

# 2.0

## SITE CONTEXT

## 2.1 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

The site is located in central Ross-on-Wye, between St Mary's Church and the River Wye. As can be seen in image 06, the site is almost part of one of the key views of the town of Ross-on-Wye, but is obscured from shot by existing large mature trees. This view from the A40 captures: (1) St Mary's Church; (2) the tower of the mock Gothic walls; (3) The Royal Hotel; (4) The Prospect; (5) the rendered buildings of Wye Street leading up into the centre of the town, (6) The British and Foreign School, and; (7) The Ice House (located adjacent/above the application site).

The site is within the boundary of the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are several listed buildings in the area, including the terraced houses to the immediate north of the application site.

Wye Street forms the north-western boundary of the site. Whilst Wilton Road forms the south-eastern boundary of the site, the dramatic topography of the site results in there being little relationship with Wilton Road. Wilton Road is the primary route into the town from Hereford. Wye Street is a secondary route, which connects with Wilton Road at the top of the hill in the town centre, and at the bottom of the hill in Wyeside park.

As can be seen in images 07 - 11, there are some visual connections between the site, Wye Street and Wilton Road, however when in close proximity to the site the steep tree-covered bank at the rear of the site obstructs views between Wye Street and Wilton Road.

Existing buildings on the east side of Wye Street are primarily three storeys, and faced into stone and/or render. There are fewer buildings on the west side of the road, allowing views to the river. Buildings on the west side of the road are, in the main, two storey and finished in render.



**Image 06 (above): The view of Ross-on-Wye from the A40 bridge. The key view of the town. Several Wye Street buildings contribute to this view, however the application site is obscured by mature trees**



## 2.2 SITE CONTEXT

Riverview Flats is positioned between Wye Street and Wilton Road. The significant change in level between the two highways manifests itself in a steep bank at the rear of the application site. The result is that from certain views, such as from the Prospect or Royal Hotel (image 07) the existing building is largely obscured by existing trees.

The view of the building on approach from the south-west shows the site set against the backdrop of the trees and structures on the elevated land behind. Many of the buildings are 3 storey stone structures with slate roofs, this is punctuated by buildings such as the British and Foreign School, the tower, the Royal Hotel and the Ice House. The existing building is of buff brick, which from a distance fits in with some of the stone buildings of the surrounding context.

White rendered and slate roofed buildings such as the Royal Hotel and former Riverside Inn emphasise their gables.

Properties towards the northern end of Wye Street step down and around a curve. This creates a certain rhythm that currently ends at the gable end of No. 14 Wye Street.

Riverview Flats, which is located at the end of the sloping area of the street, currently has a linear appearance. There is some historic precedence to this form. It is the intention of this application to retain a consistent ridge height, but to instill a vertical rhythm along the street-facing elevation, so as to respect the context of Wye Street.

Wye Street is a sought after area within the town - having the best of both worlds - being located on the fringe of the town centre and the countryside, with views of the river. By proposing apartments with river views the proposals are helping to meet demand in this popular area.

There have been several applications at the site. One of the approved refurbishment schemes was found to be unviable to complete, and was therefore not implemented. An outline application for a new-build scheme was made in 2019 was withdrawn for many reasons, one of which being its poor relationship with the surrounding context.

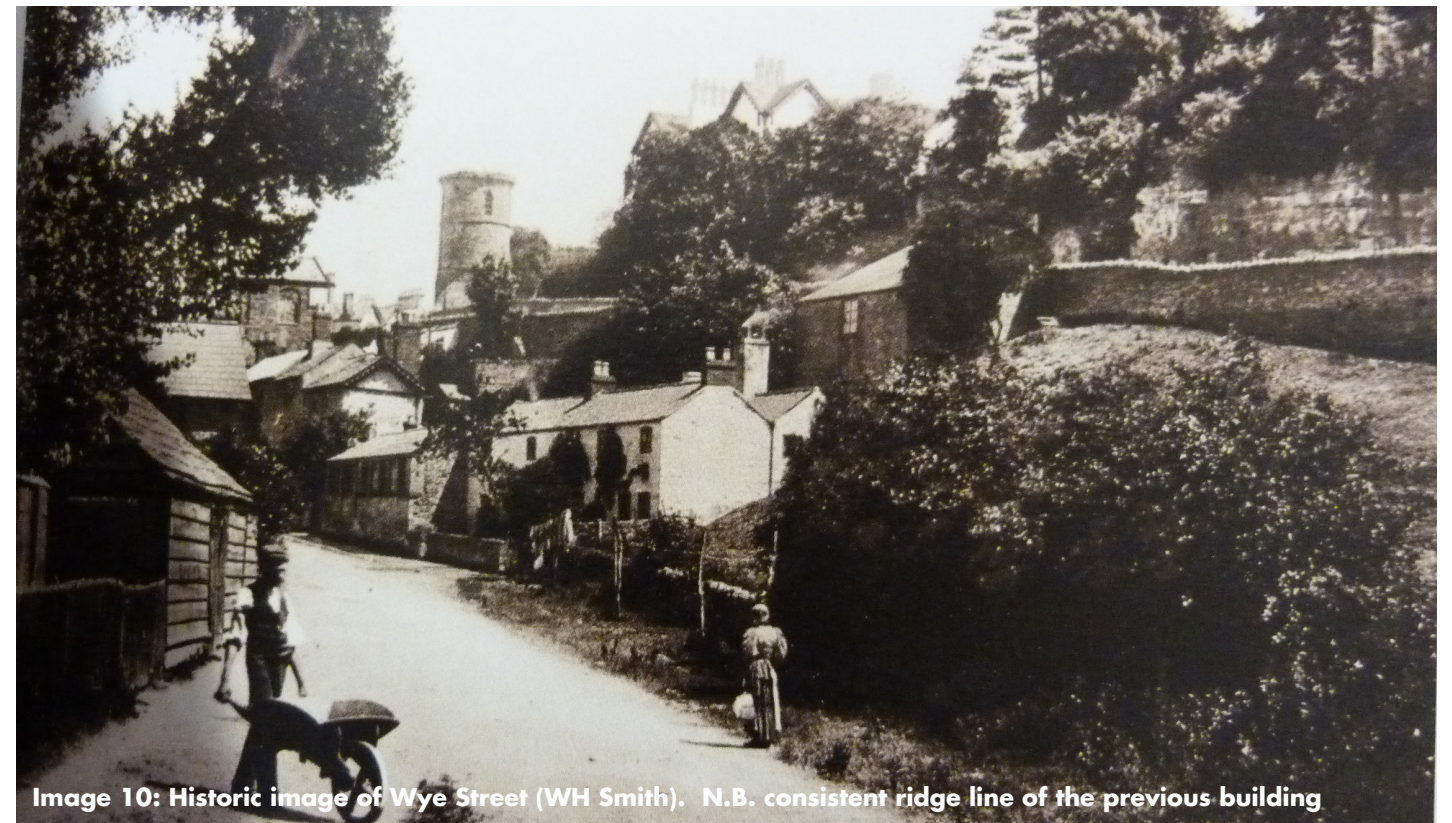
It is not economically viable to refurbish the existing building without adding at least two additional units to the development. The lack of progress made possible by the previous applications has led to the site remaining something of an eyesore in this gateway area of the town.

The proposals contained in this application represent a compromise between the previous applications, and have been made following careful consideration of the local physical context and economic context of the redevelopment. As will be discussed later in this statement, the analysis of the context has facilitated an additional storey to be added within certain established parameters.

In order to further understand the context of the site and its planning history, Pre-Application advice was sought from the Local Planning Authority. Following meetings, feedback and guidance, the proposals have been amended and local residents engaged. The applicant has discussed the proposals with residents and councillors, and the scheme has been praised for its improved mass and design. Where necessary 3d views have been shared with applicants to provide reassurance about views and impact of the proposed scheme.









# 3.0

## PLANNING CONTEXT



### 3.1

## PLANNING HISTORY

Recent applications at the site:

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>P151650/F</b>
Year:	2015
Application:	Planning
Description:	Proposed conversion of four existing (two bedroom) flats to form two (three bedroom) houses with new two bedroom house with garage
Status:	Approved with conditions

This application proposed refurbishing the existing building and extending the building to the north-east to form a new house. The new house had a gable facing Wye Street. This scheme proved to be economically unviable.

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>P183381/F</b>
Year:	2018
Application:	Planning
Description:	Proposed alterations and extensions to four existing flats
Status:	Withdrawn

A new application was submitted in late 2018. This application sought to extend the existing building forward and locate access to the rear of the building.

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>P192547/O</b>
Year:	2019
Application:	Outline
Description:	Proposed demolition of existing block of flats and rebuild with modern multi-residential apartment block
Status:	Withdrawn

An outline application was made in 2019 for a large new-build scheme. Five storeys of accommodation were proposed above a ground floor vehicle parking area. This 10no. 3-bed apartment scheme attracted many objections and was subsequently withdrawn.

Stride Treglown were appointed in late 2019 and submitted a basic sketch scheme for Pre-App advice in February 2020. The proposal included converting and extending the existing building to form 6no. 2-bedroom apartments.

Stride Treglown and the applicant have discussed the site with the case officer, taken on board the advice given, consulted with local residents and councillors and produced an amended scheme submitted for planning permission.

### 3.2

## NPPF AND LOCAL PLAN

Planning policy requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) centres on “presumption in favour of sustainable development” (para. 10). In order to achieve sustainable development the planning system is expected to perform three key roles (para. 8):

- An Economic role;
- A Social role; and
- An Environmental role.

In regards to decision making LPA’s should focus on “approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay” (para. 11 c)).

The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.



## Introduction

The site falls within the town centre of Ross-on-Wye as defined in the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy and the Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan (Draft for Referendum), where the principle of development is supported. The site is in a highly sustainable location in the heart of Ross-on-Wye market town with good access to shops, services and public transport.

The site is also located within an AONB and Conservation Area and therefore requires a sensitive design solution that respects the special interest of the surrounding heritage assets, in particular the neighbouring Grade II listed cottages.

## NPPF – relevant paras

The relevant paras from the NPPF relate to delivering new homes within the context of the Conservation Area and heritage assets.

### Para 59. States:

“To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.”

### Para 68. states:

“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:

a) identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved;

b) use tools such as area-wide design assessments and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized sites forward;

c) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes; and

d) work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes.

### Para 69. states:

“Neighbourhood planning groups should also consider the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (of a size consistent with paragraph 68a) suitable for housing in their area.”

### Para. 78. states:

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.”

### In respect of sustainable transport **Para. 103. states**

“The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.”

### In respect of making the most effective use of land **para 117. States:**

“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land.

Relevant to the proposed development, **para. 118 states** that planning policies should:

“c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;”

### In terms of the proposed density, **para. 122 states:**

“Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account: a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it; b) local market conditions and viability; c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use; d) the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”

### In respect of design **para. 124 states:**

“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”



**Para 128. states:**

“Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

**Para 131. states:**

“In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

**In respect of conservation and heritage, para 189. states:**

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”

**Para 192. states:**

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

**Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy:**

Relevant policies of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 – 2031 include:

- Policy SS1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy SS2: Delivering new homes
- Policy SS6: Environmental Quality and local distinctiveness
- Policy SS7: Addressing climate change
- Policy H3: Ensuring and appropriate range and mix of housing
- Policy LD1: Landscape and townscape
- Policy LD4: Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
- Policy SD1: Sustainable design and energy efficiency
- Policy SD2: Renewable and low carbon energy
- Policy RW1: Development in Ross-on-Wye

“Ross-on-Wye will accommodate a minimum of 900 new homes, balanced with approximately 10 hectares of allocated employment land during the plan period, in accordance with the spatial strategy. A strategic housing location will focus a minimum of 200 new homes to the south east of the town. The remaining requirement for homes will be delivered on sites allocated through a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Within Ross-on-Wye, new development proposals will be encouraged where they (relevant to the proposals):

- reflect and enhance the characteristic natural and built historic elements of Ross-on-Wye, such as its red sandstone and timber framed Tudor buildings and boundary walls, the medieval plan form, conservation area and natural setting overlooking the River Wye;
- enhance green infrastructure and biodiversity, particularly the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the River Wye; and
- have demonstrated engagement and consultation with the community including the town/parish council.

**Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan (Draft submission for Referendum)**

The relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan relate to policies affecting the town centre and infill development, which is supported by the neighbourhood plan.

Policy EN1: Ross Design Policy

“All new development should be of good design and make a positive contribution to the character of Ross. Development should have regard to the Ross-on-Wye Character Assessment Portfolio (2017) and respond to its surroundings in terms of scale, materials, form, details, layout, public realm and historic character.”

Policy EN3: Settlement Boundary

Policy EN4: Infill and Backland development

Policy EN5: Eco building

Policy EN7: Key views

Policy H4: Town Centre Housing

“The development of new housing in the town centre that respects local character, residential amenity and highway safety, will be supported. Where residential development requiring planning permission is proposed above other ground floor uses, access should be from a separate ground level entrance.”