcome. They identify that, in their view, the current scheme would be 'markedly' less harmful than the previous application. In particular we welcome HE's recognition that the proposed buildings are likely to blend into the street scene 'very well' and that from view 2 (Northbrook Street), the new buildings would present as a varied collection of pitched roofs. HE also identifies no harm from the Market Place (views 4 and 5), identifying that the scale of buildings would not be out of keeping with the surrounding townscape.

HE identifies a harmful effect in View 1. This is slightly puzzling, as this is the same axis of view as View 2, but at a considerably greater distance (500m from the site) where the visual effect is markedly less. Nevertheless, the development would similarly appear as a varied collection of roofs, as a distant background element. We do not consider this effect to be a harmful one; in any event any effect over long distance would be diminished and minor.

HE also identify an adverse impact in relation to View 8 in which the proposed development appears in views of the listed Corn Stores. Paragraphs 6.91-6.93 of the HTVIA describe the contribution made by the setting of the Corn Stores and Museum to their signifiacnce which we reproduce here:

The location of the two buildings on Newbury Wharf Newbury Wharf is experienced only in a much changed and modern context. The former wharf was redeveloped in the 20th Century and the A339 crosses the canal next to a large roundabout. The area is now dominated by car parks and the telephone exchange, the bus station and modern library.

The Granary in particular has been entirely divorced from its original setting, it sits almost entirely within a modern context and car park. When approaching from Wharf Road, the building is experienced with taller buildings in the backdrop. The BT Building is centrally located visible above the roof of the cloth store from this position, and the wide view from the elevated position of Wharf Road takes in a wide vista of modern development, the bus station and transport infrastructure. While the modern library building takes its design cues from historic wharf warehouse stores, it is a prominent foreground feature on the approach. The southern side of the corn store is similarly dominated by car park infrastructure.

None of this setting contributes to the interest of the corn stores (indeed it actively detracts), and while the former cloth store is a more peripheral element in views across the wharf, it is too a detracting element in an appreciation of the pair of buildings...

The only historic context for the pair of buildings remaining is on Wharf Street looking towards Northbrook Street and this part of its setting (arguably the most important aspect of the setting of the former cloth store) is not affected by the development due to a lack of intervisibility.

The effect of the proposed development on the significance of the pair of buildings is addressed in the HTVIA in paragraphs 6.244-6.247:

“Where the setting is changed, this is in the context of an almost entirely modern backdrop, of a part of the setting that makes only a minor contribution to the significance of the building. The proposed development would not adversely affect the setting of the buildings and does not impact on that part of the setting that remains that contributes to its significance. As a result, the proposals would at least preserve their special interest in accordance with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.

There is no impact on the elements of setting that contribute to the significance of the cloth store, namely the narrow medieval street layout and views from Market Place which are unaffected by the development”

Design

The Council has previously raised no objection to the design approach of the perimeter buildings. Indeed, the Council has identified heritage and townscape benefits from the proposed design approach within the officer report prepared for application reference 21/00379/FULMAJ.

Appendix A contains a detailed response to the design criticisms set out in HE's letter. While we strongly disagree with HE's comments on building design, we note HE's opening comments that their perception of harm would be meaningfully reduced with minor improvements.

We have, as you know, worked with you to identify design amendments which address HE's comments. The design amendments can be summarised as follows.

General

- Alterations to the depth of the window reveals to add three-dimensional articulation and interest to the elevations;

Block C

- The removal of balconies from above the archway in Block C
- The lowering of the archway;
- The re-positioning of the left hand side oriel windows;

We note that HE has incorrectly identified that the horizontal course on the right hand building is a projecting string course and not a soldier course, and we agree that this adds visual interest to the building. We also agree that the rusticated first floor level breaks up the elevation and the apparent height of the building.

Block F

- Alterations to the materials treatment to the central building (now all brick);
- The removal of the recessed canted porch and replacement with a central doorway with sidelights;
- The introduction of a brick corbelled eaves;

Block H

- The removal of the balconies;
- The reduction in size of the second floor windows.

These carefully considered design alterations achieve HE's aspiration the perception of harm should be meaningfully reduced. The further improve the detailing of the perimeter blocks and further reflect the vernacular hierarchy and detailing and improve the composition of the above blocks in a general fashion.

Therefore, caution should therefore be applied to HE's comments as drafted under the heading c): Conclusions and overall impact of the scheme. These comments are no longer applicable, and the fundamental balance of benefit is quite different to that set out in HE's letter, in the favour of a beneficial impact.

HE's identified level of harm

HE identify a 'moderate' level of less than substantial harm. This arises from their view of the scale of the proposals and the design of the buildings fronting the perimeter of the site. The Council has previously identified that the impacts of the perimeter buildings would be identified as beneficial in heritage and townscape terms. Further design revisions presented with this letter are capable of 'meaningfully' reducing HE's perception of harm.

HE's stated impact on the CA arising from scale are identified as being limited to View 1 at a distance of 500m from the site. These factors combined mean that HE's conclusion within their letter as to the overall effect of the development should not be accorded material weight in the determination of the application. HE's design comments have been addressed, the Council considers the design of the perimeter blocks to be beneficial and HE's letter should therefore be interpreted in this context.

Referring to the Council's Statement of case in relation to appealed application reference 21/00379/FULMAJ the principal heritage concern was the scale, height and mass of the central blocks (See the Council's Statement of Case paragraph 9.1). This issue has been addressed (largely confirmed by HE), and the Council raised no case in relation to the design of the perimeter blocks (identifying them to be beneficial in townscape and heritage terms); logically this must mean that the balance of benefit on heritage grounds alone is a positive one.

Should the Council consider that the development proposals do result in residual harm to designated heritage assets following a consideration of the beneficial aspects of the development, then the development would fall to be assessed under paragraph 202 of the NPPF. There are meaningful public benefits arising from the application, which we take the opportunity to reiterate here:

1. Rejuvenation and regeneration of Newbury Town Centre.
2. High quality new homes with exceptional facilities.
3. Creation of a new mixed-use quarter with new independent shops, pedestrian streets and alleyways connecting to the surrounding area.
4. Low carbon highly sustainable development.
5. New flexible workspaces for local, independent and artisan businesses that will help enhance Newbury's unique and special identity as a market town.