



Information Provided for Ashby Town Council Planning Committee by the Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds

Planning Application 14/00104/FULM - Demolition of side and rear extensions at existing hotel, erection of side /rear extension to existing hotel and associated external works; erection of single storey kiosk building (A3 use), erection of two storey pavilion building (A3 and D2 use), formation of car park and alterations to existing access at Station Road involving removal of part of boundary wall to form visibility splays, associated removal of existing fencing and car park furniture and implementation of landscape works.



We have no objections to the proposed improvements and extension of the Royal Hotel itself as these are long overdue and will enhance Ashby and the Conservation area. Our concerns centre on the associated development within this application. We believe that some development is possible but the concerns about this application outweigh the benefits and merit the Town Council objecting to the application for the following reasons:

- **The nature and positioning of the proposed 'pavilion' and 'kiosk'.**
- **Building on the current car park and consequent loss of public parking spaces, particularly for users of the Bath Grounds.**
- **Conversion of the Hastings Gardens into a private car park for use by Hotel guests and the cricket club only and consequent loss of trees and public access.**

We are also concerned about the failure by the Developer to properly consult the Community on these proposals. The developer held an exhibition of his plans in May 2012. Since then he has not published or exhibited his revised plans, nor made it clear how they have been revised in the light of feedback from the exhibition or his discussions with other parties. We believe such an important development for Ashby should have gone out to a proper independent consultation before a planning application was submitted.

Nature and Positioning of the 'Pavilion' and 'Kiosk'

The proposed 'pavilion' is a substantial two story building, with a larger footprint than the hotel itself, located in the conservation area, overlooking the Bath Grounds, between a pair of grade II* listed buildings (Royal Hotel and Rawdon Terrace) which, together, comprise the architecturally most important surviving buildings in Ashby. The 'pavilion' in this application is not the cricket pavilion. The 'kiosk' is a one storey building facing Station Road.

A significant part of the proposed use of the new 'pavilion' is A3 (restaurants, pubs, snack bars, cafes, wine bars, shops for sale of hot food). This is directly contrary to the usage permitted on this site under retained policies and should lead to rejection of the application without further discussion. Such use, which could include take away restaurants and snack bars, is wholly unsuitable for this part of Ashby.

We contend that the design of the proposed 'pavilion' makes it wholly inappropriate to be placed in this very sensitive position. It would contravene policies concerning development in conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings.

The 'pavilion' would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the Royal Hotel and Rawdon Terrace, in terms of its scale, proportions and massing; its layout, grouping and setting - we are very concerned about its imposing frontage onto the Bath Grounds when viewed from this public park; and its detailing and materials of construction – which have little in common with the hotel and Rawdon Terrace or the original Baths on the site of which it would stand.

It would be detrimental to the setting of buildings (the Royal Hotel, Rawdon Terrace, Loudon Memorial and Catholic Church) which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

It would result in the loss of important views within, into and out of the Conservation Area – the view of the closely architecturally paired Royal Hotel and Rawdon Terrace from the Bath Grounds will be irrevocably spoilt by the imposition of this large and imposing two storey building in front of and between them.

It would result in the loss of features of archaeological interest, particularly features which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area - namely the remains of the original Baths.

Whilst the developer will contend that the overall proposal complies with the emerging policy CS34 in securing a "viable and sustainable future of heritage assets at risk of neglect, loss, decay or other threats", namely the Royal Hotel, we urge the Town Council to avoid being persuaded to approve this unsightly, imposing and out of character building as a supposed means of securing such improvements. Further time is required to improve the design of any ancillary developments. There is no requirement for the developer to undertake the promised improvements to the Hotel in if he were to build the 'pavilion'.

Building on the Current Car Park

The current Royal Hotel car park accommodates up to 60 vehicles and is currently available for use by the general public in Ashby and, in particular, by users of the historic Bath Grounds, though it has recently been allowed to reach an appalling state of disrepair by the developer - no doubt in an attempt to imply a need for the proposed changes. In the District Council's last car parking review, Ashby was deemed to have a significant shortage of public car parking spaces.

The developer's proposed new car parking arrangements, whilst apparently almost trebling the number of car parking spaces on the site, will no longer provide for public access. The developer claims his proposals will "provide some general parking for the Bath Grounds", but we understand that the Cricket Club has been assured that these spaces will be exclusively for their use and will be barrier controlled. This appears to be confirmed by the submitted car parking plan.

It seems therefore that the development will provide no parking spaces for the general public wishing to use the Bath Grounds. This will inevitably reduce the amenity value of the Bath Grounds for the community.

Hastings Gardens Car Park

The Hastings Gardens area was, until recently, a public space, maintained by the Town Council and open for the enjoyment of the community. The woodland to the south of the Royal Hotel is designated a Priority Habitat.

In May 2012 the responsibility for maintaining the area returned to Oakland Hotels. There is no doubt that since then, the owner has neglected the area and allowed it to become overgrown and unkempt, no doubt in anticipation of making this application and with a view to turning it into a car park.

It is difficult to determine precisely from the application, but it is certain that important trees will be lost from the Hastings Gardens and Royal Hotel gardens in order to create a large car park across this currently natural area. The developer only pledges to incorporate "as many Category A and B trees as possible." This is of particular concern given the lack of mature trees in Ashby and its position within the National Forest. Furthermore the Hastings Gardens form an important access route into the Bath Grounds for the general public. This access appears to be severely or even completely curtailed by the proposal.

Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds. 19/3/14.