

THE CHASE HOTEL: POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT 2018

The Chase Hotel occupies grounds on Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye. The overall site is around 5 hectares. The current hotel buildings and car park take up perhaps 12-15% of the overall site, the remainder is predominantly flat or slightly sloping grassland leading down to two ponds and a small brook (all part of the site). There are extensive and good quality trees and shrubs to the north, east and south of the site. Road access is from Gloucester Road to the north east. All of the site is within the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area, the Wye Valley AONB and it is listed by Herefordshire Council as an "Unregistered Park or Garden". The site is around 300 metres from the town centre, where a wide range of facilities are available. The site falls within Flood Zone 1, which makes it at very low risk of flooding.

In order to address issues around heritage and landscape, the site owners commissioned a Built Heritage Appraisal (available separately). This provides a far more thorough description and analysis of the site than in the brief notes above. It concludes as follows:

"This Appraisal has considered the heritage significance of the grounds of The Chase Hotel and their contribution to the significance of heritage assets within their vicinity, including the non-designated heritage asset of The Chase Hotel itself, and the designated heritage asset of the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area. The appraisal also considered the potential impacts that any future development of the Site could have upon the significance of these heritage assets.

This concluded that the grounds of the hotel, which are in themselves identified by the Council as being a non-designated heritage asset in their own right, makes a contribution, albeit limited, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and also the setting of The Chase Hotel (non-designated asset) as an area of informal landscape which provides a green setting to the east of the hotel.

However, sensitive development of parcels of land on the northern and southern edges of the site could be achieved. This would need to include appropriate and sensitive planting which would reduce the potential impact of any development to the significance of the surrounding heritage assets and as such, it would be possible for the grounds to accommodate some development without causing a prohibitive level of harm. In the event that some harm was identified, the level of harm would, at worst, likely to be less than substantial in the context of the levels of harm prescribed in the NPPF.

In regards to the potential harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage assets of The Chase Hotel and its grounds, along with the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area as a whole. In line with national planning policy guidance any potential harm should be balanced in accordance with the public benefit of the proposals, while having special regards to the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area."

This appraisal suggested that there is scope for limited development to the northern and southern edges of the site and highlighted the key criterion of sensitive planting that would apply in developing an appropriate project.

The proposals from the site owners for some limited development were discussed at a meeting with the Chair of the Steering Group and a representative of the consultants and then shared and discussed at a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting. There was general support in principle but also caution about the layout, design and landscaping detail on what is clearly a sensitive site.

The site owners also commissioned some early, illustrative sketches of what might be appropriate for development at the north of the site in line with the criterion of sensitive

planting, as well as basic factors such as road access, location of the development, plot sizes. One sketch is appended below.

The Steering Group's conclusion was that this small amount of development could be supported and that this should be included in the plan as a formal allocation. They also agreed the following criteria to be included in the allocation details:

- Development to take place in the north of the site, perhaps also in the south of the site.
- Existing trees to be retained and new trees and hedgerows added to shield the development from the main part of the currently grassed central area.
- Design to be of the highest quality to reflect the site as a whole and its setting within the Conservation Area.
- A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should accompany any application.

