

PROPOSAL: THE BIRCHES

Design and Access Statement

Proposed Construction of 4 no. Dwellings and
Change of Use of Former Children's Home (C2)
to form Dwelling

at

The Birches
10 Sidmouth Avenue
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffs

for

The Birches (Staffs) Ltd

August 2015



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1. INTRODUCTION

This Design & Access element of this statement has been prepared in response to the Governments changes to the planning application process outlines in circular: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, which came into effect on the 10th August 2006. The statement provides an analysis and narrative of the proposals and is in line with guidance produced by CABE entitled Design & Access Statements; how to write, read and use them.

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application to construct 4 no. residential dwellings and the change of use of a former children's home (C2) to form a single dwelling unit. The application also seeks permission to demolish the commercial office building to the east of the site, the demolition of the east extension of the residential institution and the construction of a detached garage to serve the converted dwelling.

It is considered that the proposal is a unique opportunity to provide an appropriate residential use for The Birches which will both reduce the number of traffic movements to and from the site and alleviate known concerns of local residents about the uses of both buildings by future occupiers utilising the existing intensive fall back positions.

2. THE SITE

2.1 The Site Location

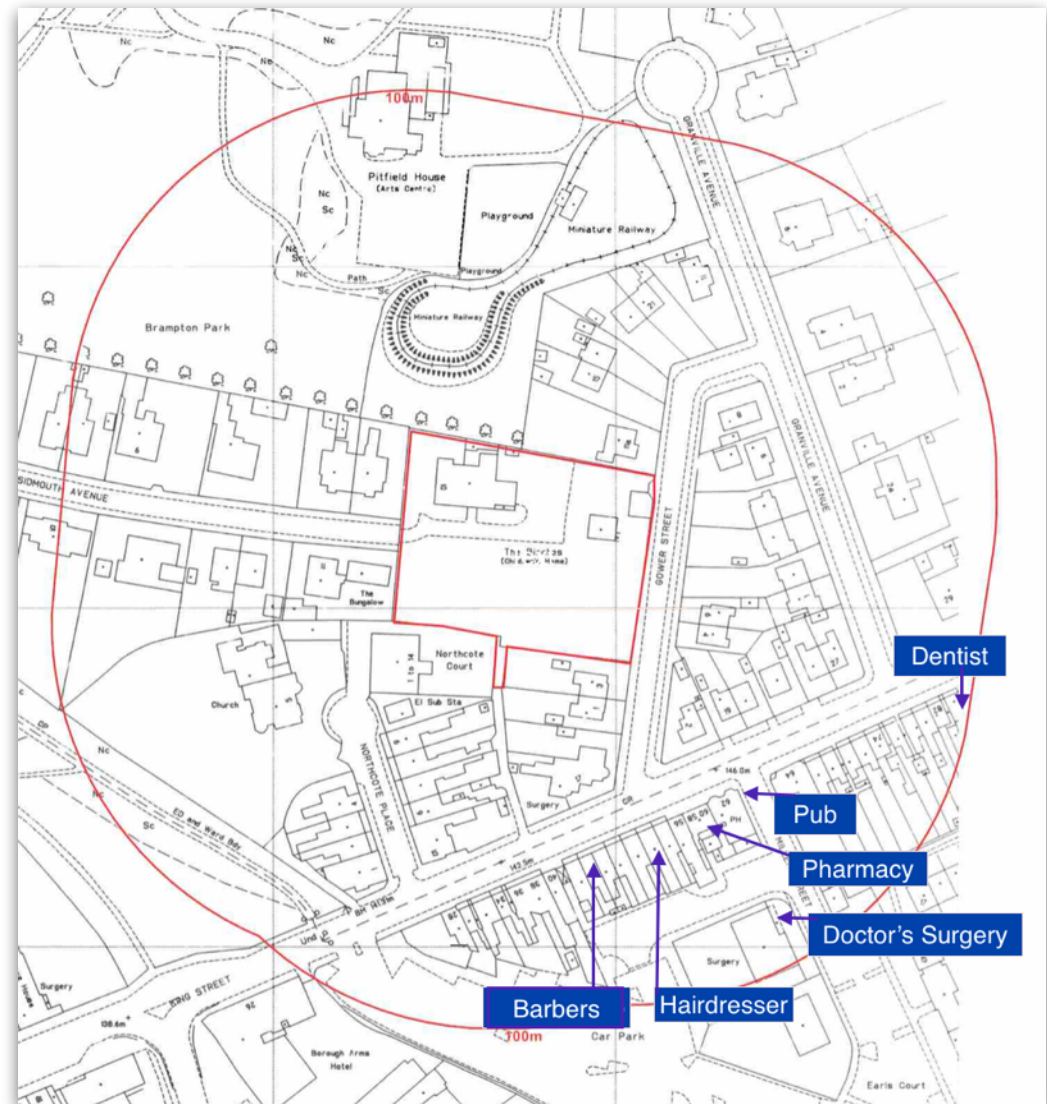
The application site is 1 acre of brownfield land situated north east from Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre.

The site is located approximately 500 metres walking distance from Newcastle town centre, which contains a range of shops, services and leisure facilities. The site is also located close to public parks and education provision. Approximately 50 metres from the east of the site is King Street which has frequent bus services to and from Newcastle Town Centre and a range of services including a doctors surgery, pharmacy, public house etc. The west of the site is located approximately 200 metres from Brampton Road, which has frequent bus services to and from Newcastle Town Centre.

As such, it is considered to be located in a highly sustainable location that is accessible by a range of transport modes, including walking and public transport.

The site has existing vehicular and pedestrian access to the west from Sidmouth Avenue and to the east from Gower Street. It also has additional pedestrian access to both the north and south.

The existing buildings on the site are not listed nor locally listed, however the site is located within the Brampton Conservation Area. Gower Street is outside of the Conservation Area (see section 6). It is noted that the Council has not published a conservation area character appraisal which identifies the special character and significance.



Location map showing 100m radius

2.2 The Site Surroundings

Gower Street, Sidmouth Avenue and the wider area are characterised by a range of buildings and uses. Some dwellings are large detached dwellings, and others are semi-detached. The dwellings in the surrounding area are a mix of 2 and 3 storey dwellings, most of which appear to have been constructed in the 19th and early 20th Century. In more recent times, some dwellings along Sidmouth Avenue have been subdivided into flats, and some buildings are used for offices/commercial units.

The properties along Sidmouth Avenue have a number of different uses such as offices, dwelling houses or apartment buildings. All of the buildings on Sidmouth Avenue have off-street car parking provision.

At the junction of Sidmouth Avenue and Brampton Road (to the south of Sidmouth Avenue) is the Staffordshire County Council Registry Office, which includes an associated car park to the side and rear, which is accessed off Sidmouth Avenue. Number 7 Sidmouth Avenue is managed by Arch (formerly know as the Elizabeth Trust and a subsidiary of Staffordshire Housing Association) and provides sheltered housing, support and advice for people experiencing domestic abuse, people in housing need and people who need support to live independently.

At the junction of Gower Street and King Street are two commercial buildings, both with car parking which is accessed off Gower Street. Adjacent to the south east of the site is a student HMO.

The description of the area and the uses of the buildings confirm that the area is by no means a quiet residential area, but a mixed commercial and

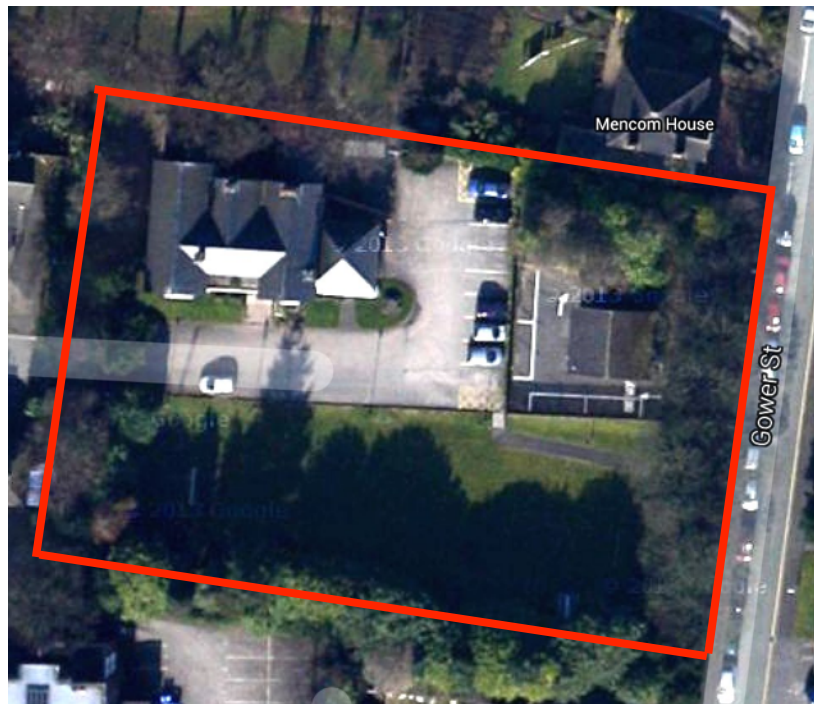
residential area which includes a number of buildings that have been converted into flats.



Examples of architecture on Gower Street

2.3 The Existing Site

The site includes 2 vacant buildings, a residential institution known as The Birches, and an office, known as the Little House. The site is bounded by substantial tree and shrub planting, with the southern half of the site being laid to lawn. The buildings occupy the northern half of the site and are surrounded by hard standing that can accommodate parking for around 17 vehicles.



Aerial photo of site

The Birches is accessed off Sidmouth Avenue. It was most recently used as an assessment centre for children with the most challenging emotional and behavioural problems. It is understood this accommodated for 8 children as well as incorporating a range of care, support and administrative staff. This was vacated in March 2014.

The Little House is a two storey building which appears to have been built during the 1960's or 1970's. The building is constructed with modern red brick, has corrugated effect clay tiles, and UPVC casement windows. It is assumed that this was originally constructed as a staff house. Planning permission was granted in 2011 for the change of use of this building to offices, plus associated works of new parking bays, and the removal of fence and a gate to create a gated vehicle access. This was a County application that the LPA was consulted upon under application number 11/0003/CPO. The planning consent was implemented with the car parking bays and the formation of the gated access being implemented following the discharge of conditions 6 and 7 relating to parking details and the provision of pedestrian visibility splays.



The Birches



The Little House

3. FALL BACK POSITION

The Birches

The Birches was last used as a Children's Home, which falls under Use Class C2. It is understood that the site last provided accommodation for 8 children, as well as accommodating a range of care, support and administrative staff.

The Use Classes Order (as amended) defines that a Class C2 use provides residential accommodation and care to people in need of care, which can include residential schools, colleges or training centres, hospitals and nursing homes. This use could also include the following types of high intensity uses including:

- Supported living for adults
- A unit to provide one to one care for residents with severe autism, including residential care with daily respite care
- A boarding school for people with special educational needs with additional daytime/non- resident students
- An in-patient or out-patient hospital
- A children's day nursery
- A rehabilitation centre for ex-offenders, drug users, and alcoholics
- A music college.

The above is not an exhaustive list, but identifies the type of high intensity uses that could occupy the building without the need for planning permission. In terms of the intensity of previous uses of the site, the Children's Home was known to accommodate more than 8 children. Reports published in 1990 following an inquiry into care home practices in Staffordshire references that The Birches was once a 30 bed Children's Home.

In August 2008, Staffordshire County Council resolved to use the Birches as an assessment centre for young people with the most challenging emotional and behavioural problems. The assessment unit provided accommodation for children to stay for 12 weeks, so that their needs could be understood before they are placed in

foster homes. A newspaper article dated 21 August 2008 briefly outlines the nature of the use at the time whilst also making reference to the occurrence of anti-social behaviour associated with the use of the site as a children's home. Local residents are quoted in the article, who state that:

"Over the years the residents living here have suffered terribly as a direct result of both children resident in The Birches, and those who were acquaintances of them and visiting them. The catalogue of problems is appalling, including theft, damage, threats, noise and serious anti-social behaviour."

Under the existing C2 use, car journeys would be generated from visitors and a range of staff including care staff, kitchen staff, office/administration staff and other support/maintenance staff. If the existing 8 bed layout was used for a nursing home then at least 5 members of care staff would be required each day plus additional support staff and visitors. In a commercial operation many of the downstairs rooms would also be converted to bedrooms which would increase both the number of residents and staff and visitors.

Given the nature of Class C2 use, and the difficult nature of intensive alternative uses, then it is likely that staffing levels would need to be higher in some cases. Many uses would be more intense, and could require one-to-one care. In addition, the building could be utilised as a public or private in-patient or out-patient hospital/treatment unit providing clinical care. Such uses would generate vehicle movements throughout the day for patients and staff covering various shift patterns, as discussed in section 5.6.

The Little House

This building has commercial use following the approval and implementation of an application in 2011 by Staffordshire County Council. Approved application 11/0003/CPO set out that there would be 6 members of staff and 8 clients visiting per day.

The site has four off road car parking spaces, with on road parking available on Gower Street. It is close to town and would be suitable for a large range of uses including a dental practice with offices.

If utilised as a B1/D1 use with D1 use on the ground floor and B1 use of the first floor then the building could be used as both a dental practice and office space. There could be two dental surgeons and a reception area downstairs accessed from either the front door via the central hallway or the rear door. The upstairs would be wholly B1 space and could be either independent from downstairs with its own access, or joint office space for the downstairs D1 use. This would create a significant number of car journeys per day as discussed in section 5.6.

4. PLANNING POLICY & HISTORY

4.1 Planning Policy

The Development Plan and Other Material Considerations

The extant development plan comprises the following:

- a) The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (2009); and,
- b) "Saved" policies of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan (2003).

Relevant policies contained within the above development plan documents and their conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) are considered below

The Core Strategy

Policy SP1 - spatial principles of targeted regeneration

Policy SP1 states that new housing will be primarily directed towards sites within:

- a) The Inner Urban Core, including the City Centre;
- b) Newcastle Town Centre;
- c) Neighbourhoods within General Renewal areas and Areas of Major Intervention and other Areas of Housing Intervention identified by Renew North Staffordshire, and
- d) Within the identified significant urban centres

Policy SP1 at part 7 otherwise states that new development will be prioritised in favour of previously developed land where it can support sustainable patterns of development and provides access to services and service centres by foot, public transport and cycling.

In terms of the above policy, it can be considered that part 1 of this policy is a housing land supply policy. The council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, and as such, this policy cannot be considered to be up to date in accordance with the Framework.

At the moment the council's own position is that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. And as such, *as set out in paragraphs 49 and 14 of the NPPF, the starting point therefore*

must be one of a presumption in favour of residential development. In this particular context as has already been stated the development is in a highly sustainable location which is close to services and facilities and promotes choice by reason of its proximity to modes of travel other than the private motor car.

On the basis of all of the above, it is considered that the principle of residential development in this location should be supported unless there are any adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits".

In light of the above considerations, part 1 of Policy SP1 is considered to be out of date in the context of the proposal in the absence of a 5 year housing land supply, however part 7 of SP1 can be afforded some weight as it is in general accordance with policy 111 of the Framework.

Policy SP2 - Spatial Principles of Economic Development

Part 5 of Policy SP2 is relevant to the determination of this proposal which states seeks to promote North Staffordshire's unique heritage and its cultural distinctiveness to strengthen its viability as a tourist destination; to underpin its image as a vibrant, dynamic and innovative sub-region and to promote the economic potential of re-use of buildings, particularly those of heritage value.

The above part of Policy SP2 is considered to be in conformity with the Framework, which at paragraph 126 outlines the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conversion.

Policy SP3 - Spatial Principles of Movement and Access

Part 1 of Policy SP3 seeks to improve accessibility and social inclusion through providing for a compact sub region of sustainable linked communities, which have a range of services and facilities, and which are well connected to major employment and service centres and the network of green open space.

Part 2 of Policy SP3 seeks to maximise the accessibility of new residential, employment, retail, development, health and education centres, green open space, leisure and sport facilities as well as strategic transport interchanges, such as railway stations, by walking, cycling and public transport.

It is considered that the above policy is in general conformity with the Framework, and in particular, paragraph 37.

ASP5 - Newcastle and Kidsgrove Urban Neighbourhoods Spatial Policy

Policy ASP5 outlines the quantum of housing to be delivered in Kidsgrove, Newcastle Urban Centre and Newcastle Urban South and East over the plan period. Part 5 of the policy states that the density of new development will balance the need to make the most efficient use of land and the need to provide a wide range of housing types, tenures, sizes and prices. In some areas it may be appropriate to plan for lower densities where there is an identified need for higher value housing.

As already set out earlier, the LPA cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, and as such, part 1 of Policy ASP5 cannot be considered to be up to date as it is a policy for the supply of housing. However, part 5 of the policy is considered to be in accordance with the Framework, in particular, with paragraphs 47 and 50 of the Framework.

Policy CSP1 - Design Quality

Policy CSP1 states that new development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent's unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres.

This policy lists a range of design criteria that proposals should seek to deliver as follows:

1. Promote the image and distinctive identity of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent through the enhancement of strategic and local gateway locations and key transport corridors.
2. Be based on an understanding and respect for Newcastle's and Stoke-on-Trent's built, natural and social heritage.
3. Protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas.
4. Contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular materials for buildings and surfaces and access.
5. Be easy to get to and to move through and around, providing recognisable routes and interchanges and landmarks that are well connected to public transport, community facilities, the services of individual communities and neighbourhoods across the whole plan area.
6. Have public and private spaces that are safe, attractive, easily distinguished, accessible, complement the built form and foster civic pride.

7. Ensure a balanced mix of uses that work together and encourage sustainable living in the use of water, energy and re-use of materials and minimises the impact on climatic change.
8. Provide active ground floor frontages where located in the City Centre, Newcastle Town centre, local or district centres.
9. Be accessible to all users.
10. Be safe, uncluttered, varied, and attractive.
11. Contribute positively to healthy lifestyles.
12. Support and foster innovative management and service delivery.

Policy CSP2 - Historic Environment

Policy CSP2 seeks to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the historic heritage of the City and the Borough including buildings, monuments, sites and areas of special archaeological, architectural or historic interest

It is considered that the general thrust of the above policy is in general conformity with the Framework.

Saved Policies of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan

Policy H6 - Encouragement of provision of living accommodation by the conversion of existing non-residential urban buildings

Policy H6 states that proposals for the conversion and adaptation of existing non-residential buildings to provide additional living accommodation will be considered favourably and encouraged for their contribution to sustainability objectives, as long as the following requirements are met:

- a) The development should not create conflict with nearby uses or damage local amenity;
- b) Separate pedestrian access must be provided to the living accommodation;

Policy H7 - Protection of areas of special character

Policy H7 states that in areas of special character, the council will seek to preserve the unique character of these areas, consisting mainly of large houses in extensive plots, and will not permit development that would be detrimental to the overall character of the area or that would result in the further sub-division of plots or the loss of or adverse effect on, visually significant trees.

Policy T16 - Development - general parking requirements

Policy T16 states that development will not be permitted to provide more parking than the maximum levels provided at Appendix 3 to the Local Plan. Development may be required to provide less than these maximum levels in order to meet the requirements of other transport policies in the plan.

Policy B9 - Prevention of Harm to Conservation Areas

Policy B9 states that the council will resist development that would harm the special architectural or historic character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

Policy B10 - The requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area

Policy B10 states that permission will be granted to construct, alter the external appearance or change the use of any building only if its proposed appearance or use will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This will be achieved by the following criteria being met:

- a) The form, scale, bulk, height, materials, colour, vertical or horizontal emphasis and detailing respect the characteristics of the buildings in the area;
- b) The plot coverage characteristics respect those of the area;
- c) Historically significant boundaries contributing to the established pattern of development in the area are retained;
- d) Open spaces important to the character or historic value of the area are protected;
- e) Important views within, into and out of the area are protected;
- f) Trees and other landscape features contribution to the character or appearance of the area are protected.

It is considered that the above policy is broadly consistent with paragraphs 126 - 141 of the Framework and that the policy carries weight in the determination of this proposal.

Other Material Considerations

The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Plan

The Council is currently preparing a Joint Local Plan (JLP) with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. No draft plan has been published for consultation at the time of writing.

At the time of writing, no relevant up to date evidence base documents, such as a SHMA have been published, however it is expected that the SHMA will be published in Autumn 2015.

The LPA expect the JLP to be adopted in 2018.

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay.

Paragraph 7 sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) carries a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay, and where the development plan is silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of

doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. For reasons explained above it is considered that relevant development plan policies are out of date.

Paragraph 17 of the Framework sets out the Government's core planning principles that underpin plan making and decision taking.

Paragraph 18 confirms that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.

Paragraph 19 confirms that the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

Paragraph 47 of the Framework seeks to boost *significantly* the supply of housing. To boost the supply of housing, the Framework states that LPAs should identify annually a supply of specific *deliverable* sites to provide 5 years worth of housing against their housing requirements. In addition LPAs should identify a 5% buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. In cases where there has been a record of persistent under delivery, this buffer should be increased by 20%.

With regard to housing delivery, paragraph 49 of the Framework requires LPAs to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites at all times; Paragraph 49 states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply.

In such instances, the decision maker should turn to paragraph 14 of the Framework. Paragraph 14 states that at the heart of the NPPF is a *presumption in favour of sustainable development*. For decision-taking this means:

- *Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:*
 - o *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this framework taken as a whole; or*

- o *Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

Paragraph 50 seeks to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- Plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- Identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand.

Paragraph 56 confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

Bullet point 2 of paragraph 69 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve places which promote safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

Paragraph 159 states that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should:

prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:

- meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;

- addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes); and
- caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand;
- prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

The following sections of the NPPG are relevant to the determination of this application:

ID: 2a – House and economic development needs assessments
 ID: 3 – Housing and economic land availability assessment
 ID: 8 – Natural environment
 ID: 10 - Viability
 ID: 11 – Strategic environmental assessment sustainability appraisal
 ID: 12 – Local Plans
 ID: 14 – Making an application
 ID: 16 – Appeals
 ID: 18a – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
 ID: 21a – Use of planning conditions
 ID: 21b – Determining a planning application
 ID: 23b – Planning obligations
 ID: 37 – Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space
 ID: 53 – Health and wellbeing

4.2 Planning History

Application number 13/00213/TCA - Removal of 3 conifers to boundary - approved 22 April 2013.

11/00003/CPO - Change of use from residential institution to offices plus associated works of new parking bays on existing hardstanding and removal of fence and gate to create a gated vehicular access - approved 28 March 2011 (Staffordshire County Council reference N.10/17). This application relates to the building known as Little House, which sits within the appeal site cartilage.

Application number 94/00230/CPO - Alterations, refurbishment and repositioning of existing fire escape - approved 31 August 1994.

Application number NNB10377 - Single staff house – approved.

Application number NNB01313 - Conversion of building to form a hostel for working girls - approved.

Planning records will show that there have been two recent planning applications on the site which have both recently been refused ref nos. 15/00047/COU change of use to student accommodation which is subject to a recently submitted appeal to the planning inspectorate and 15/00352/COUNOT which was a prior notification for the proposed change of use of existing offices to 4 self contained dwellings.

5. THE PROPOSAL

5.1 Overview

The proposal seeks planning permission for the change of use of 10 Sidmouth Avenue from a former children's home (Use Class C2) to a single detached dwelling, with part of an unsympathetic extension to The Birches being demolished with a new garage structure of a similar footprint being constructed within the front garden area to provide suitable garaging facilities for the future occupiers together with the demolition of the office (The Little House) building and replacement with 4 dwelling houses, each with 5 bedrooms and attached garages.

5.2 Amount

The overall site area of The Birches including the Little House is 4060sqm. The new build residential element for the 4 dwellings would utilise 1950sqm of this giving each plot an area of 487sqm which reflects the size of plots elsewhere in the vicinity.

The scheme would comprise 4 no. dwelling houses also utilising roof space each providing a floor area of 276sqm with The Little House which is to be demolished having an area of 97sqm. The Birches would sit in a generous plot size and has an existing floor area of 515 sqm, with 90sqm of this to be lost through the demolition of the east extension. The replacement garage will have a floor area of 50sqm.

5.3 Layout

The layout has been determined by site constraints, pre application advice undertaken and the present pattern of development on Gower Street. Site constraints include a desire to retain the principal tree line on Gower Street and remain outside of the root protection zones, along with the requirement to provide suitable car parking and turning facility within the curtilage, served off the existing access positions.

The proposal seeks to make the most efficient use of the site and to ensure that adequate distance to the former children's home can be achieved. Account has been taken of the need to avoid impacting on the amenity and privacy of the adjoining dwellings with the principal windows being provided to the front and rear elevations. The maintenance and indeed enhancing of the present boundary cover and screening should ensure that any resultant development should not have any objectionable impact.

With regards to the proposed density of the site it is calculated that the cumulative total of 4 no. dwellings on a site measuring 1950sq ha would result in a density of 20 dph (dwellings per hectare). It is noted that this part of Newcastle is not subject to any local Planning Policies which restrict or encourage a particular level of housing density.



5.4 Landscape

The existing wooden fence panels on Gower Street will be removed and replaced with attractive railings. The ground around the trees will be opened up onto the street to enhance the street scheme and give a feeling of space. New indigenous plants will be included in the proposal at the front of the properties and around the tree line. Selective thinning works have been proposed in line with pre application advice in order to enhance the active frontage to Gower Street. Full details are set out in the arboricultural report.

Areas of the existing tarmac parking areas and driveways serving both The Birches and The Little House will be removed as indicated on the submitted plans and the ground will be prepared to receive a new turf finish to break up the large areas of hard landscaping. There will be no net increase in hardstanding due to the large levels of existing tarmac driveways and parking spaces. The rear boundary fences of the new dwellings will comprise of a newly planted laurel hedge line, with 1.8m high vertically boarded timber fence to provide privacy in the short term whilst the hedge establishes. The same 1.8 m high vertically boarded timber fences will be used to sub-divide the rear garden areas to the new dwellings.

The main garden areas to the front and rear of the properties will be predominantly laid to lawn with pathways around the perimeter of the properties formed in natural stone paving along with small patio/terrace areas to the rear.

The new shared private driveway will be formed with Neoweb panels infilled with appropriate aggregate laid over a Geotextile membrane with the individual private parking areas to each dwelling formed with a porous brick paver finish to clearly distinguish the private parking areas. This will give a softer appearance and will provide drainage and ecological improvements.



Gower Street existing boundary

5.5 Appearance and Scale

The Birches

The existing building comprises the following rooms (associated with the previous use of the building as a children's home):

- 2 kitchens
- 8 bedrooms (7 en-suite, 1 x separate bathroom)
- 10 toilets
- a boardroom
- 4 offices
- a photocopying room
- 2 living rooms
- a laundry room
- associated store rooms
- a large boiler room
- garage
- basement

The proposal does not seek to extend or make any other external alterations to the existing building, apart from the demolition of the unsympathetic extension to the east which comprises a garage, boiler room and board room. The proposed internal alterations would result in the provision of the following accommodation: on the ground floor a kitchen/diner, utility room, sitting room, dining hallway, lounge, and guest suite; on the first floor 5 ensuite bedrooms and an office.

Externally, bin storage would be provided within the existing building to the rear of the property. The fire escape to the north of the building will be removed and overhead wires between the Little House and The Birches will be removed. Parking spaces would be provided for up to 6 cars. External boundary landscaping would be retained as existing.



The Birches



The Birches east extension

Gower Street

The new dwellings have been designed to complement the large Victorian properties within the conservation area, but reduced in height to be “2 & ½” stories utilising the roof space, rather than the traditional 3 to 4 stories of the villas in the surrounding area to fit comfortably in the Gower Street street scene. At the start of Gower Street is an imposing, tall, 3 storey Victorian building, and adjacent to the north of the Villas is a detached, tall, 2 storey building. The proposed properties will sit unobtrusively between the neighbouring properties. The proposed dwellings will be set back 11m from the road and screened behind a large number of mature, tall trees which will reduce their impact on the street scene.

The development will aim to have as little impact as possible, by incorporating features of the local Victorian architecture with the addition of modern elements to provide a link between the examples of the local heritage and the desire for progressive modern homes.

The proposed building elevations are influenced by the existing building palette present in the area, including elegantly proportioned windows, three sided bays; and steeply pitched slate effect roofs. Deep overhanging eaves, gables, dormer windows and balconies add interest to the buildings and break down the scheme massing visually. The choice of materials are chosen to be simple and blend into the surrounding properties and include a soft red brick with contrasting stone heads and cills.

The scheme creates an intelligent, contemporary response to the site and the character of the local surroundings to provide family homes in a key location close to Newcastle Town Centre. The internal floor areas of the buildings are 276sqm and will target the executive market for which there is a large shortfall of modern, desirable properties within easy walking distance of the town centre. The style gives a modern take on the Victorian era properties, reflecting the desire for contemporary homes with period features which will complement the heritage of the local area.



5.6 Transport, Access and Parking

Transport and Access

For the purposes of this statement, compliance with the current edition of the Building Regulation Part M is assumed to be covered within the detailed design and the proposals, as this is mandatory. It is not intended to therefore provide exhaustive coverage of all means taken to secure such compliance. For the purposes of this statement the definition of “disability” is taken as that in Part 1 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The Villas and The Birches are in a highly sustainable location within walking distance of the town centre, schools, employment and entertainment, and highly accessible by a range of transport options including public transport and cycling. It is considered that each dwelling would create 2 car journeys per day.

The Birches will retain the use of the existing access. The change of use of The Birches from C2 to a dwelling will lead to a significant reduction in the number of journeys down Sidmouth Avenue. The proposal is expected to generate 2 car journeys per day.

Under the existing C2 use, car journeys would be generated from visitors and a range of staff including care staff, kitchen staff, office/administration staff and other support/maintenance staff. If the existing 8 bed layout was used for a nursing home then at least 5 members of care staff would be required each day plus additional support staff and visitors. In a commercial operation many of the downstairs rooms would also be converted to bedrooms which would increase both the number of residents and staff and visitors.

Given the nature of Class C2 use, and the difficult nature of intensive alternative uses, then it is likely that staffing levels would need to be higher in some cases. Many uses would be more intense, and could require one-to-one care. In addition, the building could be utilised as a public or private in-patient or out-patient hospital/ treatment unit providing clinical care. Such uses would generate vehicle movements throughout the day for patients and staff covering various shift patterns.

The new Villas will utilise the existing tarmac access point off Gower Street for which planning permission was approved in 2011 by Staffordshire County Council. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council Transport Development Control were consulted on the application and raised no objections. The officers report stated ‘there is no reason to suggest the proposal would have an adverse impact on highway safety’.

The planning consent was implemented with the car parking bays and the formation of the gated access being implemented following the discharge of conditions 6 and 7 relating to parking details and the provision of pedestrian visibility splays. This proposal will see further improvements to the visibility splay through the removal of the fence panelling and opening up of the area around the trees on Gower Street.

Approved application 11/0003/CPO (Decision notice: N.10/17) set out that there would be 6 members of staff and 8 clients visiting per day. It is reasonable to assume that the 6 members would conduct some of their appointments off site as set out in the application. It is likely that visitors would use the spaces when available (being up to 8 visitors per day or 40 per week). It is considered that the Villas would create fewer car journeys than if the site was used as set out in the approved planning application.

If utilised as a B1/D1 use with D1 use on the ground floor and B1 use of the first floor then the building could be used as both a dental practice and office space. There could be two dental surgeons and a reception area downstairs accessed from either the front door / central hallway or the rear door.

The upstairs would be wholly B1 office space and could be either independent from downstairs with its own access, or joint office space for the downstairs D1 use.

Combined staff and visitor journeys in and out of the access point would far exceed the residential proposal, as would other less intensive commercial uses.

Under this scenario it is not unreasonable to envisage the following return car journeys:

Dental Surgery	10 staff journeys per day created by 5 staff (2 x surgeons, 2 x assistants, 1 x receptionist) appointment times every 20 mins equating to 3 per hour per surgeon or 6 per hour in total 8 working hours per day 96 patient journeys per day
Office	3-4 workers per room 3 offices 9-12 total office occupants 19-24 journeys per day 24 car journeys created by 12 members of staff
Total	130 journeys per day

The Villas are expected to generate 2 journeys each day, which equates to 8 journeys. This is a significant reduction from the current use.

As set out above the existing commercial use classes of both buildings are intensive and do not require any planning permission to operate, as such, it is the default fall back position. The proposal will bring about a significant reduction in car journeys against the overall fall back position.

Parking

The combined site currently has 17 parking spaces. The proposal is for 6 parking spaces for The Birches and 8 for the Villas, giving a reduction of 3 car parking spaces on the site as a whole.

The application for the conversion of the Little House to an office suggested that many of the 8 visitors per day would utilise the existing on street car parking provision. The proposed Villas have adequate parking provision for the future residents, and on street car parking use would be limited to household visitors. The proposal considers there will be a reduction in demand for on street car parking from the current commercial use.

5.7 Design Principles and Pre Application Advice

A substantial amount of pre application discussions have taken place with the planning department which has influenced the overall proposal. The following key principles have been agreed at pre application stage following iterative discussions:

1. There are no objections to the broad principle of residential development in this location which is within the urban area close to the Town Centre.
2. Residential villa style properties facing Gower Street with the frontage opened up slightly (perhaps by some appropriate/sensitive thinning works) and a higher quality boundary treatment would be an opportunity to improve this edge of the conservation area.
3. An active frontage to Gower Street is the correct approach and makes sense that the plot of land which was incorporated into The Birches historically now fronts Gower Street.
4. The design of the villas is appropriately detailed and interesting which will complement the character of the properties both along Sidmouth Avenue and around Gower Street.
5. The 4 properties sit well within the existing space and have enough room around them not to appear out of place with its context.
6. The overhanging eaves in the main gable and large amount of glass will add interest to the design and give a contemporary flavour to the traditional style villa.
7. The building line is not dis-similar from the existing one and although slightly set back, properties which turn the corner of Gower Street, further up are set considerably further back. This slight setting back can accommodate the line of trees and is consistent with the general pattern of development on Gower Street.
8. Whilst a brick wall to the front of the properties would be the preferred option, railings and a hedge will be acceptable and will not interfere with tree roots. The timber panel fence is an inappropriate treatment to this edge and to open it up with an active frontage would be an improvement to the Conservation Area.
9. The refurbishment of The Birches as a single dwelling house, with some external alterations, will be a positive change for this part of Sidmouth Avenue and to the Conservation Area.

As discussed elsewhere in this document, the proposal offers a unique opportunity to reinforce the residential nature of this part of the conservation area by removing a number of intensive commercial uses and replacing them with 5 attractive villas, which will improve the quantity and quality of housing supply in the area. The high quality design and reduction in intensity is viewed to bring significant enhancements to the conservation area, especially when the true intensity of the existing fall back planning class of the site is taken into full consideration.

6. HERITAGE

6.1 The Brampton Conservation Area (CA)

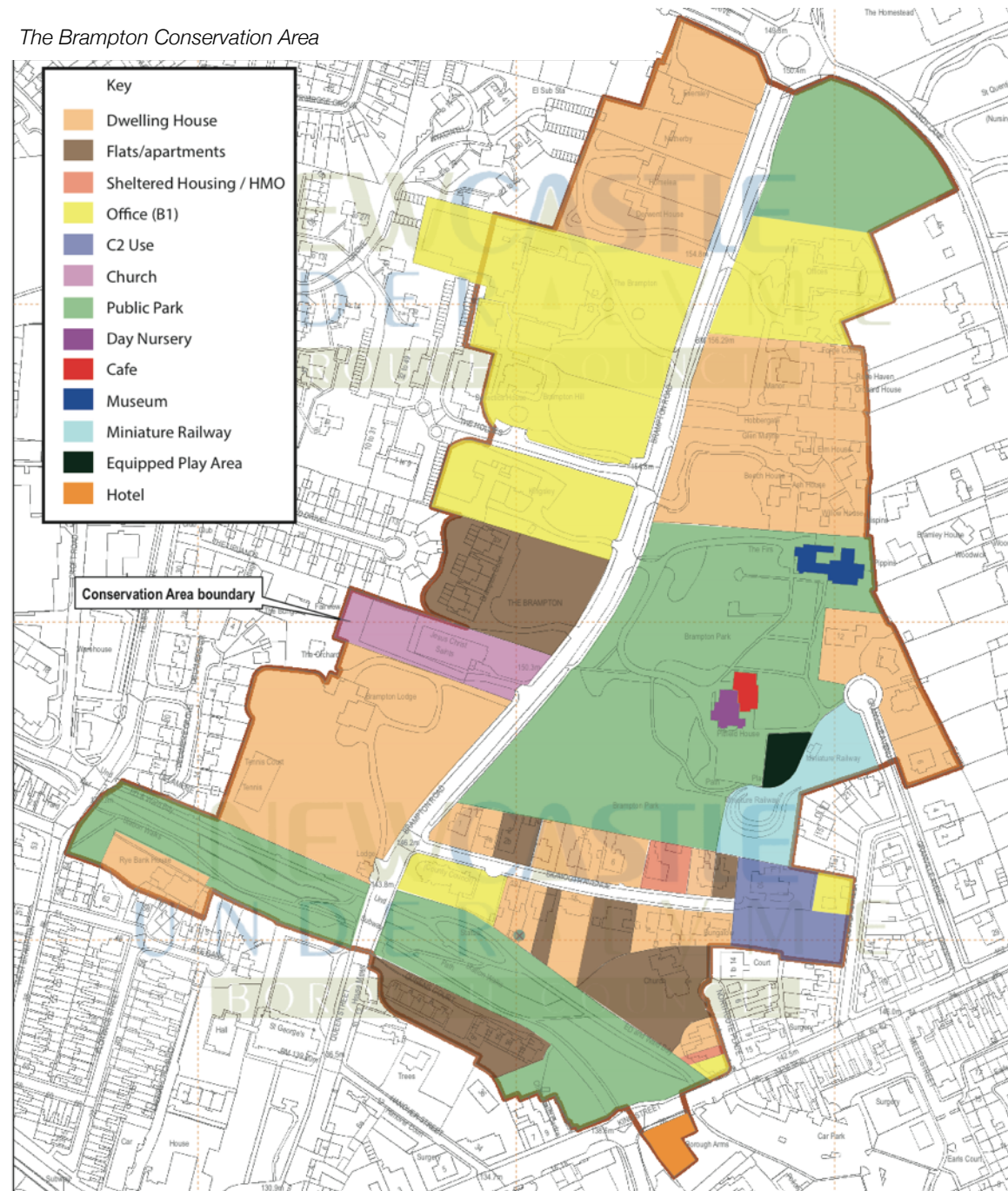
The CA was designated in 1984. There is no up-to-date character appraisal that identifies the special character of the Brampton CA. The area is diverse in building uses, architectural styles, spatial features and plot sizes (see opposite).

Sidmouth Avenue and the wider Conservation Area are characterised by a range of buildings and uses. Some dwellings are large detached dwellings, and others are semi-detached. The dwellings in the surrounding area are a mix of 2 and 3 storey dwellings, most of which appear to have been constructed in the 19th and early 20th Century. In more recent times, some dwellings along Sidmouth Avenue have been subdivided into flats, and some buildings are used for offices/commercial units.

The properties along Sidmouth Avenue have a number of different uses such as offices, dwelling houses or apartment buildings. All of the buildings on Sidmouth Avenue have off-street car parking provision.

At the junction of Sidmouth Avenue and Brampton Road (to the south of Sidmouth Avenue) is the Staffordshire County Council Registry Office, which includes an associated car park to the side and rear, which is accessed off Sidmouth Avenue. Number 7 Sidmouth Avenue is

The Brampton Conservation Area



managed by Arch (formerly know as the Elizabeth Trust and a subsidiary of Staffordshire Housing Association) and provides sheltered housing, support and advice for people experiencing domestic abuse, people in housing need and people who need support to live independently.

At the junction of Gower Street and King Street are two commercial buildings, both with car parking which is accessed off Gower Street. Adjacent to the south east of the site is a student HMO.

The description of the area and the uses of the buildings confirm that the area is by no means a quiet residential area, but a mixed commercial and residential area which includes a number of buildings that have been converted into flats.

It is also clear that there is no one overriding architectural style, use of materials, or colours in the area. Buildings of modern design feature as frequently as the large, imposing and important architecture from the Victorian era; each of these Victorian buildings being unique and giving no strict design or palettes for influence.

A selection of dwellings in the CA is shown on the following page to highlight the lack of uniformity across the CA. The first section identifies buildings in the CA which are of Victorian influence, and the second section shows a selection of dwellings in the CA with other influences.



Properties in the CA of Victorian era



Dwellings in the CA of other influence

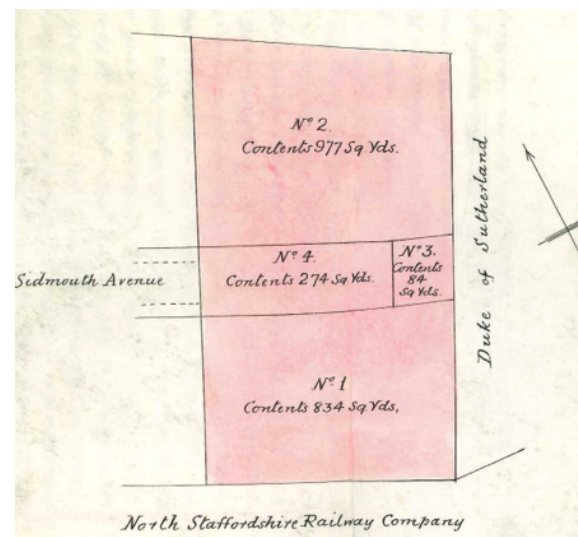
6.2 Site History

The Birches was originally built as a residence sometime before 1877. The OS map 1877-78 shows that the land to the east of the site was a separate field and was not originally part of the dwelling or Sidmouth Avenue.



1877-78 Ordnance Survey County Series Map

In 1915 The Birches changed ownership. The map from the conveyance report shows that The Birches was the west half of the site only, and did not include land to the east of the site which is documented as being in the Duke of Sutherland estate.



1915 Conveyance Report 24

From 1898 to 1938 OS maps show the land to the east of the site as being part of Gower Street. It is not known which year this land was annexed into The Birches.



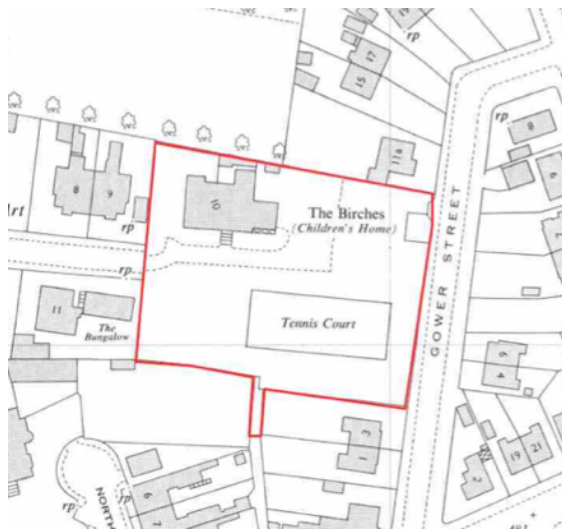
1922-23 Ordnance Survey County Series Map

At some point after 1915 and before 1963-4, The Birches changed ownership and went from being a private dwelling to a residential institution. During this time The Birches also incorporated the land to the east of the site. By 1963-64 the combined site was used as a Children's Home. There is a hardstanding tennis court in the grounds and a garage adjoining Gower Street.

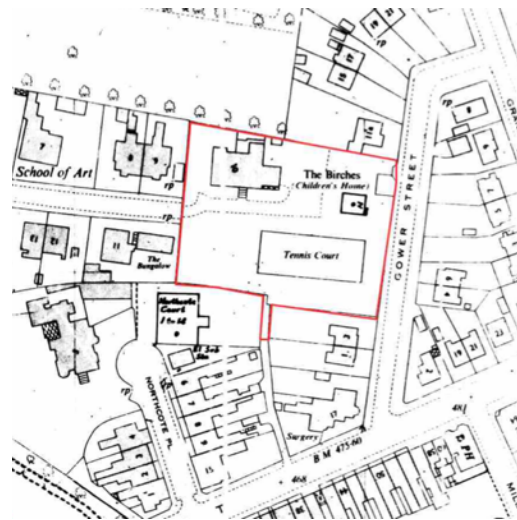
The Little House had been constructed by 1976-77 (figure 5), and the garage adjoining Gower Street remains visible.

The whole site was sold to Staffordshire County Council (SCC) in 1981, who registered it with the Land Registry in 2008.

In 2011 the Little House was converted to an office building with vehicular access from Gower Street. The combined site remained in the ownership of SCC until it was closed in 2014 and later sold as a whole.



1963-64 National Grid Map



1976-77 National Grid Map



2008 Land Registry

6.3 Assessment

The site is circa 1 acre of brownfield land which includes two vacant buildings for which a viable future use needs to be determined. Neither building are listed nor of historical significance. There is no public access onto the site and there are very limited views into the site. These factors significantly restrict the role the site plays in the CA and its contribution to local amenity.

The proposal seeks to bring The Birches back to its original residential use, set within its original half an acre grounds. The proposal includes a range of aesthetic improvements including soft landscaping and re-siting of the garage to enhance the setting of the building.

This change of use is a notable enhancement for the conservation area, and is the optimum use for this half of the heritage asset. Advice obtained from the pre application stage stated that *“the refurbishment of this property with some external alterations as a single dwelling house will be a positive change for this part of Sidmouth Avenue and to the Conservation Area”*.

The CA has previously been documented as characterised by 19th century high and middle status housing and parkland. The land to the east of the site currently shares none of these characteristics and appears to have been included based on the land ownership structure present in 1984 when the CA was designated. This proposal seeks to introduce some of these important characteristics into this part of the CA.

The historical site boundary will be reintroduced through the continuation of the building line along Gower Street, as was originally intended. This will see the demolition of the Little House which is arguably the least attractive building in the CA, and the introduction of 4 attractive Villas of high design. This will ensure site viability whilst helping to contribute to the housing supply.

Advice obtained during the pre-application stage stated that an active frontage to Gower Street was the *“correct approach ... and makes sense that the plot of land which was incorporated into The Birches historically now fronts Gower Street”*.

Much attention has been taken to the design of the Villas to ensure that they will be a positive addition to the CA. The design has been influenced by successful, completed schemes in similar conservation areas outside of The Borough. They seek to build on the aesthetically pleasing attributes of the Victorian character found along Sidmouth Avenue and Gower Street, whilst adding a contemporary edge.

The proposal will provide many visual enhancements including improved views into the conservation area, enhanced landscaping, the removal of inappropriately designed buildings and replacement of inappropriate boundary treatment with a more attractive design.

More significantly will be the enhancements to the character of the area. The historic intention for both The Birches and Gower Street was residential. The proposal will see the loss of the commercial use and the C2 use and the reintroduction of high status housing. This will lead to a significant reduction in car journeys through the CA, and the strengthening of the residential element of the streets.



Gower Street view of the site



Sidmouth Avenue view of the site

7. SUMMARY

The proposal offers a unique opportunity to reinforce the residential nature of this part of the conservation area by removing a number of intensive commercial uses and replacing them with 5 attractive villas, which will improve the quantity and quality of housing supply in the area.

The high quality design and reduction in intensity from both a transport and occupancy perspective is viewed to bring significant enhancements to the conservation area, especially when the true intensity of the existing fall back planning class of the site is taken into full consideration.