



Abbey Gate, Evesham

location:
Merstow Green, Evesham
Worcestershire

Careful and sensitive restoration of these Grade I listed buildings sits comfortably alongside contemporary elements and the reinstated communal gardens.

Introduction

The restoration and refurbishment of a complex of Grade I Listed buildings and the redevelopment of a site designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) to provide a mixed use development comprising residential and offices.

Prior to redevelopment the buildings were used as offices and the site as a builders' yard. Now it is a mixed use development incorporating the listed buildings converted into apartments and offices with complementary new build residential to the rear.



The site is located at Merstow Green, a historic part of Evesham in Worcestershire. This development has reconciled a wide range of historic environment assets of some significant national importance with a desire to bring the site back into active use.

Design process

The owners, DA Cook, a local construction company, employed Eastabrook Architects who worked extensively with English Heritage and the local planning authority (Wychavon D.C) planning and conservation officers to secure solutions to the detailed programme of restoration and refurbishment and the introduction of new build housing elements.

Abbey gate is Grade I listed, falls within the Evesham Conservation Area and parts of the site are scheduled as Ancient Monument. It is located adjacent to The Almonry and the former Evesham Abbey precinct at the heart of Evesham's historic core.

The principal building is significant historically, architecturally and in the street scene. Some of its historic origins and interest had been masked by more recent alterations and this scheme provided the opportunity for these to be revealed, recorded and appropriately protected and interpreted for future generations.

For many years the principal buildings had been used as offices for a local construction company with various outbuildings having been used as workshops and storage. During the early part of the 21st century it stood vacant for a number of years but fortuitously

managed to avoid the ravages of vandalism. Its subsequent disposal had in mind the redevelopment of the site with conversion of the principal buildings to residential use, so re-establishing the use that prevailed through the 18th and 19th centuries. The emerging scheme also provided opportunities for significant local traffic reduction – ie reducing the amount and type of vehicles using the site previously.

The eventual scheme comprises 10 apartments (4 x 1 bed & 6 x 2 bed), 2 x 2 bed detached houses and 1762 sq ft of office space with associated car parking and communal open space. The open space was achieved through restoration of the original garden.

Archaeological evaluation played a key role in the planning process and was partially used to establish the limits of where new development could take place. New development was then designed with raft foundations to minimise disturbance to below ground remains and one of the archaeological evaluation trenches was subsequently used as a soak-away for surface water drainage thus further minimising disturbance within the SAM.

Density was reduced to ensure the predominance of the listed buildings and retain the openness of the views from the site.

Architects Eastabrook Architects
Client: DA Cook Builders

Evaluation

This scheme has successfully achieved the conservation and archaeological preservation of the buildings whilst ensuring beneficial re-use and introducing feasible mixed uses. It has also successfully introduced new build and contemporary refurbishment elements using quality materials and ensuring a high level of construction and finish.



Reconciling archaeology and listed building issues and overcoming density arguments were the main challenges facing this scheme. Good partnership working between different agencies who have shared objectives which were understood by the development team helped overcome the challenges.

The scheme has been successful in enabling the beneficial re-use of a nationally important building whilst preserving in situ the scheduled archaeological deposits.

Key design features to look out for

- Sympathetic restoration of the main buildings
- Stone archways leading to landscaped communal gardens.
- Cotswold stone floor of the main entrance hall
- Main staircase in entrance hall dating back to 1711

Link and downloads

- DA Cook Builders website www.dacookbldrs.co.uk
- Wychavon District Council www.wychavon.gov.uk
- Eastabrook Architects: <http://www.eastabrookarchitects.co.uk/holder2.htm>

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