

The Lapworth Partnership – Chartered Architects

DESIGN STATEMENT

**Planning application for the construction of 3 apartment blocks
at Chase Hotel, Ross on Wye**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Lapworth Partnership was formed in 1989 and is an architectural and interior design practice based in Edgbaston, Birmingham.

The practice has a wide client base involved in housing, education, retail, commercial and industrial buildings. It also works on many period buildings and in many conservation areas including carrying out grant aided work for Birmingham City Council and English Heritage. The practice is well used to dealing with sites in conservation areas and endeavouring to ensure high quality designs to preserve and enhance the conservation area.

A project completed at Lickey Grange near Bromsgrove with the applicant for this scheme is now included as an example of good design in the latest issue of By Design (Cabe).

2.0 The Site Context and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site is situated in the centre of Ross on Wye and is completely surrounded by residential development. This residential development is both two and three storey and ranges from Victorian terraces, semi detached and detached properties up to 1960's / 70's terraces, semi detached and detached properties.
- 2.2 The Chase Hotel consists of a large house dating from early 1800's set in a large plot. The building is not listed, but it is within a Conservation Area. The long drive which passed the small lake or pond has long since disappeared apart from the gate and the shorter access is now the main access into the hotel complex. The original access has been made wider to facilitate this in the past. The original house was clearly extended during the Victorian period on at least one occasion and a large three storey extension was erected many years ago to provide the majority of the bedrooms and conference facilities for the hotel. The three storey extension was built at the beginning of World War II to accommodate Channings Girls School from London. Obviously it was built under severe war time restrictions and with the pressures of the time the result was not the most sympathetic design solution. After the war in 1947 The Chase became a hotel and the girls dormitories were converted into 78 non ensuite bedrooms.

More recently consent was approved for a large leisure complex which was to be attached to the hotel and included a car park extension. This has not been built to date. The remaining grounds slope down from the hotel to a small lake and there is around 10 to 11.5 metres drop from the ground level outside the hotel to the lake boundary of the site.

- 2.3 The site is relatively open and contains a number of mature trees and hedges and there are good views out of the site to the surrounding hills albeit over the tops of trees and roof tops of buildings all around the site. The site is private open space sitting within the conservation area. On the eastern boundary adjacent to Gloucester Road there is planting along the main part of the site boundary which coupled with a change of level and a Fall stone wall adjacent to the pavement ensures that there are no views into the site for pedestrians apart from where the wall height is just below eye level at the point near the small lake where the original gateway exists.
- 2.4 To the southern and western boundaries there are mature trees and hedging, which acts as a good screen both looking in and out of the site. There are a few limited areas where views into the site are available but in most cases it is through planting.

To the north of the site is the hotel complex which sits on top of the highest ground on the site and there are no views from the development site area out of the site. Clearly the site is privately owned and if there wasn't a hotel on the site there would be no public access to the whole 12 acres of land. Clearly the hotel allows for a limited / controlled access provision.

3.0 The Design

- 3.1 The proposal with this application looks to erect 24 apartments in total set within 3 separate blocks.
- 3.2 Block C is proposed as a building set to the NW of the existing hotel complex and would be accessed off the existing main entrance road / hotel service road with parking adjacent to the existing hotel service area. The building is designed as a two storey stable courtyard and sits in a location which would typically historically have been the site for service buildings to the original house.
- 3.3 The site is well screened by existing trees and landscape and would sit discreetly into the overall site. Planning consent has previously been granted on this part of the site for new housing and by granting a consent for six apartments in this location this consent would not allow the original consent to be implemented. As such it would form a good replacement.
- 3.4 The new building has been designed in a style to complement the main house and it would have rendered walls and a slate roof with white windows all to match the existing hotel complex.

- 3.5 The existing hotel as already described consists of the original 2 storey dwelling with a large full 3 storey element added at a later time which includes most of the hotel bedrooms. Blocks A and B have been designed to sit at the southern end of the hotel beyond the existing hotel bedroom block.
- 3.6 Block A is 3 storey and is intended to be read with the 3 storey hotel section of building but separated from it by a shared garden area.
- 3.7 Block B sits adjacent to Block A and is intended to relate to the hotel and Block B as a group of buildings. This block drops to 2 stories with the exception of one unit which takes advantage in the change in level of the site to form a 3 storey section without raising the main roof height.
- 3.8 Both blocks are designed to give where possible good views over the adjoining parkland and both have been sited to preserve the views across the open parkland to the hills in the distance from the public domain.

Both blocks have been sited on the approximate location for the large leisure centre which has already gained a planning consent. Clearly when the apartments are built it would not be possible to build the leisure centre and the one would replace the other.

- 3.9 Blocks A and B are designed to have more formal gardens between the blocks and the hotel but the blocks would then merge into the more open parkland around them. Car parking for these blocks would be provided in the existing hotel car parking area and this would ensure the existing trees and landscape feel would be maintained around the new building rather than the large extra car park which would have been provided with the new leisure centre in a rather insensitive way.
- 3.10 The existing parking and landscape would be largely retained and the new buildings are intended to sit well with the hotel complex and for all intense and purposes look like additional hotel accommodation.

As already mentioned the site is private open space. There are only limited views in from outside the site especially from the adjoining streets. The buildings have been designed to sit within the site so that they are not influencing views into the site and as such do not detract in anyway from the feeling of openness currently enjoyed by the passer by.

The open space around the buildings is fully preserved and the buildings will have no adverse effect on the open space or the conservation area. As already mentioned if there was no hotel on the site there would be no public access at all to the privately owned land. Currently the hotel affords a limited access facility.