

Application Reference Number:	2026/0544
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Application Type:	Full Planning Permission
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Proposal Description:	Combining of 7no. existing Use Class E retail units to one larger Use Class E(e) unit.
Location:	The Alhambra Shopping Centre, Cheapside, Barnsley, S70 1SB

Applicant:	Ben Taylor - BMBC
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Third-party representations:	None.	Parish:	None.
		Ward:	Central Ward

Summary: This application proposes to amalgamate 7 existing retail units within the Alhambra Shopping Centre, resulting in a single unit of circa 1,143sqm. It is understood that the unit will be used for the second phase of the Health on the High Street project and will be occupied by the NHS. The proposed works are contained within the existing shopping centre, and will not alter the external appearance of the Alhambra Shopping Centre. There are no outstanding consultee objections. Recommendation: GRANTED subject to conditions:

Introduction

The application is being presented to Members due to the applicant being a Council department.

Site Location & Description

The application relates to the existing Alhambra Shopping Centre in Barnsley Town Centre. The shopping centre opened in 1991 and is prominent when entering the Town Centre from the south. The centre has two floors, with the main pedestrian entrance via Cheapside with secondary entrances on New Street and Wesley Street and the car park entrance via Lambra Street.

Whilst a number of national retailers continue to occupy units within the centre, in recent years a number of units have become vacant either due to relocation into the newly developed Glassworks centre or simply as a result of the ongoing challenges in the retail sector. In response to that, BMBC have recently undertaken works to facilitate the 'Health on the High Street' project which supports health uses at the upper floor of the centre. This means the centre itself offers a mixture of uses for visitors rather than a traditional retail shopping centre.

The surrounding area is characterised by shops, food outlets and pedestrianised streets.

The site is in a high risk development area as defined by the Mining Remediation Authority mapping, and within Flood Zone 1 meaning low risk of flooding.

Site History

The shopping centre has a complex planning history. Relevant applications include:

2025/0936 – Amalgamation of two existing retail units (Use Class E) to a single retail unit (Use Class E) with alterations to frontages, GRANTED, 12/2/2026

2025/0937 - Removal of condition 7 (maximum food retailing floorspace) on application ref: B/87/1497/BA - Erection of shopping development and multi-storey car park, Land bounded by New Street, Lambra Road and Eastern and Western Relief Roads, Barnsley, GRANTED, 12/2/2026

2025/0021 - Removal of condition 6 (Use Class restrictions) of application B/87/1497/BA: Erection of shopping development and multi-storey car park, land bounded by New Street, Lambra Road and Eastern and Western relief Roads, Barnsley, GRANTED, 4/3/2025

2024/0837- Proposed cladding on existing gables, new UPVC fascia covers and replacement rainwater gutters and downpipes, GRANTED, 18/11/2024

2017/0281 - Minor material amendment to the plans approved under condition 2 of planning permission 2014/0960 (Erection of extension to existing shopping centre to provide new 9 screen cinema and restaurants at Gallery level including new personnel entrance on New Street level, alterations to existing parking layout and associated alterations at Retail Mall levels) GRANTED, 12/6/2017

2017/0536 - Proposed alterations to profile and external facing materials of the existing rooftop atrium/rooflight, GRANTED, 15/6/2017

2014/0960 - Erection of extension to existing shopping centre to provide new 9 screen cinema and restaurants at Gallery level including new personnel entrance on New Street level, alterations to existing parking layout and associated alterations at Retail Mall level, GRANTED, 19/11/2014

2014/0307 – New entrance screen to shopping centre entrance and replacement of rooflight to mall, GRANTED, 4/6/2014

B/01/0252/BA - Erection of store room extension on roof-level carpark, GRANTED, 28/3/2001

B/98/0769/BA - Alteration to existing mall entrance/exit to form new store entrance/ exit, GRANTED, 7/8/1998

B/98/0375/BA - Erection of extension to retail unit, new fire escape and internal alterations, GRANTED, 7/5/1998

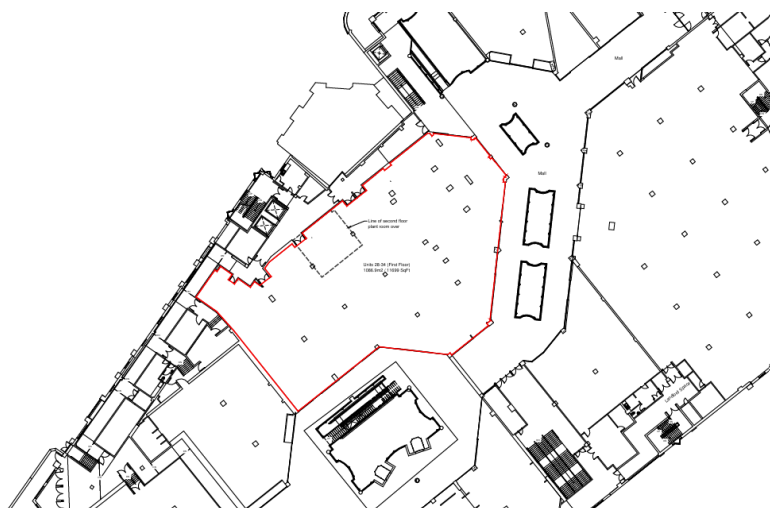
B/95/1435/BA - Change of use of shop to (Class A3) Sandwich Bar and installation of new shop front, GRANTED, 8/2/1996

B/87/1497/BA - Erection of shopping development and multi-storey car park, GRANTED, 26/2/1988

Proposed Development

This application seeks permission to amalgamate 7x existing retail units within the Alhambra Shopping Centre. The works would join units 28-34 at the first floor by removing the existing subdividing walls. The removal of some storage/back office space is also proposed to create a larger gross internal area, though access to the second floor of Unit 30 will be retained and used as a plant room. Alterations to the unit(s) frontage will be sought via a separate planning application. Nevertheless, all works will be contained within the shopping centre and not change the external appearance when viewed from surrounding streets.

The singular unit would have a gross internal area of circa 1,143sqm and is proposed to be occupied by the NHS as the second phase of the Health on the High Street project. The unit will provide a mix of consultation rooms, reception and waiting spaces and staff areas.



Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Local Plan was adopted in January 2019 and is also now accompanied by seven

masterplan frameworks which apply to the largest site allocations (housing, employment and mixed use sites).

In addition, the Council has adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans which provide supporting guidance and specific local policies and are a material consideration in the decision-making process.

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances, require it.

Allocation/Designations

The site lies within the Primary Shopping Area and within the Town Centre boundary as defined in adopted Barnsley Local Plan. The units within the centre are primary shopping frontages whilst those facing onto Cheapside are secondary shopping frontages.

The site falls within the Town Centre District 9: Market Area as defined by the Local Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework – August 2026

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in August 2026, replacing the previous versions. The NPPF is a material consideration when assessing planning applications. The following sections are relevant to this application proposal:

Section 8 – Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

Section 16 - Promoting Healthy Communities

Section 12 - Making Effective Use of Land

Section 14 - Achieving Well-designed Places

Barnsley Local Plan 2019

The following Local Plan policies are relevant:

Policy GD1: General Development

Policy TC1: Town Centres

Policy TC2: Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages

Policy BTC12: The Markets Area District

Supplementary Planning Documents

The Council have adopted SPDs to provide further guidance about the implementation of specific planning policies in the Local Plan. The adopted SPDs should be treated as material considerations in decision-making and are afforded full weight. The following SPDs are relevant to this proposal:

Shop Front Designs, May 2019

Consultations

Local Ward Councillors- No response.

Pollution Control – No response.

Public Health – No response.

Enterprising Barnsley – No response.

Regeneration - No response.

Representations

This application has been advertised in accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) 2015, as follows:

- Site Notice (local interest) displayed adjacent to the site - consultation expiry date: 4/8/2026
- Press Advert (local interest) site - consultation expiry date: 7/8/2026

No representations were received in response to the above publicity.

Assessment

Principle of Development

NPPF Paragraph 90 states that planning decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This includes allowing town centres to diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries and allows a suitable mix of uses.

Local Plan Policy TC1 states that Barnsley Town Centre is the dominant town centre in the borough and should continue to fulfil its sub regional role in the majority of new retail and development.

Local Plan Policy TC2: Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages states that uses other than retail may be acceptable where they diversify and improve provision in a centre provided that it can be demonstrated that the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area would not be negatively affected and that ground floor uses remain predominantly retail.

The application site falls within the primary shopping area, with the frontages within the centre constituting as primary and secondary shopping frontages. The proposal looks to amalgamate 7x existing retail units to create a single larger unit which will remain within Use Class E and be used for medical/health uses. Although the adopted Local Plan policies predominately encourage retail uses at primary and secondary shopping frontages, any Class E use can operate at former retail units and is therefore accepted in principle. The success of the Health on the High Street phase one has also demonstrated that the introduction of health/medical uses within the town centre has positively impacted the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area. The proposal is therefore afforded substantial weight in the planning balance.

Impact Upon Character of Area/Highways

NPPF Policy DP3 – Key Principles for well-designed places, relates to high-quality design and states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive; contribute to local character; maintain a strong sense of place whilst optimising the potential of the site and create inclusive places.

Local Plan Policy D1 states that development is expected to be of high-quality design and should respect and reinforce the distinctive, local character and features. Development should contribute to place making and make the best use of materials, as well as display architectural quality and express proposed uses through its composition, scale, form, proportions and arrangements of materials, colours and details.

Local Plan Policy GD1 states that proposals for development will be approved if there are no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents. Proposals should be compatible with neighbouring land and should not significantly prejudice the current or future use of neighbouring land.

NPPF Policy TR6 Assessing Transport Impacts - Development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement

Local Plan Policy T4 states that new development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement. It follows on state if a development is not suitably served by the existing highway or would add to problems of safety or the efficiency of the highway, developers will be expected to take mitigating action to make sure the necessary improvements go ahead.

The development includes removing the existing subdividing walls to create a single unit within the shopping centre. The submitted information suggests that changes to the unit frontage will be sought via a separate planning application. Therefore, this current application proposes minimal alterations to the appearance or character of the shopping centre, with no external works hereby proposed.

In terms of highways impacts, the amalgamation of the 7x units is not expected to significantly impact highway movements within the locality. Nevertheless, the shopping centre is well served by a number of town centre car parks as well as public transport services (bus/train) meaning the proposal is acceptable in regard to highways. This is afforded significant weight in the planning balance.

Conclusion

The development looks to combine 7x existing units within a town centre shopping centre, which will be used for Class E uses. The works will secure an NHS occupier within the town centre, which will positively impact the footfall and vitality of the shopping centre, as evidenced by the success of the first phase of the project.

The proposal accords with NPPF section 7 which seeks to ensure that planning decisions support the role that town centres play by taking a positive approach to their adaptation. It also accords with Local Plan Policy TC1 Town Centres which indicates that Barnsley Town Centre is the dominant town centre in the borough and that town centre developments will be expected to be appropriate to the scale, role, function and character of the centres in which they are proposed. The development looks to provide a larger Class E unit for medical uses and will look to retain an active frontage and the growth of an existing occupier within the shopping centre. The development is therefore acceptable.

Recommendation

Granted subject to conditions:

