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Project Title	CATS NURSERY SCHOOL, Leys Hill Timber Lodges	
Document	Design and Access Statement	
Client	Mr and Mrs Graham Mitchell CATS Nursery School Leys Hill Walford Ross on Wye HR9 5QU	
Architect	Graham Frecknall Architecture & Design 9 Agincourt Street Monmouth Monmouthshire NP25 3DZ	



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INTRODUCTION

CATS was conceived in 1986 following numerous meetings and consultations with the Chief Planning Officer for Herefordshire Mr. John Stanniland, and Alan Curless Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce, Local Councillors, the Chairman of the Parish Council and Mr. Joe Sadu, Chief Highways Engineer. It was subsequently agreed that CATS, "The Family Centre" buildings did not affect the intrinsic natural beauty of the landscape and was necessary to facilitate the economical social well being (Policy LA1) of this area of outstanding natural beauty at Leys Hill, Walford, Ross On Wye because:

- a. The facilities are of a social and economic benefit to the community (Policy LA1) because they permit parents to work safe in the knowledge that their children from 3 months to 13 years of age are safe and secure 52 weeks of the year under the professional care of the proprietors Graham and Stella Mitchell.
- b. Recreational, leisure and sports facilities are also provided for the parents and local community (Policy LA1) and the quality of the landscape was considerably enhanced by the planting of over 350 trees and shrubs on this elevated South West slope of Leys Hill with the assistance and advice of Graham Frecknall an architect with a good reputation for conservation and design for sensitive sites. and contributions from Mr. Steven Mitchell, a Landscape Architect.

CATS celebrates 20 years of trading and valuable economic and social contributions to the local and wider community and is proud that in the past twenty years they have not just educated and nurtured children and their families but have also provided educational training and employment to dozens of young people several of whom started life with us as pupils and progressed to qualified staff members and parents themselves. (Policy LA1)

CATS is a Nursery School, Kids Club and Holiday Club, open 52 weeks of the year, since 1987 and is registered for 50 children in the Nursery School, plus 50 children in the Kids Club. CATS was first awarded the accolade of Model School by the Oxford University Press in 1989 and also lauded by EYDCP for putting Herefordshire in the vanguard of Children's Centres at their National Conference.

Diversification is necessary for the survival of this valuable community enterprise which no longer employs 12 staff full time and 3 to 5 part-time, because of :-



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1. Falling birth rate nationally
2. Falling roles locally
3. Government initiatives espoused by EYDCP and Sure start which is promoting "wrap around care" in local schools and reducing our shuttle bus service to local schools drastically from 40-50 children per day to 10-18 instead. Furthermore the government proposes that by 2007 all schools must provide access to "wrap around care" from 8am to 6pm.

This combined with children starting school at 3 years instead of 5 demands diversification as our market diminishes. (Policy LA1)

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR CATS, LEYS HILL, WALFORD, ROSS ON WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE HR9 5QU. PROPOSED TIMBER LODGES.

CATS THE SITE

Is in an elevated position, beautifully landscaped with over 350 trees and shrubs which provide tranquil areas for relaxation on the South West facing slope of Leys Hill and is easily accessed from the main road which by passes Ross and links to the dual carriageway to Monmouth via Kerne Bridge. (See aerial photo 1).

The complex is reached from Leys Hill by a short safe stretch of public highway with numerous passing places both in the bell mouths of large domestic driveways and specifically constructed passing places. The site is well screened from the roads, viewpoints and other public places and is well laid out and landscaped with particular regard to screening and access. CATS is at the end of a 300 yard long tarmac driveway. There are beautifully positioned mature and semi-mature trees along either side. There is also a small orchard and wild area to encourage more than to accommodate the bio-diversity and ecological needs of this area. Car parking is adequate and safe with well defined spaces including provision for the disabled. The site is very well screened all round by surrounding woodland and trees and recent planting of semi mature trees on the South East Boundary, will soon obscure long distance views into the site from the Pludds, Ruardean and a few scattered domestic dwellings in Gloucestershire. The continued process of tree planting is also combating climate change.

The site excluding existing buildings comprises 3.5 acres of superbly landscaped land sympathetically planted with over 350 trees and shrubs, which lends itself naturally to the secluded setting of architecturally designed (see attached) timber lodges, well screened and exclusively situated around the leisure facilities.



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Further planting is currently taking pace to consolidate the existing broad leaf hedge with variegated holly, traditional holly, acuba and copper beech upon the south west boundary of the site adjacent to Leys Hill Road, plus the additional planting of indigenous trees and shrubs as indicated on the aerial photograph and site plans (see enclosed).

EXISTING AMENITIES

The buildings and facilities are laid out in a well planned architect designed traditional courtyard style, with a covered, heated, salt water swimming pool centred in the courtyard. The disabled, children and adults have been able to enjoy education, recreation, culture and leisure for the past 20 years responsibly utilising the swimming pool, sauna, spa pool, fitness classes in the Leisure Suite, tennis, table tennis and training in the gymnasium. There are 4 large classrooms, toilets, shower facilities with toilets, a large reception area and a TV and play station/computer room. The domestic accommodation comprises 1 bedroom, 2 reception rooms, kitchen and dining room all on the ground floor. The larger kitchen diner and bathroom areas are currently used as a canteen for the nursery, as a breakfast club and for the after school children or during all school holidays. CATS has always, for the past 20 years been open 52 weeks of the year for the economic and social convenience of working parents enabling them to work, secure in the knowledge that their children are safely and professionally cared for.

USE

The application for 9 single storey lodges 5 metres x 6 metres, to boost tourism, together with the existing amenities on site and locally will work well together and will help to create a most appropriate mix of Education, Care, Recreation, Culture and Leisure in this area and will also assist the social activities in the nearby village hall.

The topography of the site is not a significant constraint because of the secluded existing flat areas which abound the three and a half acre site and the aesthetics of the 9 architecturally designed chalets which will be purpose built, hopefully by local craftsmen, and designed specifically for the site. But, anyway, will not be visually intrusive or cause unacceptable annoyance (RST2) (see submitted drawing/construction details.

AMOUNT

The proposed site adjoins the community of Leys Hill and Bishopswood Village Hall and having regard to Policy RST14 the scheme is of an appropriate scale. Bishopswood Village Hall was constructed several years ago and provides a community venue where local people hold celebrations, weddings and social gatherings.



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The scale of CATS building is in keeping with regular public transport. These public services to Ross On Wye, Monmouth and Coleford are also used by our staff and parents. Mini-buses and CATS people carriers supplement public transport.

The nearest bus stop is only 300 yards away. Ross also operates a very good taxi service.

CATS is three and a half miles from Ross town centre. Within a mile we have a post office, garage with shop, Goodrich Village General Stores, Bishopswood Village Hall (300 yards away), public houses and restaurants The Inn on the Wye, The Hostelry and The Mill Race Theme bar. There are numerous other tourist attractions very close by, including Goodrich Castle, The Hedge Puzzle, Butterfly Attraction, Symonds Yat Rock, and canoeing and abseiling instruction from Kerne Bridge 300 yards away, adjacent to Bishopswood Village Hall.

LAYOUT.

The proposal is to site 8 timber lodges on the site (see plan) plus 1 socially inclusive unit with private parking, together with a sympathetic renovation of the storm damaged barn and the addition of a purpose built dining lodge (see plan). Also a removable cover over the existing terrace (see enclosed) for visitors comfort and healthy exercise. The tennis court will not be demolished because it can provide a sheltered focus for sport and recreation for all.

Public spaces will be convenient for everyone using the amenities and as flexible as possible to allow adaptability. Enclosed areas will be clearly labelled and facilities around the grounds will be conveniently signposted. The whole of our premises, including the grounds are accommodating and risk assessed. Taking into account what people say they need and want. This is a continual on-going procedure which is backed up by the professionals. A realistic Citation Health and Safety system is in operation.

A location map will be provided and each lodge will have an inclusive understandable folder containing comprehensive details of ground layout, facilities and other welcoming literature on the local area.

Each lodge will have its own clearly defined private area for its occupants and keys will be returned after each stay is complete. The lodges will be continually maintained, cleaned, bedding changed and risk assessed after each occupancy. Visitors will be encouraged to make suggestions and comments to improve our services and facilities as an ongoing method of continual assessment.

The proprietors live on site which will be a great advantage to all visitors staying in the tourism lodges.

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SCALE

The site, excluding existing buildings comprises 3.5 acres of landscaped grounds, sympathetically planted with over 350 trees and shrubs over the past 20 years. This lends itself naturally to the secluded setting of 9 architecturally designed timber lodges, which will be well screened and exclusively situated around the leisure facilities.

The leisure facilities, swimming pool, illuminated tennis court, gymnasium, spa pool, sauna, have been gradually added to the leisure facilities of CATS over the past 10 years plus, due to popular demand and to the delight of many of the local community.

Fixtures and fittings, will comply with our usual high standard that has been maintained throughout CATS and in consultation with the relevant professionals. Doors and windows will all be double glazed for energy conservation comply with building regulations and be of the appropriate size for social inclusion in accordance with the relevant policies locally and nationally.

LANDSCAPING

CATS development proposal is to reinforce the ecology/biodiversity (Policy LA1) of the three and a half acre predominantly woodland site with further planting of historic and ancient hedgerows and trees and to also enhance their landscaped site by sympathetically placing 9 exclusively designed energy saving timber lodges to boost tourism (Policy RST2) and to diversify incrementally from integral child care, to embrace visitor accommodation (Policy RST12). There are already numerous recreational, sport and leisure facilities on the site (Policy RST1) and it is proposed to maintain external and improve existing internal facilities for the comfort and convenience of visitors, but in such a way as it does not cause harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, screened from roads, view points and other public places and, legitimately, because of its design and landscaping relate sympathetically to the wider location too. The properly proportioned attractive timber lodges will relate visually to the surroundings, and will work well with all the other amenities on site and locally. Pedestrian and vehicular access to the lodges will have the minimum impact on the landscape. Pedestrian access will be via the existing footpath and there is already ease of access for all emergency services.

APPEARANCE

No significant earthworks will be required but any foundation or retaining structure will be sympathetic in appearance and designed by the architect in consultation with his landscape architect/consultant and of course the building inspectors.



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The aim of this landscaped scheme is to continue creating a predominantly woodland character for tourists to enjoy the privacy and sanctuary that the lodges proposed in this beautiful area offers. This moderate development of 9 tourist lodges are pleasing to the eye because of their natural construction, blending in with the existing facilities and woodland surroundings to enhance the quality of the public realm.

We have carefully listened to the needs of the public, past, present and future and are responding accordingly by applying for this permission to diversify our current business and offer what many visitors have requested which is, holiday accommodation on our beautiful three and a half acre site and the opportunity to immerse themselves in a healthy living and eating plan.

The proposed facilities will meet the conservation aims for wooded hills and will further enhance the ancient broad leaved character of the woodland already planted over the past 20 years that the applicants have been operating their business. Further planting is proposed with additional screening of the lodges to retain the character and enhance the visual impact.

ACCESS

CATS is reached from Leys Hill by a short safe stretch of public highway with numerous passing places both in the bell mouths of large domestic driveways and specifically constructed passing places. CATS has been on this site for 20 years with no highway problems, even under adverse weather conditions and to our knowledge there has never been any road accidents. The site is well screened from the roads, viewpoints and other public areas and is well laid out and landscaped with particular regard to screening and access which is along a 350 yard long tarmac driveway, with the same coloured surface as Leys Hill Road. The drive is 5 metres wide and lined on each side with mature and semi-mature trees. The existing one bedroom bungalow occupied by the proprietors has its own private driveway and additional large parking area. There is also a private tarmac driveway with gated pedestrian or vehicular access to a single track leading onto Leys Hill. There is a small orchard and wild area to encourage more than to accommodate the bio-diversity and ecological needs of this area.

Car parking is adequate and safe with well defined spaces including provision for the disabled.

Traffic will no longer be concentrated in peak periods and will considerably reduce because of the drastic reduction in nursery use and the demise of the before and after school club as the government and EYDCP progresses with its



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policy for "wrap around care" for all schools from 8am to 6pm. It is not our intention to immediately abrogate our responsibilities to loyal working parents who need our facilities but to co-operate with all others to ensure a smooth transition from the core of CATS nursery towards visitors satisfaction and tourism development (RST1/2).

We have an Anti-discriminatory Policy and Statement of Intent and are committed to providing every safe, social and economic characteristic possible for the ease of access for visitors and the emergency services. Sleeping policemen are strategically placed on the driveway and wheelchair ramps are provided at present.

CONCLUSION

CATS has evolved over 20 years by the proprietors listening to their clientele and consulting with professionals to provide the facilities we now have.

Due to the present government legislation that all schools must provide before and after school care from 8am to 6pm and holiday care, coupled with the falling birth rate nationally and falling roles locally , we are obliged to diversify. We therefore propose to espouse tourism by providing timber lodge accommodation and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

This diversification application to erect 9 lodges, renovate the barn, erect a separate eating lodge and cover over the terrace on the gym to replace the gym area needed for changing room facilities is essential.

Sympathetically placed exclusively designed energy saving timber lodges will attract tourists (Policy RST2). Assisting CATS to diversify incrementally from integral child care, to embrace visitor accommodation (Policy RST12). There are already numerous recreational, sport and leisure facilities on the site (Policy RST1) and it is proposed to maintain external and improve existing internal facilities for the comfort and convenience of visitors, but in such a way as it complements the character and appearance of the countryside.

As a business we have provided a service for the community covering all age groups for 20 years and with the inclusion of all, be it in education, fitness or leisure. Our business will naturally evolve from providing for the immediate community to embracing the general public by offering tourist accommodation for visitors to enjoy the hospitality of Herefordshire and will create new jobs at CATS and support other local businesses and, improve local employment.



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We are grateful to the officers for their professional pre-application advice (01/2006) and co-operation and respectfully request that you accept that the reasoned objectives based upon relevant policies (LA1, RST1, RST2, RST12, RST14) referred to in this design and access statement qualify for approval because all criteria have been met and that the economic and social sustainability of this valuable community asset will be secured for another 20 years with the added benefit of timber lodges for visitor accommodation for 52 weeks of the year. We emphasise that these lodges are for holiday use and will **not** be used for residential accommodation and we are certainly **not** making a formal application for residential use for them.

Appendices

Aerial Photograph 1

Site Plan 1:500

Topographical Survey 1:500 site as existing

Lodge Design plans and elevations at 1:100

Design and Access Statement

