

# Green light hope for Astley Castle

by RYAN MERRIMAN



PLANS to save Astley Castle and restore it to its former glory turning the site into holiday homes looks set to be given the green light.

Approval to regenerate the site is within the grasp of The Landmark Trust, which has now submitted a planning application to North Warwickshire Borough Council.

The application will come under scrutiny by the Planning and Development Board of the authority on Monday, April 14.

But the recommendations in the council papers states that approval should be given, but a number of conditions should be applied, which include a standard three year condition on the development, a bat survey must take place and much more.

The proposal is to construct a new house within the shell of the old building, but not all of the structure will be used. New bedrooms and living areas will be created as well as open courtyards.

In the report to the board it states: "The historic analysis concludes that the castle forms the focal point of a broader historic landscape that has medieval origins.

"It has been through numerous changes since then, and still currently displays a variety of these historic components. The castle has been associated with important historic figures - including Lady Jane Grey.

"It was last lived in during the 1970s, but was badly damaged by fire in 1978, since then it has continued to deteriorate. In short, there is no singular Astley Castle, rather a heterogeneous set of structures dating from different times, which have weathered together to give the present appearance.

"The fabric that survived the fire, and the subsequent 30 years of neglect, now effectively leaves just a masonry shell."

As revealed in the Heartland Evening News, The Landmark Trust, the building preservation charity, has now submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £1.47m to rescue the castle.

The castle which dates back to the 1200s is a nationally significant building, but it is in a severe state of disrepair, and it is cited by English Heritage as one of the 16 highest priority buildings at risk in England. It is estimated that it will cost around £2.2m to repair.

Peter Pearce, director of Landmark, said: "We have been truly heartened by the support expressed locally. We are very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to come to see our exhibition, look at our website and give us their feedback and comments.

"All this demonstrates the desire of many local people to see Astley Castle brought back to life and saved for future generations to enjoy.

"Their feedback has also helped us to develop our thoughts further and understand what the building means to local people."

The Planning and Development Board will meet in the council chamber of the council house on South Street, Atherstone. The meeting will begin at 6.30pm and members of the public are welcome to go along and listen to discussions.

***Heartland Evening News, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008***