

Planning Statement

Proposal to alter 2no. existing Class E Retail Units into 1no. Class E Retail Unit

24-32 Cheapside, Barnsley

Barnsley MBC

January 2025



BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Barnsley MBC Property Services are seeking approval to combine 2no. existing retail units into 1no. larger retail unit with a view to attracting a medium sized national retailer to further bolster the current retail offer in the town centre.

2. The Site

The building, to which the application relates, is located on Cheapside in the heart of Barnsley Town Centre. Cheapside is a central pedestrianised shopping area, which runs from Eldon Street in the North, down to the Alhambra Shopping Centre to the South.

The building once served as a department store (BHS) and since their departure, it has been subdivided into smaller units and occupied by various retailers at the ground & first floor levels. A Snooker Hall previously occupied the third floor, and the second floor has predominantly been used as ancillary storage and welfare for the retail units.

Barnsley Town Centre has undergone extensive regeneration in recent years with the 'Better Barnsley' project delivering the conversion of the existing Metropolitan Centre to form a new indoor market and the addition of the Glassworks, a new covered retail development, which wraps around the market building, providing a diverse and accessible shopping offer for the town.

Prior to the opening of the Glassworks, 24-32 Cheapside had 3no. retail tenants. Unit A provided an entrance to Sports Direct, which was located on the first floor; unit B was occupied by New Look and Superdrug occupied unit C. In July 2022, both Sports Direct and New Look relocated to new units in the Glassworks, leaving Superdrug as the only remaining tenant.

The addition of the Glassworks has resulted in several national retailers relocating from other premises within the town centre to take advantage of new purpose built units alongside similar sized retailers. Whilst some of the existing units, both on Cheapside and in the Alhambra Shopping Centre, have been taken over by new tenants, there are a few shop units that have remained vacant. The Council's estates team have been working with commercial agents to produce a strategy for attracting new retailers to the town to backfill the vacant units. 24-32 Cheapside has been reviewed as part of this process and the key outcomes from the assessment of units B & C are as follows:

- The current ground floor configuration is no longer attractive to retailers, as evidenced by its long-term vacancy of 2 years and 5 months
- Increasing the ground floor plate will vastly improve the marketability of the premises by providing a larger trading area and a dominant high street shop front presence which will compliment The Glassworks development.
- It will also widen the pool of retailers we are able to target to occupy the space

The above outcomes have led to the Council's decision to serve notice on Superdrug (Unit C) and proceed with the combining of the Unit's B & C to form a larger retail space.

3. Pre-Application Advice

Initial contact was made with BMBC planning back in December 2024 to discuss the proposals with a view to confirming the type of application required as well as the level of supporting information expected inline with the national and local validation requirements.

As a tenant has not yet been confirmed for the larger unit, the planning team advised that the works should be split into two full applications. The first application is the one to which this statement relates, and the second application will be submitted by the tenant to include any shopfront alterations or other amendments relating to their operations. An Advertisement Consent application would also be required for any tenant signage.

With regards to the validation requirements and supporting documentation, it was agreed that this would be minimal due to the nature of the proposals. We will expand on this further in the document.

4. Proposed Development

The proposed development will see the amalgamation of unit B and unit C to form one larger unit. The works will be minimal and will only relate to the removal of the existing partition wall between the units including any enabling/making good works required.

As the prospective tenant is not yet known, no further internal or external works will be undertaken prior to the agreement for lease being in place.

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

As both units are already Class E Retail Use, we feel that consideration and compliance with the NPPF has already been suitably addressed.

Barnsley Local Plan

The Barnsley Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is available on the BMBC website. The plan covers future development up to the year 2033. The plan outlines the Council's vision for the future of Barnsley and its residents as well as aspirations to be involved with the wider city regions including Leeds and Sheffield.

The plan outlines Barnsley's commitment to economic growth including provision of jobs, improvement in living conditions/quality of life, improving the choice of homes and protecting and enhancing environmental assets.

Relevant Policies

Given the relatively minor nature of the works, many of the Local Plan Policies don't apply, however, we have opted to address the following policies that could be considered as relevant to the proposed development

- TC1 - Town Centres
- BI01 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

TC1 - Town Centres

Policy TC1 addresses the need for redevelopment and enhancement of the existing town centres in the borough.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in January 2019, there has been extensive redevelopment in the main Town Centre with the Markets, Glassworks, Public Space Improvements, The Lightbox (Library) and more recently the completion of the Eldon Street regeneration project.

The proposed alterations to Units B and C will support this by improving the type and size of units available to prospective retail tenants.

Based on the information provided above, we feel the proposed development has adequately addressed all the criteria under TC1.

BI01 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy BI01 relates to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geological features.

As the units are in an urban area with no external space and therefore has a baseline of zero habitat units. We believe this means the development will be exempt from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

Based on the information provided above, we feel the proposed development has adequately addressed all the criteria under BI01.

6. Other Considerations

Operation of the proposed unit

As the application relates to the amalgamation of 2no. existing Class E units, the operation of the new unit is not expected to vary from the current and previous occupations. Opening hours will be expected to be inline with other surrounding retailers.

Transport

The Town Centre location means the proposed unit already has well-established public transport links, with May Day Green Square providing a direct pedestrian link to the bus and train stations. There are two large multi-storey car parks in the Glassworks and Alhambra as well as council operated surface car parks in and around the Town Centre.

Deliveries

Deliveries to the existing units are made at the rear of the building. This arrangement will remain the same for the new larger unit.

Employment Opportunities

With the New Look staff transferring to the new Glassworks Store and the intention to retain Superdrug in the Town Centre it is anticipated that the new Unit will create local employment opportunities.

Sustainability

Although the works to which this application relate will not involve the installation of any new building services or thermal elements, we would expect the prospective tenant to take this into consideration with their fit out design, promoting the use of thermally efficient glazing for example and specifying energy efficient building services plant. This will also be supported through the Building Regulations application, ensuring compliance with the relevant Approved Documents.

Access

The existing units are located at ground floor with level thresholds. It is worth noting that the existing floor in both units slopes down towards the rear of the building.

Further Applications

As referenced in Section 3, this application relates only to the amalgamation of the two units to form one larger unit. This will leave the existing double shopfront currently in place from New Look (now vacant) and Superdrug (still currently trading). We would therefore expect the prospective tenant to make changes to the shopfront to form one single shopfront onto Cheapside. Due to retailers generally having their own design standards and requirements for shopfront displays, signage etc. we have opted not to include this within this application. The tenant will be responsible for submitting a further full application and advertisement consent application for their signage. We are aware of the Supplementary Planning Document on Shopfront design and as Landlord, Barnsley MBC will ensure this is captured at the fit-out design approval stage.

7. Summary

The application seeks approval to combine 2no. existing retail units into 1no. larger unit.

We believe there will be a benefit the local economy through the creation of jobs as well as further increasing the footfall of the already thriving retail offer in the Town Centre.

We believe the justification outlined in this statement, with the support of the other documents included with the application, demonstrates that the development will have a positive impact on the Town Centre.