

HERITAGE CENTRE (OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL)

The proposed relocation of the Heritage Centre to the Market House, and rationalisation of meeting spaces elsewhere, will free up the Old Grammar school for income generation.

The proposal from Ledbury Places is to use the ground floor for a specialist retail activity – like a gallery for example - and to convert the first floor to an open plan, two bedroom holiday apartment.

The key advantages of these proposals are:

- The building can generate income while still giving some public access.
- The historic charm of the building will be kept.
- The uses do not require the installation of lifts and the modern screening to the existing staircase can be removed.

The physical changes would allow the main spaces to remain little altered visually. The proposed changes include:

- Subdivision of the ground floor hallway at the north end of the building to create an accessible WC for the ground floor. This gives the option of use independent of any facilities on the first floor.
- Alterations to the south end of the first floor to rearrange the existing sanitary and kitchenette facilities to create two new bedrooms with adjacent bathroom facilities.
- Removal of the modern screen to the existing staircase.

‘Bringing visitors to the town by providing places to stay.....’



MARKET HOUSE

The feasibility study carried out by Ledbury Places identified that the first floor of the Market House is very little used and that the building itself remains a significant financial burden on the town. To increase use, moving the Heritage Centre to the first floor to create a tourist hub is a proposal from Ledbury Places.

The main reasons for the low use of the first floor are the lack of sanitary and kitchen facilities, its poor internal environment and the limited access up the original staircase.

While moving the Heritage Centre to the first floor would mean that the building was properly used, this is only achievable if access for all is made possible.

Ledbury Places is acutely aware of the sensitivity of any proposal to install a lift in such an historic and much-loved building, but it is clear that if the upper floor of the Market House remains little used then not only is the feasibility of the whole scheme in question, but also it becomes an even more significant financial drain on the community.

The real question then is whether public use of the first floor is important enough for the town to accept changes which will have some impact on the open and inclusive ground floor space, along with the visual impact on views of the Market House.

Current pressure on local government to make massive savings means that Ledbury Town Council, and the local community, will need to find ways of filling the funding gaps. This will make it harder to support a building which is not being fully used.

The lift proposal (two different options are likely to be presented) has been carefully considered. It has been developed through close consultation with English Heritage and Herefordshire Planning and Conservation to ensure that it is acceptable in terms of Grade I listed status.

‘What is best for the whole town and what can realistically be achieved?’

