

Planning Appeal  
APP/D1265/W/24/3353912

**Tess Square & Butts Close, Marnhull**

**Proof of Evidence Relating to Matters of  
Design, Character and Appearance**



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## **1. Qualifications and Experience**

- 1.1. I am Jonathan Taylor, an Associate at Corstorphine & Wright (formerly BrightSpace Architects) and qualified Architect. I am registered with the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and professionally Chartered with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Architecture BSc(Hons) from the University of Bath and a Diploma in Architecture DipArch from Oxford Brookes University.
- 1.2. I joined BrightSpace Architects (now Corstorphine & Wright), based in Fordingbridge Hampshire, in November 2014. Prior to that, I spent 6 years at Archial Architects (formerly SMC Charter Architects), based in Bournemouth Dorset. In total I have over 19 years of experience in architectural practice, with over 16 years working for practices in the Dorset and Hampshire region. I have extensive experience in the design of residential masterplans, mixed-use schemes, rural developments and have been involved in many challenging planning applications with a variety of uses.
- 1.3. Having spent my early years prior to university growing up in the East Dorset village of Corfe Mullen, I have lived in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) conurbation since 2008. The combination of my roots in the county and the majority of my project experience in the region give me a solid understanding of the area that the subject of this appeal is situated.
- 1.4. I personally oversaw the concept and detailed design of the scheme that is the subject of this appeal and have been involved since our instruction in 2022. This involvement has included site analysis, concept design, design development and the preparation of a hybrid full/outline planning application.
- 1.5. The evidence which I have prepared and provided for this appeal is my true and professional opinion and in accordance with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Code of Professional Conduct.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. This Proof of Evidence has been prepared in support of an appeal against Dorset Council's refusal to grant planning permission for development of two sites in Marnhull, Dorset. The appeal has been lodged by Chapman Lily Planning Ltd on behalf of Mr Paul Crocker (the Appellant), under Section 78(1) of the Town and









**Figure 3: Butts Close Indicative Proposed Site Layout (Outline Planning) Appendix JT4**

### 3. Scope of Evidence

3.1. Planning permission was refused for five reasons. This Proof of Evidence covers elements of the first and fourth reasons for refusal.

**Reason 1.** The proposed development by reason of its location outside of the settlement boundary of Marnhull would be contrary to Policies 2, 6, and 20 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (January 2016) [CD3.001].

**Reason 4.** The proposed development by reason of its siting, scale (in terms of mass and quantum), and appearance would have a less than substantial harm on grade I listed Church of St Gregory, grade II\* listed Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn, and Marnhull Conservation Area. It is considered that the harm identified would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal contrary to Policies 2 and 5 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (CD3.001), and paragraphs 199, 200, and 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

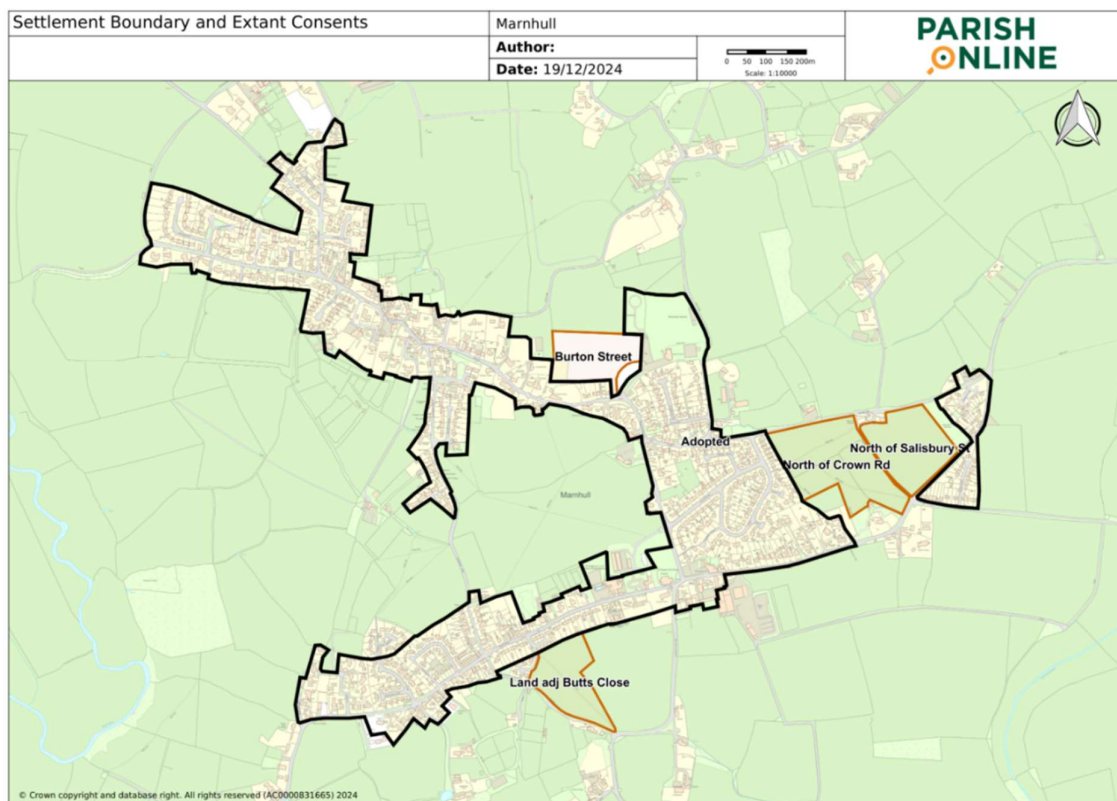
- 3.2. The above reasons for refusal have now been effectively subsumed by Main Issue 1 noted in the Case Management Conference Summary (CD4.016), namely:  
***“The effect of the development on the character and appearance of Marnhull and on the setting (and significance) of its heritage assets.”*** This proof of evidence addresses Main Issue 1 specifically.
- 3.3. This will include the effect of the development on the existing character of the village as well as its heritage assets. Village character has been raised in a number of representations.
- 3.4. This Proof of Evidence should be read in conjunction with the submitted application drawings and documents. Particular attention is drawn to the Design & Access Statement (May 2023) [CD1.040].
- 3.5. It should also be noted that impact on Heritage Assets is covered extensively in the evidence by Kevin Morris Heritage Planning Ltd (CD11.004).
- 3.6. Relevant planning policy; North Dorset Local Plan (NDLP) [CD3.001], the NPPF (November 2024), Draft Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan (February 2025) [CD6.001], Marnhull Design Guidance and Codes (January 2025) [CD6.002] have all been referenced in the following sections where appropriate. The Draft Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan (February 2025) and the Marnhull Design Guidance and Codes (January 2025) having only reached Regulation 14 Stage, are not at an advanced stage and are therefore of limited weight.

## 4. Development Plan Context

- 4.1. I will briefly summarise the development plan context for the proposed development. However, the full planning policy arguments are addressed in the evidence of Clare Spiller (CD11.001) and to whom I will defer in respect thereof.
- 4.2. Marnhull evolved from several hamlets that conjoined over time to form the village we see today. This has left the central part of the village open and surrounded by three dispersed centres containing public facilities. This application seeks to provide 122 much needed homes, primarily family housing, and a new community focal point for the village in ‘Tess Square’; containing a range of uses that fulfils the existing needs of the village, as well as providing additional facilities to serve the growing population of Marnhull. ‘Tess Square’ is



located in the heart of the village and is convenient to access for most residents in Marnhull. Recently approved residential developments in and around the village will both need and support the proposed retail and commercial offers and will be able to access and enjoy the proposed green spaces.



**Figure 4:** Map showing Settlement Boundary and Extant Consents from Marnhull Parish council Statement of Case. Appendix JT5

4.3. Although outside of the settlement boundary, the proposed development is in a central location in the context of Marnhull.

4.4. The NDLP (CD3.001) ‘Policy 2: Core Spatial Strategy’ states: *“Blandford (Forum and St. Mary), Gillingham, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton are identified as the main towns in North Dorset. They will function as the main service centres in the District and will be the main focus for growth, both for the vast majority of housing and other development....Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside of the four main towns.”* Marnhull is listed as one of the eighteen larger villages identified as a focus for growth outside of the 4 main towns.

4.5. Para 4.13 of the NDLP (CD3.001) states; *“where possible, development should be located in areas that are, or can be, made more sustainable by virtue of being*

*close to a good range of facilities, in line with Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy. This will enable building users to meet their everyday needs within a short distance of their location. In all instances the first travel option should be through sustainable travel modes such as walking or cycling, rather than through the use of the private car.”* If residential development is required, additional local services to serve existing and new residents should be sited in as sustainable location as possible i.e. the shortest walking/cycling distance for the maximum number of people.

4.6. Marnhull Parish Council’s Statement of Case (CD4.011) states: *“Unlike most villages within Dorset which have grown around a crossroads or village green, Marnhull has developed from several hamlets some of which have joined over the years creating a distinctive linear settlement pattern with outlying areas.”* Whilst the hamlets that grew to make Marnhull were linear, the current form of the village is centred on the meeting point of its three main ‘arms’, as is evidenced by the location of the church, public house, doctors’ surgery and pharmacy.

4.7. Although The Reg 14 Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan has not reached an advanced stage, the Draft Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan (February 2025) (CD6.001) has still been referenced. ‘Policy 3 *Green gaps, local green spaces and settlement pattern*’ is particularly relevant to this issue: *“The historic, linear settlement pattern will be respected through ensuring that development does not significantly alter the historic linear arrangement of Marnhull, or begin to represent a nucleated village (around a new centre), or lead to the coalescence of its distinct parts.”* Further development extending the existing linear routes would put services and houses further away from the centre of the village. The most appropriate and sustainable location for new housing and local services is as close to the centre of the village as possible. Since the linear hamlets which make up Marnhull conjoined over time, the current form of Marnhull already shares many characteristics of a nucleated settlement with a centre in the vicinity of Church Hill.

4.8. The proposed Marnhull Design Guidance and Codes (CD6.002) section 2.1.1 Settlement Pattern (not an advanced stage of adoption, therefore of limited weight) gives some further detail: *“The parish is characterised by its linear settlement pattern, with most dwellings located alongside the main roads of Burton Street / Church Hill and New Street. Historic maps demonstrate that the village expanded in this way with the first dwellings spanning off these roads...In line with its linear settlement pattern, Marnhull lacks a defined village centre. Rather, having initially grown from a number of smaller hamlets, the village has a number of hubs. One lies to the north along Burton Street where a cluster of shops are located, whilst another lies to the south near to St Gregory’s Church, school*



*and Crown public house. The Village Hall just off Burton Street and to the north of the main housing cluster is also an important focal point.” Church Hill is specifically mentioned as one of the roads forming the ‘linear settlement pattern’. This is currently mostly developed along the east side, the Tess Square proposals would provide development on the west side of the road. There is acceptance that Marnhull lacks a defined village centre, without a strong positive argument for maintaining that characteristic. Tess Square looks to tie the three ‘arms’ of development together by creating a new central heart to the village in a sustainable and accessible location.*

- 4.9. The Tess Square development would still allow countryside to penetrate into the heart of the village whilst making it more accessible. It would therefore align with Policy 3 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan (CD6.001): *“The extent and layout of development should seek to ensure that the countryside continues to penetrate into the heart of the village, providing a network of accessible natural, attractive green spaces within and adjoining the village, designed to enhance biodiversity and reduce flood risk.”*

## **5. The effect of the development on the character and appearance of Marnhull (Issue 1)**

- 5.1 Design, in and of itself, is not one of the reasons for refusal. Whilst there is some overlap between my evidence and that of Kevin Morris (heritage) [CD11.004], my evidence concentrates on the design principles underlying the proposals and how they respond to the character of the area, including the heritage assets.
- 5.2 It is acknowledged that Marnhull Parish Council in capacity as a Rule 6 party has expressed concern over the impact of the proposal on the character of Marnhull, specifically referencing ‘NDLP Policy 24: Design’ (CD3.001). With the ‘Tess Square’ element looking for full planning permission, more detail can be given to this part of the application, whereas Butts Close is outline so comments can be made on the design intent and illustrative layout, however the detail would be addressed in a future Reserved Matters application.
- 5.3 To assist with addressing the concerns of Marnhull Parish Council and to assess the level of impacts on heritage assets (reason 4), a series of verified views (Accurate Visual Representations) have been undertaken and can be found in Appendix JT1. The levels of visualisation are AVR level 1 for Butts Close and AVR level 3 for Tess Square with all visuals represented using the Type 4 (survey

verified) methodology. For the Tess Square development, vegetation with foliage coverage was matched to the season of the base imagery, in this instance, most trees were bare but still demonstrated some screening.

- 5.4 The Decision Notice and Officer Report cites NDLP (CD3.001) 'Policy 5: The Historic Environment' in reason for refusal number 4. 'It is considered that the harm identified would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal'. The relevant section of the policy states *"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use."*
- 5.5 The proposal would deliver a range of public benefits (aligning with Local Plan Policy 5 & 24 (CD3.001)), which are covered in 'CD11.001 Planning Evidence of Clare Spiller (Chapman Lilly Planning)'. Some of these benefits relate particularly to design and character, including:
- Enable easier access for people to appreciate heritage assets and their setting (aligns with NPPF para 203 and para 6.7 of the draft Neighbourhood Plan (CD6.001)).
  - Deliver amenity space and improving connectivity through the village.
  - Provide and increase public access to significant green open spaces and play spaces (aligning with NDLP Para 7.127 (CD3.001)).
- 5.6 Maintaining views to and respecting the setting of heritage assets has been at the forefront of the design concept from the outset. Early in the design process, as the site analysis and design strategy was developed, four key view corridors towards St Gregory's Church tower were established. The view cones marked in orange in Figure 5 were the primary views of great significance (numbers 1 and 4). These are on the main vehicular approaches to the village from the north and south. Secondary views shown in yellow (numbers 2 and 3) are from key points on Public Rights of Way. This gave a framework to where the areas of Public Open Space would be positioned and generally kept clear of development. This aligns with the Draft Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan (MNDP) [CD6.001] Policy 5: Views, which states *"Development should preserve and where possible enhance the much valued views of local landmarks and important views"*.



**Figure 5:** Aerial photo with proposed and extant schemes showing 4no. key views to St Gregory's Church tower. Appendix JT6

5.7 NDLP (CD3.001) Policy 24: Design states: *“Development should be designed to improve the character and quality of the area within which it is located. Proposals for development will be required to justify how the relevant aspects of development form address the relevant design principles and standards set out in Figures 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 of this policy and how the design responds to the local context....Developments will be expected to incorporate existing mature trees and hedgerows and other landscape features into the public realm of the development layout and provide sufficient additional landscape planting to integrate the development into its surroundings.”*

5.8 The schemes make a positive contribution to the village character through substantial tree planting throughout the proposed sites and preservation of existing trees and hedgerows, aligning with NDLP (CD3.001) Policy 5, 15 and 24, and Draft MNDP (CD6.001) Policy 2. The proposal seeks to retain and reinforce the existing hedgerows along Schoolhouse Lane and Chippel Lane to maintain a soft border along the Lane and a green outlook from the properties directly opposite.

5.9 NDLP (CD3.001) Policy 24: Design Figure 10.1 Design Principles includes the following points:

5.10 *“Character: In places that already have a positive image or character, the design of new development should respond to and reinforce locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture. In places where positive elements are lacking, proposals should seek to create a distinctive and coherent sense of place through the use of intelligent and imaginative design solutions.”* The Tess Square and Butts Close proposals look to build on the existing positive character in their layout, choice of materials, building forms and green spaces. At Butts Close, the informal and traditional character of the surrounding Marnhull cottages and two-storey buildings is continued into the site by setting the plots at varying distances back from the access road and from each other; varying the plots’ orientations to present both side and front elevations and including a mixture of detached, semidetached, terraced 2-storey dwellings with gables, dormers and chimney stacks, as well as 2 and 3 bedroom bungalows. AVR02 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1 shows how the proposed Tess Square uses agricultural building forms and local materials to sit comfortably in its context.



**Figure 6:** Tess Square AVR02 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1

5.11 *“Continuity and Enclosure: Development should promote the continuity of street frontages, reinforce existing spatial patterns and create new and exciting spaces with public and private areas clearly distinguished....Public space should*



*incorporate an element of natural surveillance.”* Both schemes achieve a continuity of street frontage and clear distinction between public and private space in different ways. Butts Close generally uses perimeter block layouts, with back-to-back gardens and houses fronting onto the streets and green spaces, providing active frontages to these spaces.

5.12 The commercial/retail units at Tess Square front onto the shared car park and face towards the vehicle access point. This forms an enclosed square by utilising the existing Doctors Surgery and Pharmacy buildings.



**Figure 7:** Butts Close Strategy Diagram. From Design & Access Statement (CD1.040b), p.45.



**Figure 8:** Tess Square Birds-eye View from Northeast. From Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a), p.35. Appendix JT7

5.13 *“Ease of Movement: Layouts should be designed to promote accessibility and local permeability making connections with neighbouring areas and reinforcing existing connections.”* Tess Square utilises an existing vehicular access off Church Hill via the Doctors Surgery and Pharmacy car park. The primary access to the Butts Close Scheme is from the existing cul-de-sac at Butts Close, with a second access from Schoolhouse Lane. Both schemes work with and incorporate the existing Public Rights of Way, aligning with p-32 of ‘Marnhull Design Guidance and Codes’ (CD6.002). The upgraded public footpaths at Tess Square will make it easier to move between existing services from Burton Street to New Street over an enhanced green open space.

5.14 *“Quality of the Public Realm: Where development creates a new, or affects, an existing public space, it should be safe, attractive, uncluttered and well related to the surrounding buildings.”* Both schemes look to enhance existing agricultural fields into a more species diverse and biodiverse public open space, complete with enhanced walking and cycling routes. As previously noted these have been designed to maintain important views towards the Grade I listed St Gregory’s church tower.





**Figure 9:** Tess Square Birds-eye View from South west. From Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a), p.36. Appendix JT8

5.15 *“Legibility: A legible development has a clear image that is easily understood and a layout that is easy for people to find their way around.”* Legibility has been achieved by making a clear separation of public and private areas, maintaining view corridors to the church tower and fronting the commercial/retail uses onto the shared car park. At Tess Square the primary retail offer is located front-and-centre to visitors arriving from Church Hill via the Doctors’ Surgery car park, the entrance of which is accommodated in the tallest and most visually prominent of the proposed buildings. This building forms the first of two visual and functional ‘anchors’, around which sits the remainder of the proposed buildings. The second of these two anchors is the café/ restaurant located in the ‘threshing barn’, at the northwest end of the proposals. The remaining buildings form fully and partially enclosed courtyards, providing space for parking courts, outdoor retail spaces and outdoor dining spaces. The proposed buildings will screen most of the proposed car parking from views back towards the proposed development from the open space to the west. Strategic gaps between the buildings on their south-western edges will allow and encourage visitors to move from the development to the accessible green spaces to the south and west. Additional routes along desire lines complement the existing pedestrian network and improve connectivity



**Figure 10:** Visual of Tess Square shop front. From Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a), p.33. Appendix JT9

5.16 *“Diversity: A diversity of uses, building forms and layout in a development will provide visual interest and variety whilst avoiding conflict between neighbouring uses.”* Tess Square utilises a number of traditional agricultural building typologies with a palette of local materials to offer a rich visual interest that blends in with its surroundings. Butts Close uses a range of housing types, with terraces, semi-detached and detached housing of 1, 1.5 and 2 storey buildings.

5.17 NDLP (CD3.001) Policy 24: Design Figure 10.2 Aspects of Development Form includes the following points:

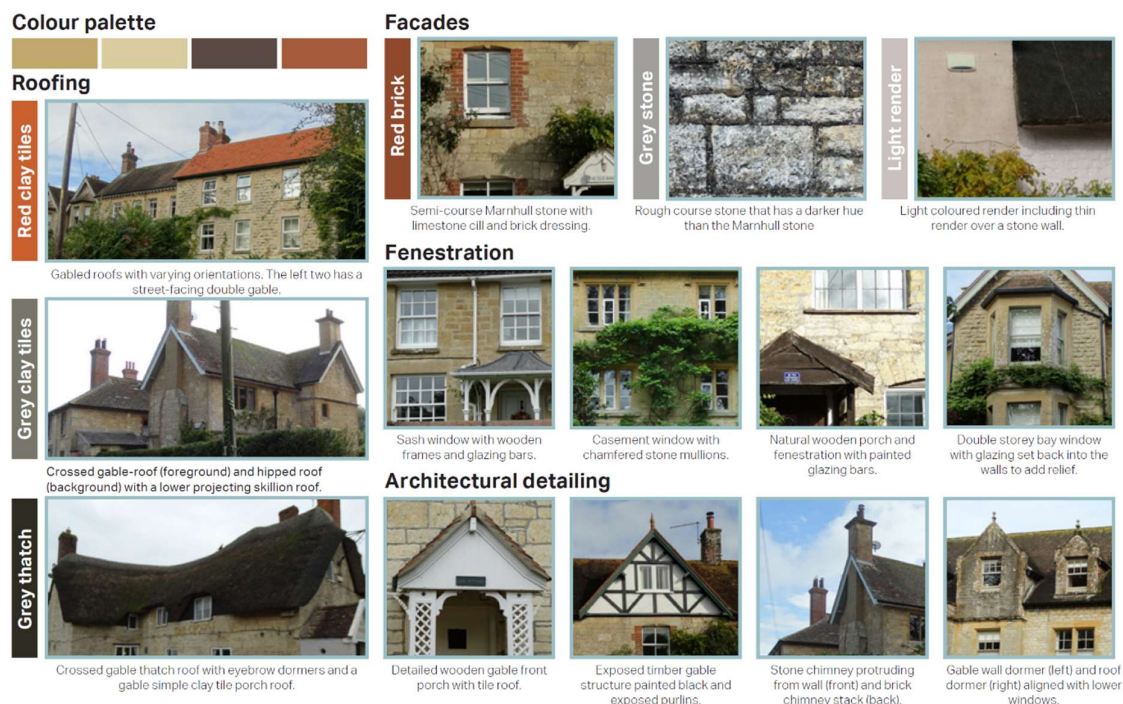
5.18 *“Scale – Height and Massing: The scale, massing and height of a proposal should be related to any adjoining buildings, the general pattern of heights in the area, views, vistas and landmarks.”* The height of buildings proposed at Butts Close range from 1-2 storeys, with lower heights on the eastern side to reduce adverse impacts on views to St Gregory’s Church and the open fields adjacent. On the East side of the site bungalows and chalet bungalows have been proposed to keep the building height scale in relation to Schoolhouse Lane as low as possible to respect this context of an important route into Marnhull. Density of the proposed scheme is low, with large swathes of green open space to ensure view corridors are maintained. The impact on the rural character along Schoolhouse Lane and Chippel Lane would be minimal due to the retainment of tall hedgerows, a buffer between the development and the hedgerow, low building heights, and front door/driveway access from roads within the site.



**5.19 “Appearance - Details and Materials: The details of a scheme refer to the craftsmanship, building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting of a building or structure. It includes all building elements such as openings and bays, entrances, roofscapes and façades. The richness of a building lies in its use of materials including their texture, colour, pattern and durability that contribute to the attractiveness of its appearance and the character of an area.”** At Tess Square, the palette of materials has been inspired by the historic buildings of Marnhull as well as farm buildings throughout Dorset. This has led to most of the walls being made from a mix of rough cut and smooth dressed stone, slate coloured roof tiles and timber panels. The business units have conservation style rooflights set within the roof tiles. The ‘Threshing barn café’ has large timber barn doors either side of its entrance. The cycle and bin stores at either end are clad in ‘hit and miss’ timber cladding. Lintels are a mix of stone, timber and stone arches. Whilst the housing scheme at Butts Close is outline, the design details incorporated would resemble that of the local characteristics of Marnhull, with the use of Marnhull Stone and a mix of clay and slate tiles.

## Marnhull material and vernacular palette overview

**Figure 26:** Positive examples of material and vernacular building features found throughout Marnhull.

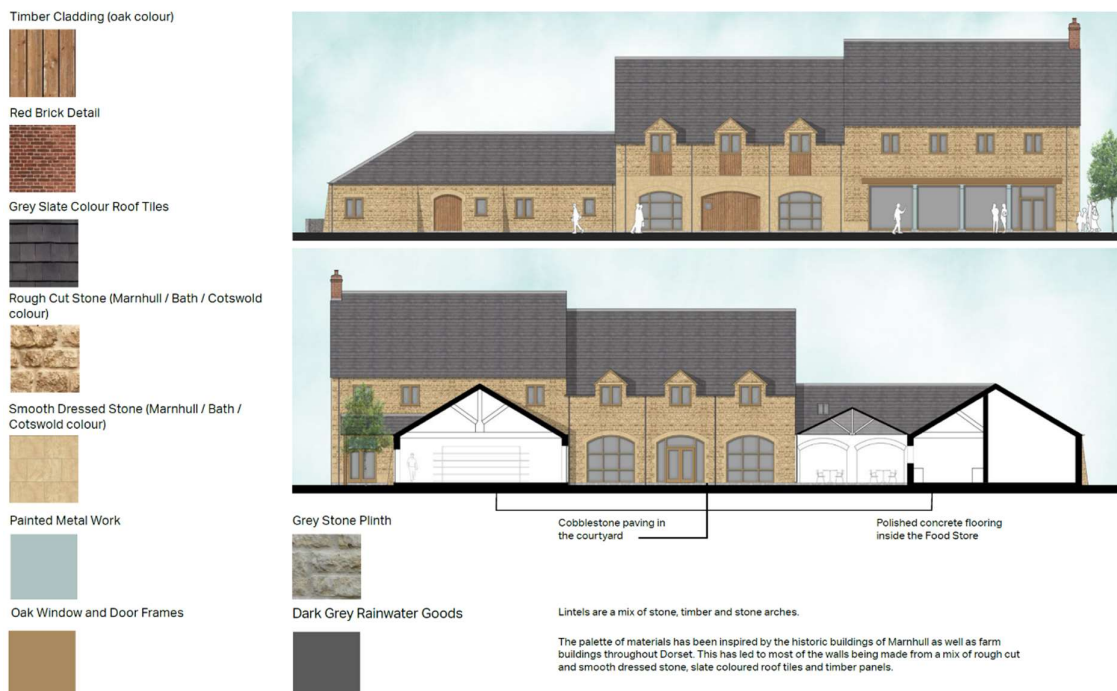


**Figure 11:** Marnhull material and vernacular palette overview from Marnhull Design Guidance and Codes, p-34 (CD6.002) Appendix JT10

5.20 Materiality - Housing in the village is typified by the use and inclusion of:

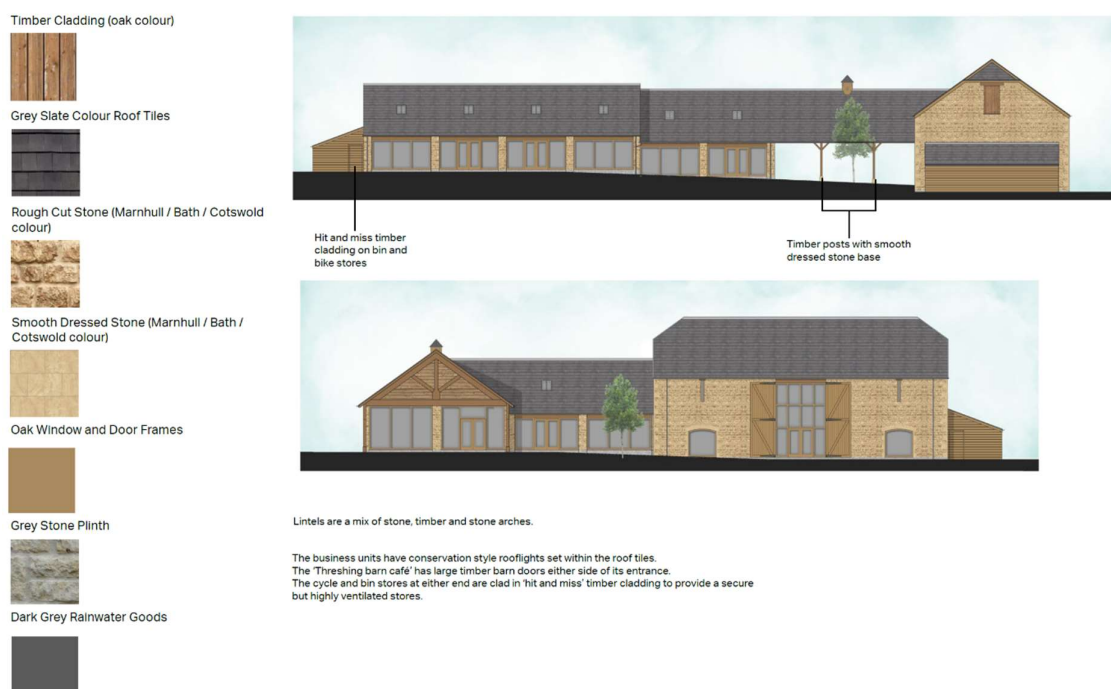
- Locally-quarried Marnhull stone
- Predominantly slate roof tiles
- Blank gable ends
- Brick chimneys
- Half dormers
- Roof pitches of 40 and 45 degrees
- Lean-to single-storey 'additions' at the ends of taller buildings
- Relatively small windows

## MATERIALITY - FOOD STORE



**Figure 12:** Tess Square Materiality – Food Store diagram from p-31 of Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a) Appendix JT11

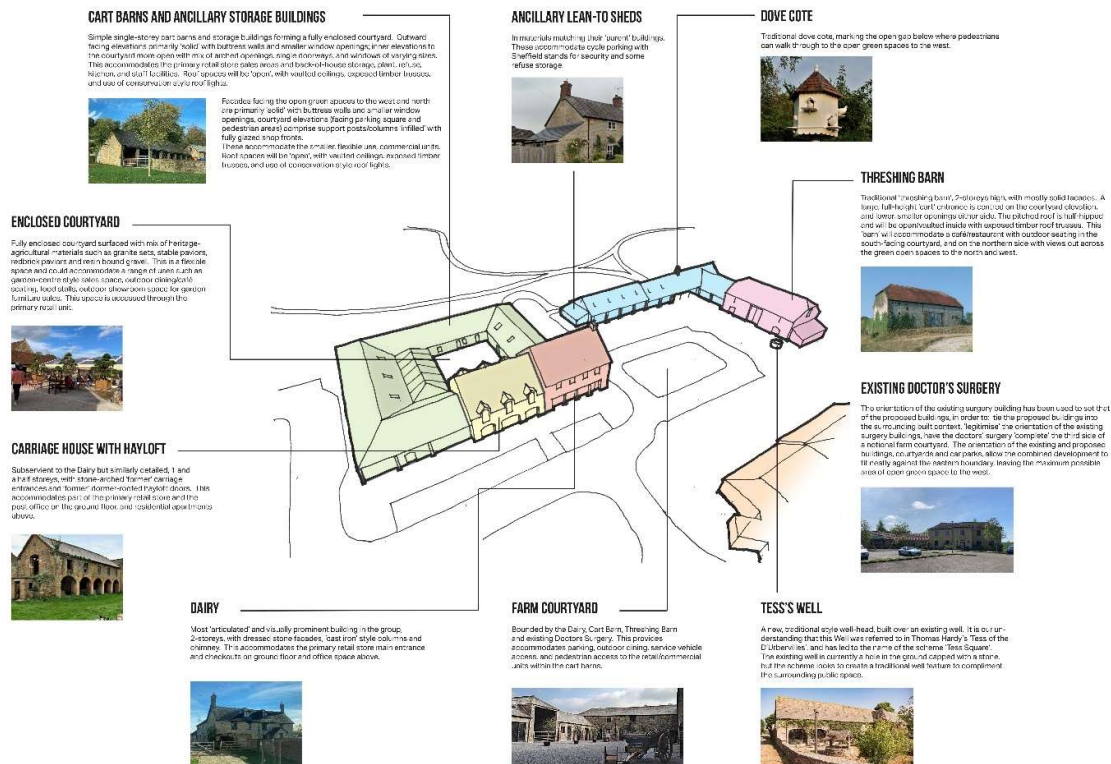
## MATERIALITY - BUSINESS UNITS



**Figure 13:** Tess Square Materiality – Business Units diagram from p-32 of Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a) Appendix JT12 & JT13

5.21 The conception of Tess Square started with studies of local traditional farm layouts as a source of inspiration. Traditional Dorset farms tend to be laid out in a very orthogonal geometry, often around courtyards, with a preference for simple rectangular building forms and 90 degree angles. Therefore, since the scheme looks to incorporate the existing Doctors Surgery and Pharmacy building, the geometry of this should be used to set out an orthogonal series of buildings around courtyards and parking areas. This also relates the existing geometry of the Doctors Surgery and Pharmacy building to the proposals to legitimise its currently 'abstract' orientation.





**Figure 14:** Tess Square Typology diagram, p-25 of Design & Access Statement (CD1.040)

Appendix JT14



**Figure 15:** Visual of Tess Square 'threshing barn' café, p-34 of Design & Access Statement (CD1.040a) Appendix JT15



5.22 The Case Officer Report states that *“the proposed development is perceived to erode the building’s historic relational legibility with the immediate extent of the encompassing agricultural landscape.”* The agrarian setting of St Gregory’s Church is mostly appreciated from the north, in the fields between the church and Burton Street. This is in a large part maintained by the proposed green spaces, and buildings that will appear as a grouping of rural, agricultural farm buildings, built in natural local materials, and entirely appropriate to their setting. AVR01 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1 shows how the proposed Tess Square sits subtly in the existing landscape and maintains the key view to St Gregory’s church tower.



**Figure 16:** Tess Square AVR01 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1

5.23 The Tess Square proposal also includes the removal of existing dilapidated agricultural sheds at the southern edge of the proposal site, which will improve the visual setting of the listed farm house and church.

5.24 The Butts Close site has a higher degree of separation from the Church setting since the built form along New Street sits between the two. However, a green setting has been maintained from the two key viewpoints as identified previously, by the positioning of generous areas of green open space within these view corridors. AVR04 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1 shows the view

through the gap in the hedgerow through which visitors will get a clear view of St Gregory's Church when they arrive to Marnhull from the south along the B3092.



**Figure 17:** Butts Close AVR04 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1

5.25 *“There is scope for the area to attract visitors interested in its heritage and beautiful countryside”* such as *“through the framing of key views through appropriate landscaping or other measures”* (para 6.7 in draft MNDP (CD6.001)). The prominence of the church is maintained by the view corridors proposed through the proposed development of Butts Close, which frame the church tower.



**Figure 18:** Butts Close AVR03 from Verified Views Document Appendix JT1

- 5.26 The incorporation of building characteristics from Marnhull throughout the Butts Close development would enhance the setting of St Gregory’s Church, aligning with NDLP (CD3.001) Policy 5, through obscuring the late 20th Century, less sympathetic housing that currently visually dominates the northern edge of the site.
- 5.27 Para 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains that well-designed places “*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting*”. Para 203 states that “*Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment...This strategy should take into account; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*” Para 219 continues “*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*” Given that the importance of maintaining views to and mitigating the adverse impact on heritage assets has been at the forefront of the design strategy, it is felt that the ethos of the above policies has been followed.

5.28 As covered in CD11.004 'Statement relating to Heritage Impacts' by Kevin Morris Heritage Planning Ltd, it is important to consider that the setting of heritage assets in the village is not static, and the setting of St Gregory's Church is not solely agricultural.