

**Goodrich Castle, Herefordshire****Proposed development of facilities in Goodrich Castle car park****JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT**

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**Executive Summary**

The proposed development will demolish the existing catering kiosk and toilet block in the car park and create a new visitor reception building, featuring ticket sales, retail, catering and a small interpretive exhibition. The car park will be adapted as a Pay and Display facility. The existing visitor facilities on the barbican will be demolished.

**Background to the Development Proposal**

Goodrich Castle is a major historic attraction in Herefordshire, close to Symonds Yat and Ross on Wye on the edge of the Forest of Dean. It is one of the most visited English Heritage (EH) sites in the region and currently gets around 40k visitors per year, but was achieving 50k+ pre- Foot and Mouth. The Wye Valley is a growing area for tourism and there is a gap between visitor expectations at Goodrich and the current quality of facilities on offer for castle visitors and other users.

The current visitor facilities – a hut - are built on the Barbican, which is a sensitive part of the site which would ideally not feature such a facility. The hut has an external counter for visitors, with space only for a maximum of 2 staff members inside. Shop display space is therefore very limited and the spend per head is below what we would expect for a site of this significance. At one end of the hut is a small compartment containing the WC facility, for staff only, a caravan style "Portapotti." There is no foul drainage available and the hand washbasin is supplied with water by containers. A pipe for mains water supply was laid up the approach track several years ago but has not yet been connected. An electricity supply and telephone line are connected. The approach track from the car park is a gravelled trackway for pedestrians only and is about 350m to the Castle. Due to safety concerns the site staff drive along the trackway and park adjacent to the Castle. The trackway is also used by disabled visitors who are dropped off by the Castle.

The facilities in the car park – the lavatories and catering kiosk - are poor and reflect badly on the English Heritage brand and undermine the visitor experience as well as constraining the appeal to visitors and commercial potential.

In the 1970's there was no dedicated parking for castle visitors and local residents were very concerned about the nuisance of roadside parking. In May 1978 an area of woodland of approximately 5.6 acres was let to Hereford

and Worcester County Council for 99 years and an initial rent of £150 per annum. The Council then improved the access road and constructed the car park and provided WCs. A small kiosk/information centre was also built and let to a third party on a concessionary arrangement. This land provided good visitor facilities including parking, picnic area, WCs and tourist information for visitors and walkers in the area.

In 1988 in an effort to recoup some of the costs the County Council installed a pay barrier at the car park entrance. This conflicted with E:H policy at the time of providing free visitor parking and an agreement was reached with the Council to remove the barrier and to guarantee positive management of the car park for which English Heritage paid 10% of the admission income to the Council.

In 1994 EH explored options and created designs for new build of substantially improved facilities in the car park without success. In 2001 a further options appraisal was carried out and concluded that the re-location of all facilities in the car park was a desirable solution.

In 2002 Herefordshire County Council surrendered their lease on the car park and the agreement with EH therefore lapsed. Subsequently an agreement on similar terms (EH paying 10% of visitor admissions on an annual basis towards car park costs) was made between EH and the landowner Mr Trafford-Roberts.

In 2004 the EH Property Development Programme has chosen Goodrich as one of the sites which has potential to benefit from investment and generate an improved experience for visitors and an acceptable return.

### **Objectives of the Development**

#### **1. To improve the quality of visitor facilities:**

A quality facility would include:

- A retail space with a single counter service point for ticket, retail & membership sales, audio tour and visitor information serving as the "welcome & control point" for visitors before they leave for the Castle
- A catering space with a self-contained servery and pay point.
- An outdoor customer seating area of which 50% would be under cover
- An external serving hatch for take-away food and beverages
- An interpretation space including family area
- Local tourist information space – which will be located externally
- Adequate storage, preparation (kitchen) and office space including secure cash handling and safe deposit
- An entrance lobby from which the visitor can either enter the shop (and thence the Castle) interpretation and tourist info, the restaurant or the toilets/baby change facilities.
- Access to all facilities (except the Castle) for all car park users.

- Toilets – male, female, disabled, baby change
- Level access throughout
- Lockable bike storage
- Playground facility with picnic area

## **2. To improve the quality of staff/service facilities**

- A mess room adjacent to the visitor “welcome and control” point with kitchen facilities, secure storage for personal belongings and unisex, accessible toilet facilities.
- A clear line of site from the shop counter to the building entrance point and the car park.
- Adequate storage, preparation (kitchen) and office space including secure cash handling and safe deposit
- A lockable storage area with separate cleaning equipment store
- An external refuse store with easy access for refuse removal – separated from visitor routes.
- Adequate services – electrical, waste drainage, heating etc

## **3. To maintain the car park including security**

The car park will need to be regularly maintained to present an acceptable quality facility for visitors. It is proposed that this is funded by the introduction of a Pay and Display facility. There will be no charge for coaches & disabled visitors and an access scheme will be agreed for village residents. An agreement with a third party may be entered into to contract manage the control of the car park.

- Installation of pay and display machines
- Marking out of car parking bays
- Essential repairs and landscaping to existing
- Replacement of existing picnic furniture (but not barbecue equipment) adjacent to the playground –located adjacent to steps up from lower to upper car park

## **4. To remove the existing building from the Barbican**

The location of the current building on the Barbican is extremely sensitive and has an impact on the monument. To remove it will deliver an obvious improvement from a planning perspective.

## Outline Options Appraisal to achieve Objectives

### Option A – Do Nothing

#### Pro

- Least cost option
- No additional intrusion on castle

#### Con

- Fails to provide improved quality of facilities
- Misses opportunity to gain commercially
- Does not clear the Barbican of intrusions

The existing facilities have long been deemed inadequate. Failing to improve the situation will be unacceptable in the long term. The issue may therefore be whether the existing situation can be borne for any longer whilst a better long term solution is agreed.

This option fails to deliver on all points.

### Option B – Create a larger shop on the Barbican

#### Pro

- Retains existing location at the entrance to the Castle “proper” and gives good visitor control
- Costs may be lower than other options – unless entirely new build
- No land acquisition or negotiation with other parties needed

#### Con

- Adverse impact on the appearance of the Barbican
- Only a very limited increase in size could be considered
- Very difficult to provide a WC with proper foul drainage due to archaeological impact
- Other adverse impact on historic fabric and archaeology
- No development of additional income streams – café, car park

A proposal for a small extension to the front of the existing shop was, after much debate, approved internally by EH several years ago. However after further consideration it was decided not to pursue this scheme.

Although the existing very small shop blends in to this highly sensitive site with some success, any extension or replacement will be the focus of great debate, and possible controversy. If there were not already a building on this site it is highly unlikely EH would now consider building on this location.

One recent proposal was for a projecting extension to the front of the existing building, in a T shape. Given the lightweight nature of the existing construction

and its age, extending on to the existing fabric is unlikely to prove practical, nor would it be visually successful. The reality is that, even if the intention is to retain the existing appearance, the only sound approach would be to demolish the present and rebuild.

A recent proposal was for a building of more modern design. However this proposal was not followed through. Alternatives for a re-creation of the existing building or for a new building of "traditional" type have not been pursued.

If foul drainage cannot be provided to the Barbican, then alternative packaged WC types would need to be considered; or a proper WC and septic tank/Biodisc installation fitted elsewhere, near the hut to the north of the Barbican, or on the approach track just south of the Castle.

### **Option C – New build by the approach track, to the South of the Castle**

#### **Pro**

- Would enable removal of all intrusions on the Barbican
- Reasonably close to the Castle
- Less sensitive site than the Barbican, somewhat separate from the castle with some screening
- The space available is probably sufficient for a good sized shop and WC (using adjoining land)
- Costs of new build may be less here than on the Barbican

#### **Con**

- Requires use of adjoining land owned by others
- Less immediate visitor control than the Barbican location
- Location still has an undesirable impact on the Castle approach
- New build on this site would establish a precedent, and could mean long term commitment to this location

The best site is on the west (left) side of the approach track. There is a clear, level area here (already used on occasion for Portaloos for events) but it would be best to set the new building back further, into the edge of the existing woodland. This would allow better screening, and also space for emergency vehicle access and landscaping in front. The main site electrical intake is adjacent.

The woodland to the east of the track is owned by Mr Trafford-Roberts, the field to the west of the track is owned by Mr Roper. Neither area appears to be of particular use to its owner, so negotiations may well be possible, though agreement would probably be needed from both owners.

From an operational point of view this site would seem to be less well placed to handle visitors and supervise entry to the Castle than the Barbican location.

**Option D – Replace existing facility on the car park**

**Pro:**

- Removes all intrusions to the Barbican and castle environs
- Brings all visitor operations facilities into one location
- Enables upgrading of existing poor quality , temporary facilities on car park
- Minimal archaeological impact
- Good access to car park and infrastructure / services
- Plenty of space available
- Opportunity to create a successful partnership with other stakeholders

**Con:**

- Considerable distance from the Castle
- May require an additional roving member of Visitor Operations staff at the Castle
- Requires agreement of landowner
- Costs may be higher for this option

This option has often been considered to be the best long term option. The poor quality of the existing facilities and the need to upgrade them are widely recognised. A comprehensive study of the area – the Symonds Yat Management Plan was undertaken in 1993-4 and adopted as policy by the Joint advisory Committee of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, published by Hereford and Worcester County Council . This document includes references such as “The portakabin style buildings next to the kiosk add a sense of confusion and clutter to the otherwise well laid out site and Proposal R55 “Refurbish Goodrich Castle visitor facilities.” The overall policy is to promote the use of less busy sites such as Goodrich and therefore relieve the extreme tourism pressures on Symonds Yat itself.

The distance of the location from the Castle is a substantial issue. A careful study will need to be made to establish how health and safety and customer care can be maintained , particularly with comparison to other EH sites. It may be concluded that the only way to operate the site would be for a mobile Visitor Operations member of staff to be based up at the Castle – possibly in the Chapel – with seating and heating.

Legal agreement would need to be reached with Mr Trafford-Roberts, the land owner. Initial negotiations indicate that he is sympathetic to such a development indeed seeing a future benefit for visitors to Goodrich Court who would share the car parking facilities.

Operation of the car park is a potential part- funder of operating costs.

**Preferred Option**

Option D is preferred as the best long term approach.

**Statutory Context**

The Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Car Park and adjacent land where the visitor facilities could be located is owned by Mr Trafford-Roberts, whose agents are Knight-Frank.

There is currently no Conservation Plan or Statement available. A full assessment of the significance and historic context of the monument is included in the Guidebook.

The Castle is in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there is a current Tourism Strategy for Herefordshire.

**Conclusion**

The development of the visitor facilities in Goodrich Castle Car Park will enable EH to provide an improvement in service to castle visitors and other users visiting and enjoying the Wye Valley Area. Improvements to interpretation and physical and intellectual access will enhance the visit for all groups, particularly for people with disabilities. A higher quality facility will encourage people to spend more time in the area and potentially spend more in the local economy as well. Staff working at the site will have facilities that are entirely fit for purpose. Improvements to the quality and security of the car park will ensure that it continues to show a reduction in incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The development will also enable the setting of the castle to be improved by removing the outdated and inadequate visitor reception building.