



Background Information about Ashby Bath Grounds

Three planning applications have been submitted by Oakland Hotels Ltd to build houses on part of the Bath Grounds in Ashby, build commercial buildings next to the Royal Hotel and to redevelop the Royal Hotel. It is not yet clear when these will be considered by the Planning Committee.

The purpose of this document is to provide you with information on the unique character of the Bath Grounds, its history and why there has been so much concern within the Town about these applications.

The Bath Grounds are a unique area of open space running east from the Royal Hotel towards Ashby Castle. The Bath Grounds have been open public space for nearly two hundred years and are often described as 'the countryside within the town'.

History of the Grounds

The Bath Grounds takes its name and origin from the Ivanhoe Baths that were built by the 1st Marquis of Hastings in 1822, and which stood on the raised area of land behind the Royal Hotel until declared unsafe and demolished in 1962. The land to the east of the Baths was laid out as an area of fashionable 'greensward' for the benefit of visitors to the Baths. This landscaped area consisted of a carriage drive, walks, trees, shrubs, central fountain and seating areas used for sedate and genteel recreation.



3. Ivanhoe Baths, 1822 : Robert Chaplin

By the turn of the century a more formal organisation of recreation was reflected in the establishment of tennis courts, a croquet lawn and a bowls green and use of the area by the Ivanhoe Archery club and Deer's Leap Gun Club. By 1926 the Grounds had become an established venue for hockey and cricket clubs, and remained a county cricket ground until 1964.

In tandem with this formal development as a sports field, the Bath Grounds became a focus for the town's community activities in hosting Grand bazaars in 1898 and 1901, annual Whit Monday Gala Fetes and the annual Town flower and Agricultural Show.

As well as the Grade I listed Castle, the Grounds are surrounded by Grade II* listed buildings, many of which are a direct consequence of the Baths – the Royal Hotel, Rawdon Terrace and Ivanhoe Terrace.

Current Use of the Grounds

The Bath Grounds continue to be used for informal recreation, games and picnics as well as more formal sports and events. From dog walkers early in the morning to students celebrating the end of exams in the summer months, the Bath Grounds are well used by all sections of the community.

The Hastings Cricket Club's main ground and pavilion are on the Bath Grounds and these are heavily used during the summer. Ashby Bowling Club, which celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, also has its ground and pavilion on the Bath Grounds.

Various events are held on the Bath Grounds – Fake Festival, Ashby 20, Food Festivals and Jim's Tractor Run.

Ownership of the Grounds

For many years the Bath Grounds was owned by Bass. In 1999 Allied Sainif plc took ownership and in 2010 ownership transferred to Oakland Hotels Ltd, the current owners. Oakland Hotels is owned by Simon Dawson and Klaus Bach. Simon Dawson has been involved with a number of developments in the area – Royal Mews, Castlegate House. Oakland Hotels was established in 2010 and the Royal Hotel is the only hotel owned by the company.

For many years the majority of the Bath Grounds has been leased to Ashby Town Council for the purposes of 'park pleasure grounds or playing fields and recreation grounds'. The current lease is due to expire on 22nd June 2023 but there is a clause to extend the lease for a further 28 years so long as the Grounds are 'zoned as a playing field on the Development Plan'.

For the freehold owner of the Bath Grounds to build on the Bath Grounds, the Town Council would need to agree to surrender its lease.

Planning Status of the Grounds

The Bath Grounds are currently designated as Sensitive Area and Protected Open Space. The planning presumption is that development would not normally be allowed on such areas. The Grounds are also within the Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area.

Applications are currently being considered by the County Council and District Council for the Bath Grounds to be designated a Village Green and a Community Asset.

Concern within the Town

Since the planning applications were submitted, there has been considerable concern within the town about their impact on the Bath Grounds. Over 3000 petition signatures and over 1000 individual letters of objection have been sent to the District Council.

For the application to build houses on the Bath Grounds, the main concerns are:

- The lack of sustainability of the application.
- The area is designated as a Sensitive Area where development would not normally be permitted.

- There will be a reduction of Recreational Open Space when there is already an under provision in the Town.
- The negative effects on heritage assets and the conservation area.
- Potential Flooding Risk.
- Uncertainty of the Community Benefit referred to in the application.



The proposed five 'parkland villas' and the current view from the Bath Grounds

The application includes plans for new cricket and bowls pavilions, however the developer is not providing any funding for the sports pavilions.

For the applications to redevelop the Royal Hotel and build commercial buildings (pavilion and kiosk), the main concerns are:

- The nature and positioning of the proposed 'pavilion' and kiosk (commercial buildings)
- The size of the proposed 'pavilion', with a larger footprint than the Royal Hotel.
- 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 (part of the existing Bath Grounds) into a private car park for use by Hotel guests and the cricket club only and consequent loss of trees and public access.



The proposed commercial 'pavilion' adjacent to the Royal Hotel and the current view today.

Who are the Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds?

The Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds was formed in January 2014. The group's aim is to work and campaign to protect and improve the Bath Grounds as a free, public access park and recreational facility for the benefit of the whole community. The group has a constitution and has 45 members and has held its first Annual General Meeting.

More Information

If you would like more information about the Bath Grounds or to discuss the planning applications, please contact Dave Simkins, Chair of Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds, on 07712 088529 or email bathgroundsfriends@gmail.com