
WREXHAM MUSEUM
HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
ISSUE 01
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PURCELL

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WREXHAM MUSEUM: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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SECTION 1.0
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND AUTHORSHIP

This report has been prepared by Mark Clifford (IHBC), Senior Heritage Consultant (Purcell) on behalf of Wrexham Museum to provide an assessment of the significance of the Museum and the impact of the proposed scheme.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

There is a requirement for applicants to make an informed assessment of heritage significance as part of a staged approach to decision-making. As part of determination of applications for planning and listed building consent, local authorities must also identify and assess the effect on significance of any proposed changes.

Beyond an updated map progression, there was no additional research undertaken for the historic background of this study with the relevant sections of the Conservation Plan for the site summarised in this report.

A site visit was undertaken which included a visual inspection of the interior and exterior of the building.

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SECTION 2.0
IDENTIFYING THE HERITAGE ASSETS

The Museum sits near the town centre of Wrexham with its main elevation facing onto Regent's Street. St. Mark's Road forms the side elevation with the rear of the building now the site of car parking. The north-western boundary of the site borders St. Mark's Church.

The building sits within the Grosvenor Road Conservation Area and outside the nearby Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area.



LOCATION PLAN
- Site Boundary
- Grosvenor Road Conservation Area Boundary
- Grade II Listed Building

This plan is not to scale

IDENTIFYING THE HERITAGE ASSETS

2.1 THE COUNTY BUILDINGS

For a detailed historic background to the building see the conservation plan dated 2005

The majority of what are now known as the County Buildings were built as a depot for Denbighshire Militia in 1857. In 1879 the militia moved to a new barracks at Hightown, Wrexham and the building was converted to a county court and a police station. A second court and new entrances were added in 1896.

The police moved to a new Divisional Headquarters at Bodhyfryd in 1976 and the Magistrates court was moved to new premises at Bodhyfryd in 1977. The County Buildings were then used by Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau and subsequently taken over by Aston College Art Department.

In 1995 Wrexham Maelor Borough Council took over the building and in 1996 the Wrexham County Borough Museum was opened. Subsequently the building has undergone a programme of repair and in 1997 the satellite building was added to the Museum partially funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

1833
Plan of Wrexham by John Wood showing the area where Wrexham Barracks were subsequently built belonging to Sir W.W. Wynn Bart. Regent Street is not shown and was described as the 'road from Mold'. The town was populated by 5,500 people at this time.

1852
The Militia Act came into force with improvements to conditions of service including voluntary recruitment, a cash bounty for a five year contract and 21 days training a year.

1854
Michaelmas Quarter Sessions for the County of Denbigh record notice from Robert Myddelton Biddulph Esquire, Lord Lieutenant of the County and Colonel Commandant of the Militia stating plans for new barracks to be submitted to the Clerk of the Peace. Land was purchased adjacent to Regent Street from Thomas Bury. The plans were drawn up by Thomas Penson, the County Surveyor of Denbighshire (QSD/SR/562). The schedule of works and materials brief for the building are very detailed covering the exact timbers, tiling, brickworks and paintwork used for doors, panelling and floors.

1855
Artillery Barracks built at Ipswich to fortified plan by R M Phipson- Illustrated London News 17.2.1855

1855
Contract signed 3rd September between Joseph Peers, Clerk of the Peace for the County of Denbighshire and builders Ebenezer Thomas and John Thomas (QSD/AM/3).

1856
140 troops from Wrexham deployed in quelling rioting miners from Wrexham area.

1857
Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser 13th June, reported that the new Militia Barracks was almost complete. The building, constructed in Cefn Mawr sandstone, had the appearance of a fort. The towers at each corner, proposed bullet proof shutters and moat (not executed) give some indication of the desire for the building to appear commanding, given nervousness regarding the war with Russia, political insurgency from the Chartists aims for 'one man one vote' and industrial unrest at local collieries. The forecourt was also used by the Denbighshire Militia band as a venue for public entertainment. The Denbighshire Yeomanry Cavalry used one of the towers as a store.

1857
A canon from Russia was presented to Wrexham by the Secretary of State for War to commemorate those who fought in the Crimean War (although residents had to fund transportation from Woolwich Arsenal to Wrexham).

1857
St. Mary's Cathedral, The Cathedral Church of Our Lady of Sorrows was built as a Parish Church adjacent to the site of Wrexham Militia Depot. The church was founded by Richard Thompson and built by Edward Welby Pugin the son of the celebrated architect Augustus Welby Pugin.

IDENTIFYING THE HERITAGE ASSETS

1863
The canon was fired to salute the marriage of Prince Edward (King Edward VII). The earliest photograph of the building shows it decorated to mark the wedding of Prince Edward to Princess Alexandra - the full details are provided in the Wrexham Advertiser.

1868
Wrexham granted its own Commission of the Peace

1873
OS 25" scale In contrast to the fields shown on Woods plan, 'Regent Street' is shown with buildings on either side. The Militia Barracks stand adjacent to St. Mary's R.C. Chapel and almost opposite 'King Street', a residential road. Gardens lie across the side street east of the barracks.

1874
The 50" scale edition of the OS shows greater detail of the barrack layout. The entrance from Regent Street is at an angle with the wall angled in towards the gates. The barracks are divided into Sergeant Major's quarter and Sergeant's Quarters on the west wing, a store and general room in the central wing, Orderly Room, cells and Quarter Master Sergeant's Quarters in the east wing. A second entrance to the barracks is located at the south end of the east boundary. A number of small service buildings range along the south boundary wall.

1876
Wrexham Art and Industry Exhibition. At the time of the exhibition there were many thriving industries in the town including, machinery manufacturers, leather works and tanneries.

1877
The Militia were moved to new barracks in Wrexham at Hightown where they joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers. The old barracks were converted for the Court of Petty Sessions and Police Headquarters and renamed County Buildings. The buildings also provided accommodation for married police officers and families.

1879
First session of the Magistrates Court was held in January. Complaints are made concerning the coldness and drafts in the court room from the very start. Reports in the Wrexham Advertiser.

1882
The miners in Moss Valley went on strike. The Police Constables were issued with cutlasses and eventually the militia were drafted in to help. The surviving cutlasses of the Denbighshire Constabulary are in the museum collection.

1885
The cannon was removed to Hightown Depot. (It was evidently returned as post 1896 photographs reveal it in-situ).

1885
The Tithe Wars took place when the Church of England caused great anger when they forced sales of farm goods belonging to non-conformists who objected to paying taxes to the Church.

1897
Proposal to demolish the County Building prior to building new Guildhall. Instead alterations were made including a second court and new public entrances. This changed the north façade of the building considerably as the pair of towers were removed and the east wing was added. The exercise yard dates from this period. The sycamore tree on St Mark's Road adjacent to the exercise wall was a specific requirement of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn.

1899
The barracks had undergone alterations by this time and were called 'County Buildings'. Both turrets at the north end are squared off. The survey shows an extension to the north end of the east wing that abuts the east boundary wall. A smaller extension is shown west of the west wing. The inner court of the barracks is enclosed at the south end by new structure which links the east and west wing. The inner court has a wall forming a corridor along the north and east sides. The service buildings along the south wall are also linked by a new structure which extends north towards the barrack complex. Walls are also shown linking the south west of the barracks to the service buildings and the east of the complex to the boundary wall.

1900
The population of Wrexham was over 15,000.

1912
The survey shows the introduction of a small structure linking the south-east turret to the boundary wall. Church House was built across the road to the east of the County Buildings.

IDENTIFYING THE HERITAGE ASSETS

1914
Upon the outbreak of the First World War the forecourt of the County Buildings was used for military parades. All appeals against the decisions of the Military Tribunals of the Borough and Rural District of Wrexham were held at County Buildings (1916-18).

1937
The site has changed little since 1912 except from the addition of two small buildings in the north west corner of the courtyard. Coroner's inquests into the deaths of the 266 men killed in the Gresford Colliery Disaster (22.9.1934) finally held at County Buildings. Also the trial of the management for criminal negligence was heard at County Buildings attracting nationwide attention.

1940
A two story flat roofed building was added to the rear of the building to accommodate an ARP store. After the war the extension was divided for use by the CID and police garage facilities. This was demolished in 1997.

1960
The last resident, the Bridewell Sergeant, moved out of County Buildings. The OS shows changes to the footprint of the buildings. A structure has been introduced between the service buildings and the main County Building. Two small buildings have been added to the west corner of the courtyard.

1976
The police moved to the new Police Divisional Headquarters at Bodhyfryd.

1977
The Magistrates court was moved to new Magistrates Courts at Bodhyfryd.

c.1978
The County Buildings were used by Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau and subsequently taken over by Aston College Art Department. The Art College enclosed the central courtyard to create a gallery space with the canteen facility and associated kitchen installed in Gallery 3 and Exhibition prep. The art college also installed an additional staircase on the south side of the building, which was removed in 2010 (the site of the toilets on the two floors).

1995
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council took over the County Buildings.

1996
Wrexham County Borough Museum was opened at the County Buildings on 30th September.

1997
The Satellite building was added to the Museum partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

1998
Opening of the Satellite extension

2001/02
Replacement of roof slates across County Buildings

2002-3
Conversion of disused south-west corner rooms ground floor to host Local Studies library. Modernisation of temporary gallery and conversion of disused canteen into exhibition prep space.

2005
Additional security measures to the building's windows to meet National Security Advisor's recommendations prior to hosting the Mold Cape loan, courtesy of the British Museum.

2010-11
Museum Makeover ground floor and glazed extension. Removal of former police station toilets and internal panelling on first floor.

2017
Installation of new seating, interpretation/exhibition stands, Brymbo Man sculpture and Acton Dog sculpture on museum forecourt, funded by the Landfill Tax.

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IDENTIFYING THE HERITAGE ASSETS

2.2 ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Originally the Cathedral Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Wrexham, was a Roman Catholic parish church. It was built in 1857 to replace a chapel in King Street, which still stands. The new church provided extra capacity, and was itself enlarged with the addition of a cloister and side chapel in the mid-20th century.

The church was designed by 23-year-old Edward Welby Pugin, son of the celebrated architect Augustus Welby Pugin. The design was inspired by a 14th-century style. It was commissioned by Richard Thompson (1799-1866) who, with his father and uncle, had developed the local coal and iron industries in the 19th century. In the cloister is a tomb with an effigy of Ellen Thompson, Richard's wife, who died of cholera in 1852.

In 1898 the Diocese of Menevia, covering most of Wales, was established, and St Mary's became the pro-cathedral, later the cathedral.

The chapel / transept to the east is a later addition of the early 20th century and it does not appear on the OS Map of 1909.



The site location in 1871

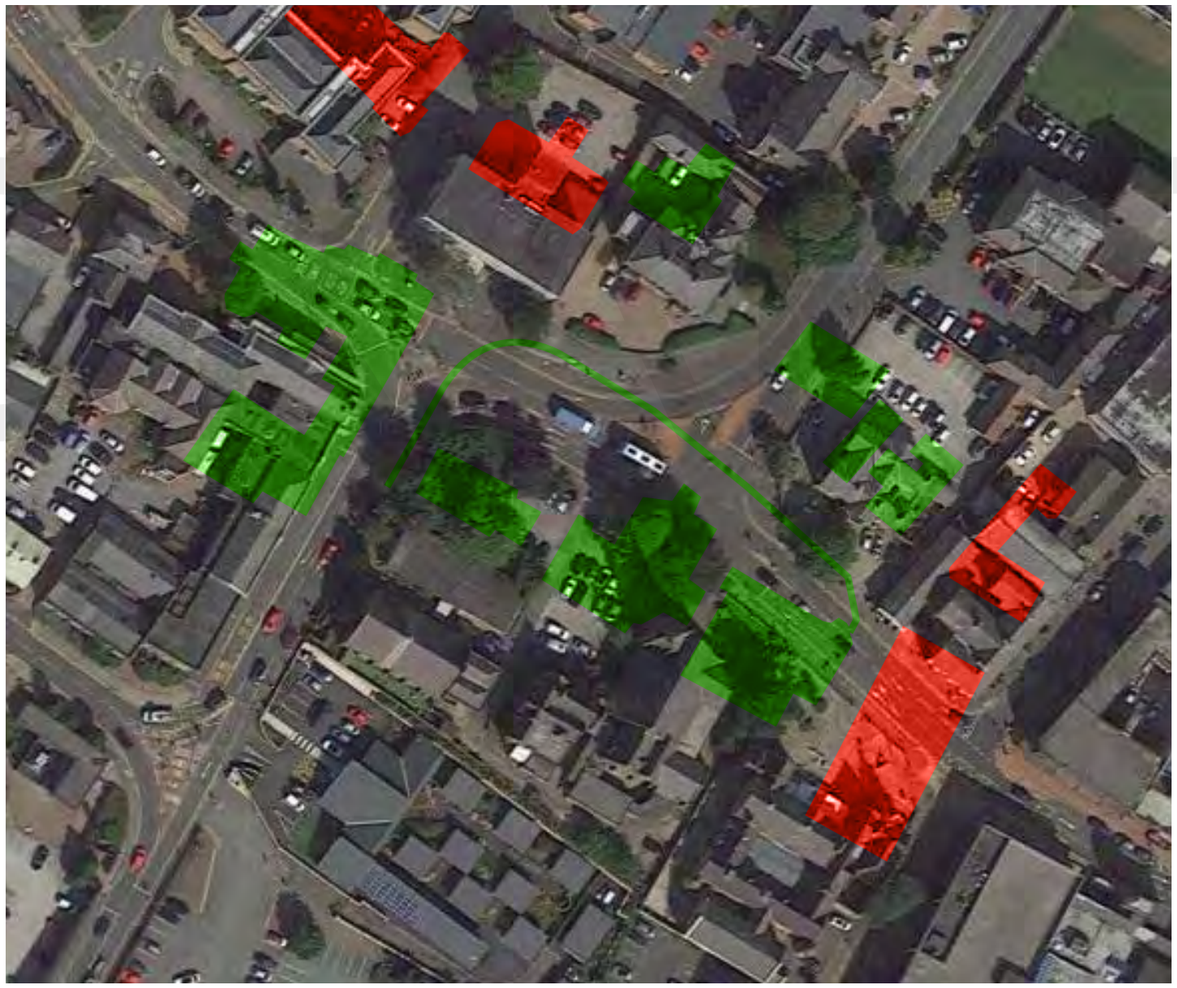


The site location in 1909

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SECTION 3.0
THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

Both the church and the Museum are set back from the road and when approaching the town along Regent's Street heading south-east the church dominates the streetscape due to its massing and height. The church tower and spire are the tallest buildings in the immediate setting. The church sits within the context of other historic ancillary buildings of red brick, a churchyard along with a stone boundary wall all contribute to the setting of the site. The presbytery and the boundary wall are both separately listed at Grade II. The setting of the church has numerous mature trees which screen part of the building.



STREETSCAPE PLAN
- Positive Contributor
- Neutral/Negative Contributor

This plan is not to scale

THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

3.1 WREXHAM MUSEUM

Amended from list description

The county buildings (Wrexham Museum) are set back from the road with a large courtyard in front with a low stone boundary wall around the Regent's Street frontage. There is evidence on site that this boundary wall has been lowered from its original height. The courtyard has modern surface treatments with some small trees added as landscaping.

Roughly coursed and squared stone with freestone dressings and steep slate roofs, with coped gables and axial and end wall stacks with chamfered shafts. Tudor gothic style, a courtyard plan with 2 storey, 5-bay entrance front flanked by advanced gabled ranges to either side. Central gable over main entrance in loggia (now glazed) comprising 5 bays of chamfered depressed gothic arches sprung between dwarf buttresses. 4-light oriel window with leaded roof over entrance, flanked by 3-light windows each side, all with mullions and transoms. Lower gabled wings similarly detailed: the right-hand gable is advanced from the main range and houses entrance to No 1 court in its own gabled rear wing. Left hand range clasps the outer angle of the main front, and has a further rear wing, parallel to the main range. Projecting stair tower to No. 2 court at angle of the 2 ranges: Chamfered buttressed tower, with deep moulded arched doorway, the staircase expressed under a sloping, embattled roofline with stepped windows, to the left; the tower terminates in octagonal turret with miniature crenelations around slate spirelet with openwork crown and weathervane. Wide gabled returns each side, then rear wings and lower gabled rear cross range. Circular turrets at rear angles with window loops and conical roofs.

3.2 ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL OF ST MARY

Amended from list description

Coursed and squared stone with slate roofs. Tower and spire to (liturgical) SW, nave with 2 lean-to aisles, clerestory and lower chancel. Additional aisle and side chapel to north. Late C13 style. West doorway in steep archway with shafts and hood mould, flanked by steep pinnacled niches. 5-light window above. 2-light windows in west walls of aisles, which are divided into 4 bays by buttresses, with 2-light geometrical traceried windows beneath angled hood moulds. Rose windows as clerestory lights. SW tower and spire, with steep trefoiled window in base of tower, lancet in upper stage, and paired bell-chamber lights. Brooch spire with lucarnes and projecting bands. Massive trefoiled east window in chancel, comprising rose window with a band of quatrefoil lights below.



THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

KEY VIEWS



THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

KEY VIEW ONE



THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

KEY VIEW TWO



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THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

KEY VIEW THREE



THE SITE DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

KEY VIEW FOUR



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SECTION 4.0
SIGNIFICANCE

Significance can be defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. The understanding of the significance of a place is vital to inform sensitively managed change. The following criteria are employed within this report to assess significance:

Archaeological Interest
There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural and Artistic Interest
These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Historic Interest
An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

The levels of relative significance used to inform the assessment of significance in this heritage statement are as follows:

Very High Significance
Attributable to those themes, features, buildings or spaces which are the most valuable. These elements are considered to be essential to the understanding and appreciation of the place and are contributors to its overall character and setting, as well as its local, regional, national and international importance. Large scale alteration, removal or demolition should be strongly resisted.

High Significance
Attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which is has a high cultural value and forms an essential part of understanding the historic value of the site, while greatly contributing towards its character and setting, as well as its local, regional and national importance. Large scale alteration, removal or demolition should be strongly resisted.

Medium Significance
Attributable to a theme, feature, building or space which has some cultural importance and helps define the character and appearance of the site. These features are generally of local or regional value. Efforts should be made to retain features of this level if possible, though a greater degree of flexibility in terms of alteration would be possible.

Low Significance
Attributable to themes, features, buildings or spaces which have minor cultural importance and which might contribute to the character or appearance of the site. These features are generally of local value. A greater degree of alteration or removal would be possible than for items of high or medium significance, though a low value does not necessarily mean a feature is expendable.

Neutral Significance
Themes, spaces, buildings or features which have little or no cultural value and neither contribute to nor detract from the character or appearance of the site. Considerable alteration or change is likely to be possible.

Intrusive Significance
Themes, features or spaces which actually detract from the values of the site and its character and appearance. Efforts should be made to remove these features. The significance plans provide a level of significance for both the physical fabric and the spatial characteristics of internal areas.

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SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wrexham County Borough Museum is a fine example of an increasingly rare building type being an 1850's militia barracks following the act of 1853. The equivalent militia depot for the Royal Flintshire Militia in Flint was demolished. Although significantly altered in later periods, the basic plan of the 1850s barracks remains legible making the building of national importance as an example of its type. The period of construction also links the building to wider British military history and to the design of military architecture, upon which the influence of early barracks buildings such as these must not be underestimated. The militia themselves also have notable historical value having been used to quell riots and insurgence across Wales.

The buildings second use as Magistrate's Courts alters the layout and exterior design of the building as a fortified keep removing the two front turrets and building extensions that slightly unbalances the architectural design although these early alterations are themselves of high significance. Although a 19th century magistrates court is worthy of retention and is of national interest in its own right, giving the building further strong historical connections as the centre of the judicial system for the wider area. The retention, largely intact of the alterations and many of the fittings, albeit in storage, mean this is an interesting and relatively complete example of a provincial court.

Regent Street is one of the primary arterial routes into the town and the Museum, in conjunction with the adjacent cathedral and neo-classical infirmary, defines the approach to the town.

Architecturally the building forms a strong addition to the streetscape of Wrexham in a prominent location in the town and an important group value comprising: the neighbouring Church of St Mary (grade II); the church boundary walls (grade II); the presbytery (grade II); numbers 1,3 and 5, 56, 58 and 60 Regent Street, King Street (grade II); and number 2 Grosvenor Road (grade II) all contributing to the combined setting. The main façade reads as an example of 19th century gothic with its turrets and castellations all surrounded by the stone boundary wall and it is an important contributor to the Grosvenor Road Conservation Area. It is one of the three surviving buildings of the mid-19th century 'west end' of Wrexham when the town expanded westwards.

The building is a fascinating blend of picturesque intent, pragmatic spatial planning, military functionality, and the contrast of this functionality with the later court alterations. Influences vary from the Tudor houses of the 16th century to the early pioneers of the picturesque such as Miller through to more contemporary influences from Salvin and the other 'barrack builders' of the period.

The building is well known locally, often referred to as the police station. It has played a significant role in the local community both in this role and subsequently as the Aston College Art Department. The use of the building as the Wrexham County Borough Museum can both draw upon and enhance this familiarity with the people and communities of Wrexham. In a town where many historic buildings have been demolished including the adjacent Church House, St Mary's Church and Imperial Hotel, the surviving buildings have taken on an even more important role.

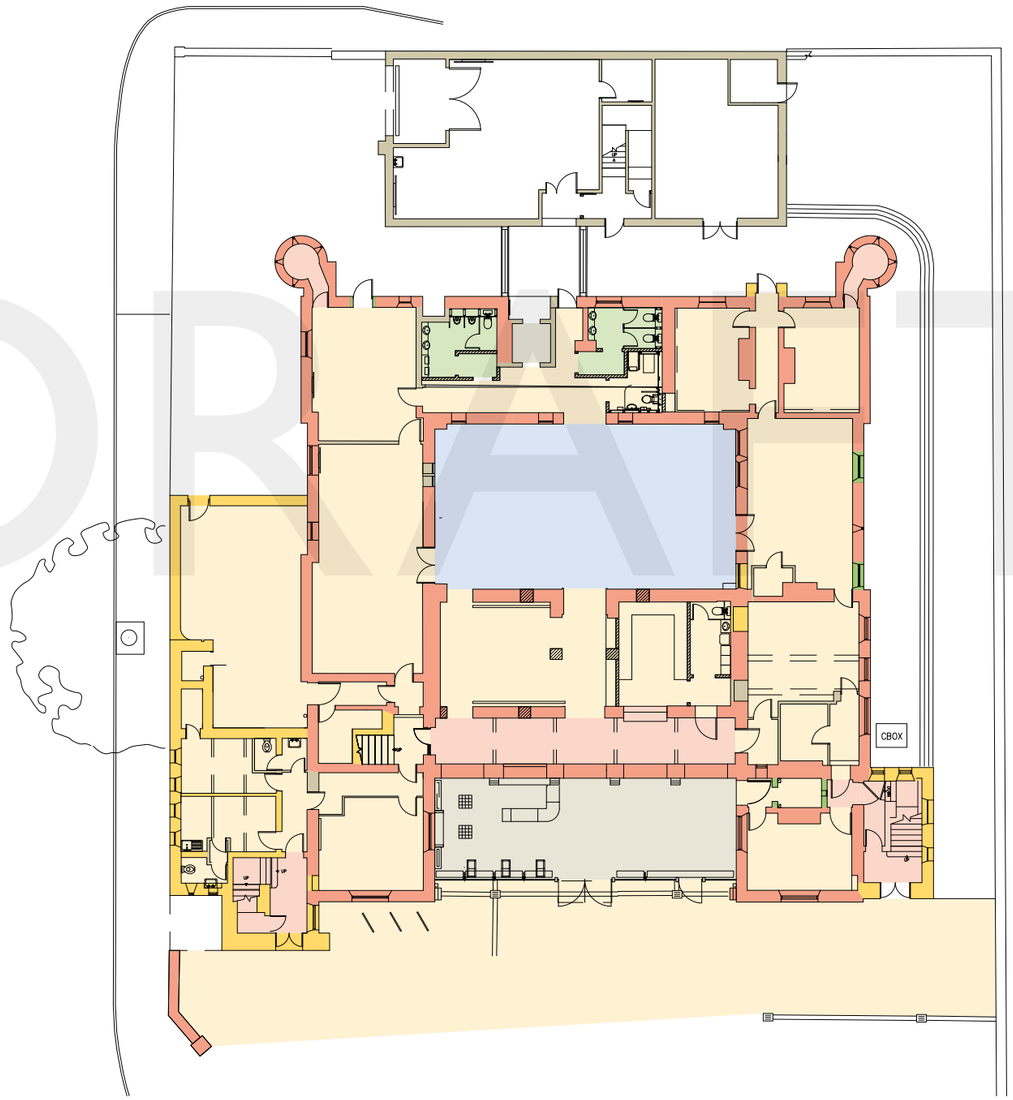
Good records survive for the building including floor plans by the architect, Thomas Penson. Penson was a prominent architect with several notable projects in Wales, he was the county surveyor of Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire and was an innovative architect and designer of several masonry arch bridges over the River Severn and elsewhere. Thomas Penson designed the following buildings in Wrexham: Butchers' Market Hall on High Street (1847, extant); and the British School, Brook Street (1844, demolished recently). Penson's involvement adds further historical interest to the building.

The Museum has demonstrable importance nationally (in a British as opposed to purely Welsh context) as a key example of the development of a system of barracks for militiamen. The significance of the building in a Welsh context is further enhanced by its second incarnation as courts and a police station, a task it undertook for almost 100 years.

The building is of **high significance**.

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SIGNIFICANCE



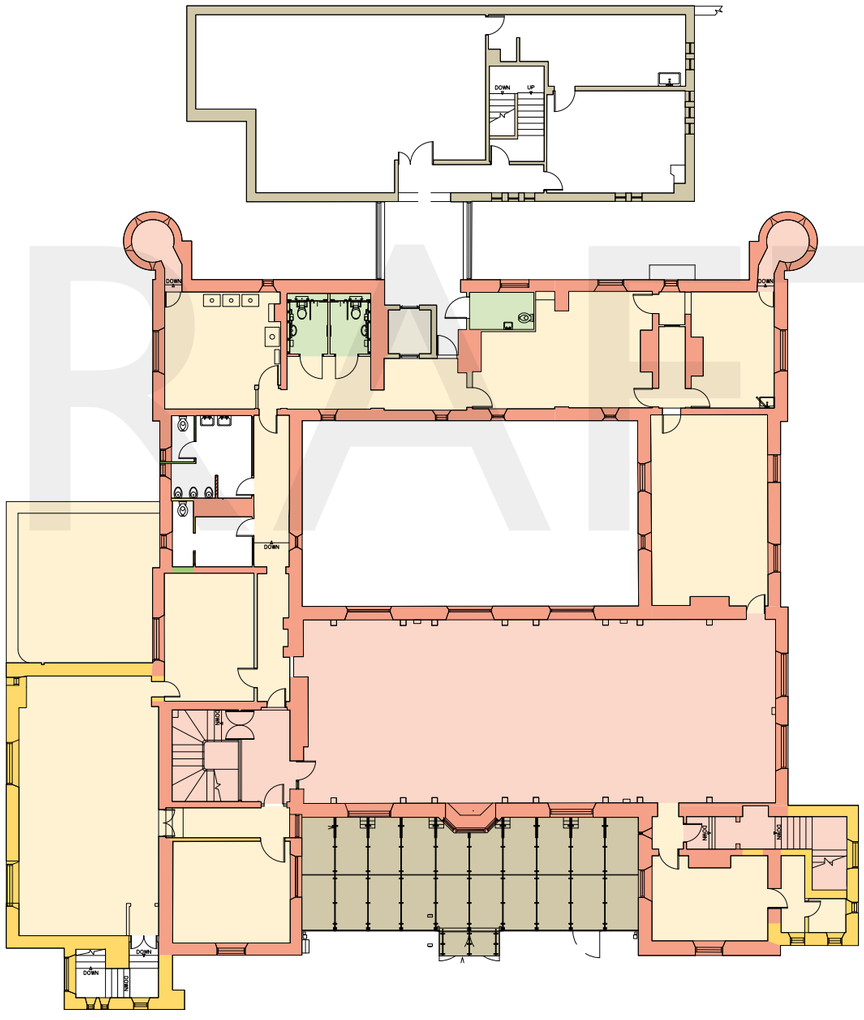
GROUND FLOOR
SIGNIFICANCE PLAN

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Neutral
- Intrusive

This plan is not to scale

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SIGNIFICANCE



FIRST FLOOR
SIGNIFICANCE PLAN

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Neutral
- Intrusive

This plan is not to scale

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SIGNIFICANCE



SIGNIFICANCE



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