Wrexham Old Library Refurbishment



Design & Access Statement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREFACE

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared to accompany a Planning and Listed Building Application for the refurbishment of the Old Library, to form a new Creative Hub within the centre of Wrexham. The vision and objectives of the project are to create a new flexible, energy-efficient, creative hub within the city centre that mixes culture, technology and sustainability to benefit local people and businesses. This transformation seeks to support Wrexham's growing creative community by providing a dynamic space for collaboration, innovation, and cultural engagement.

The Old Library building is owned by Wrexham County Borough Council and is a Grade II listed Victorian property located within the city centre. Built in 1907, the building has become a significant landmark within Wrexham.

Originally designed as a public library, the building has been extended and remodelled over the years to suit various changes of use. Until most recently, the property provided council office accommodation, but is now vacant and ready to be refurbished. The refurbishment works will bring the building back to its former glory, whilst meeting the criteria of modern regulations and ensuring the spaces within suit the requirements of a contemporary C21st building.

This document aims to provide a written and illustrated commentary when read in conjunction with the associated design drawings. In addition, the following documents will be provided in support of the planning and listed building consent application and will be referenced in this document:

- Preliminary Ecology Appraisal, *Enfys Ecology*
- Green Infrastructure Statement, *Lawray Architects*
- CCTV Inspection, *Metro Rod*
- Existing and Proposed Drainage, *JPS*
- Heritage Impact Assessment, *Geraint Roberts Associates*

2.0 PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

The planning policy framework for the determination of this application is provided by the content and scope of National Planning Policy, which is contained within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and its associated Technical Advice Notes (TANs), together with the Development Plan for the local area.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this Planning Application comprises the following:

- National Development Framework: Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 (February, 2021);
- Wrexham Council Local Development Plan (2013-2028) (Adopted December 2023).
    - Policy SP2: Location of Development
    - Policy SP7: Wrexham City
    - Policy SP8: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise
    - Policy SP11: Transport and Accessibility
    - Policy SP12: Design Principals & Masterplanning Framework
    - Policy SP15: Historic and Cultural Environment
    - Policy SP18: Climate Change
    - Policy SP19: Green Infrastructure
    - Policy R1: Retail, Leisure and Commercial Centre Hierarchy
    - Policy R2: Development within the Wrexham City Centre Masterplan Area

In addition to the Development Plan, the Planning Application has been informed by policy and guidance set out in the following:

- Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (February, 2024), informed by The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and supplemented by Technical Advice Notes;
    - Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)
    - Technical Advice Note 18: Transport (2007)
    - Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development (2014)
    - Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)
- Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures (July, 2020);

No formal pre-application enquiry has been submitted for the proposed development; however, the project has been discussed on-site with Wrexham Council's Conservation Officer and CADW and the general principle is considered to be acceptable. This involved walking each floor and discussing the proposal in detail with advice provided at the meeting taken on-board in the final proposal, as submitted.

3.0 SITE & CONTEXT

3.1 SITE LOCATION

The Old Library building in Wrexham is located in the heart of the city centre, prominently situated along the eastern edge of Queen's Square. Along with Guildhall to the north and Lambpit Street council offices to the east, the library building forms a strong separating boundary between Queen's Square and the green space of Llwyn Isaf to the northeast.

Vehicular access to the building is limited, with the Old Library set within a public pedestrianised area. However, limited vehicular access to the building can be obtained via Lambpit Street to the east or Queen Street to the south.

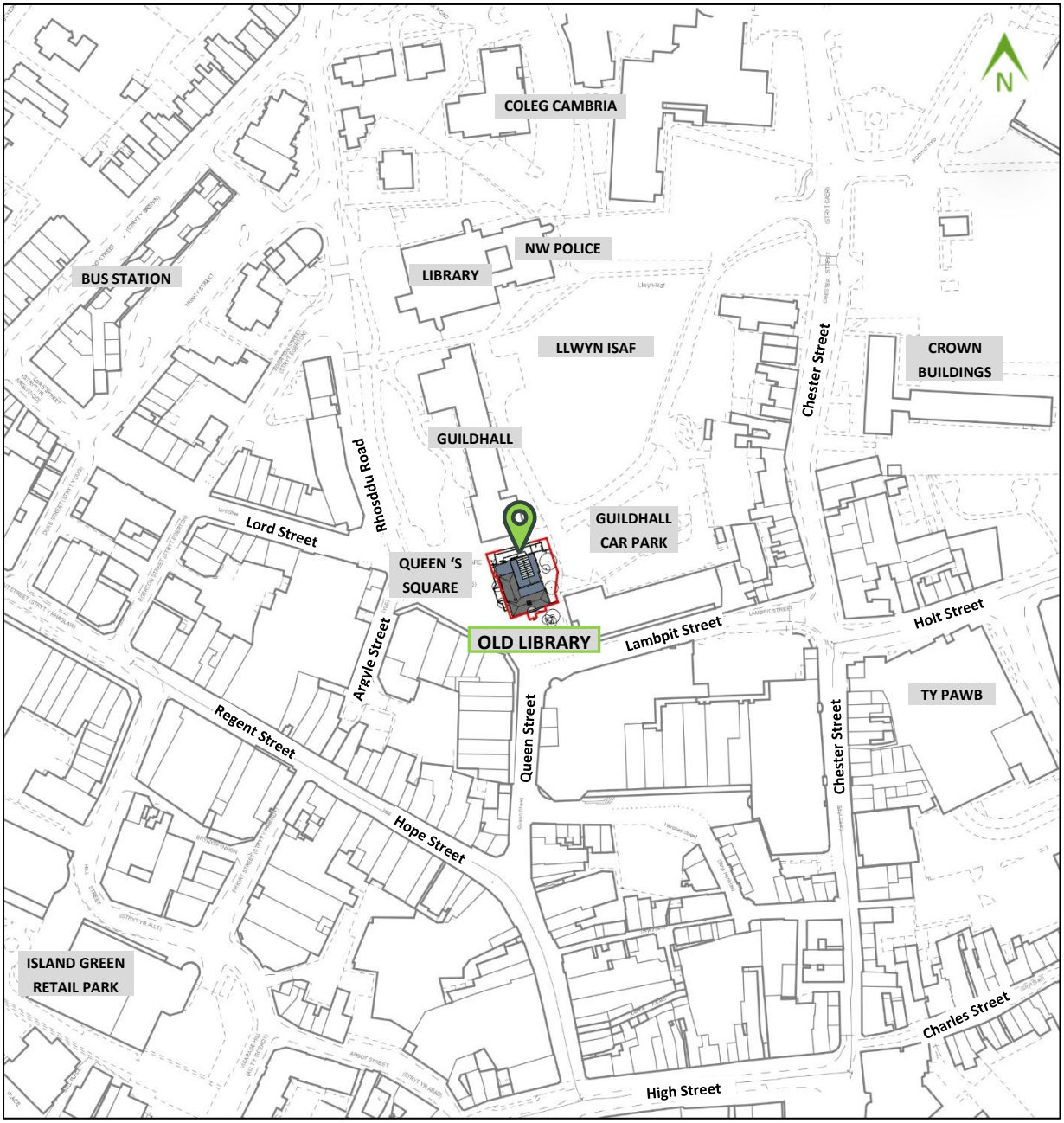


Figure 1 - Existing Location Plan

While there is no dedicated parking for the library, there are several parking options close by in the city centre. These include car parks to the north and north-east near the new library and Waterworld, the multi-story car park above Ty Pawb to the east, parking by St Giles Parish Church to the south and Island Green parking to the west.

The building is accessible from multiple directions, with close proximity to the following public transportation hubs:

- Wrexham General Station is the main train station in Wrexham, located a 10-minute walk from the Old Library to the north-west. It is served by regular trains from Chester, Shrewsbury, and other regional locations.
- Wrexham Central Station is located within Island Green and is a smaller station located a 5-minute walk from the library. This station is mainly served by local trains.
- Wrexham Bus Station is located a 5-minute walk from the Old Library to the north-west. It is well-connected by local bus services from surrounding towns and villages.

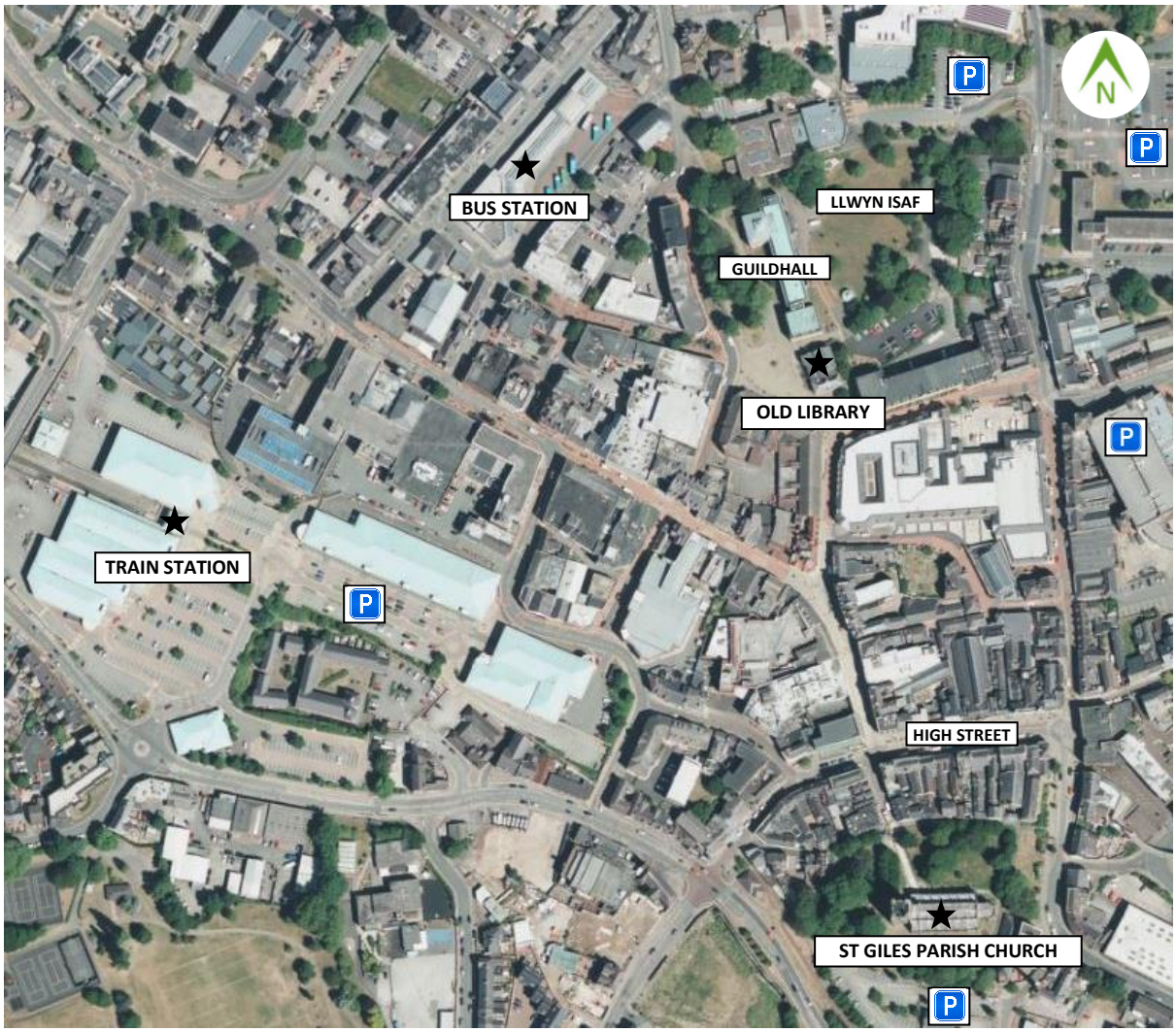


Figure 2 - Existing Satellite Image

3.2 SITE CONTEXT & CHARACTER

As a prominent Grade II listed building located in the centre of Wrexham, the Old Library provides a strong link to the city's past, as well as an opportunity to showcase the future aspirations of Wrexham.

The building forms a significant back drop to Queen's Square and the various events the area plays host to across the year, including seasonal markets, cultural festivals, music events and other community activities. The square is demarked with large stone flagstones, with a grassed and tree planted area to the north. A raised planter, with bench seating and flagpoles forms part of the square and borders the western elevation of the Old Library.

Although listed, the Old Library sits outside of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area to the south, and is surrounded by a mixture of modern office, retail, council and apartment properties.

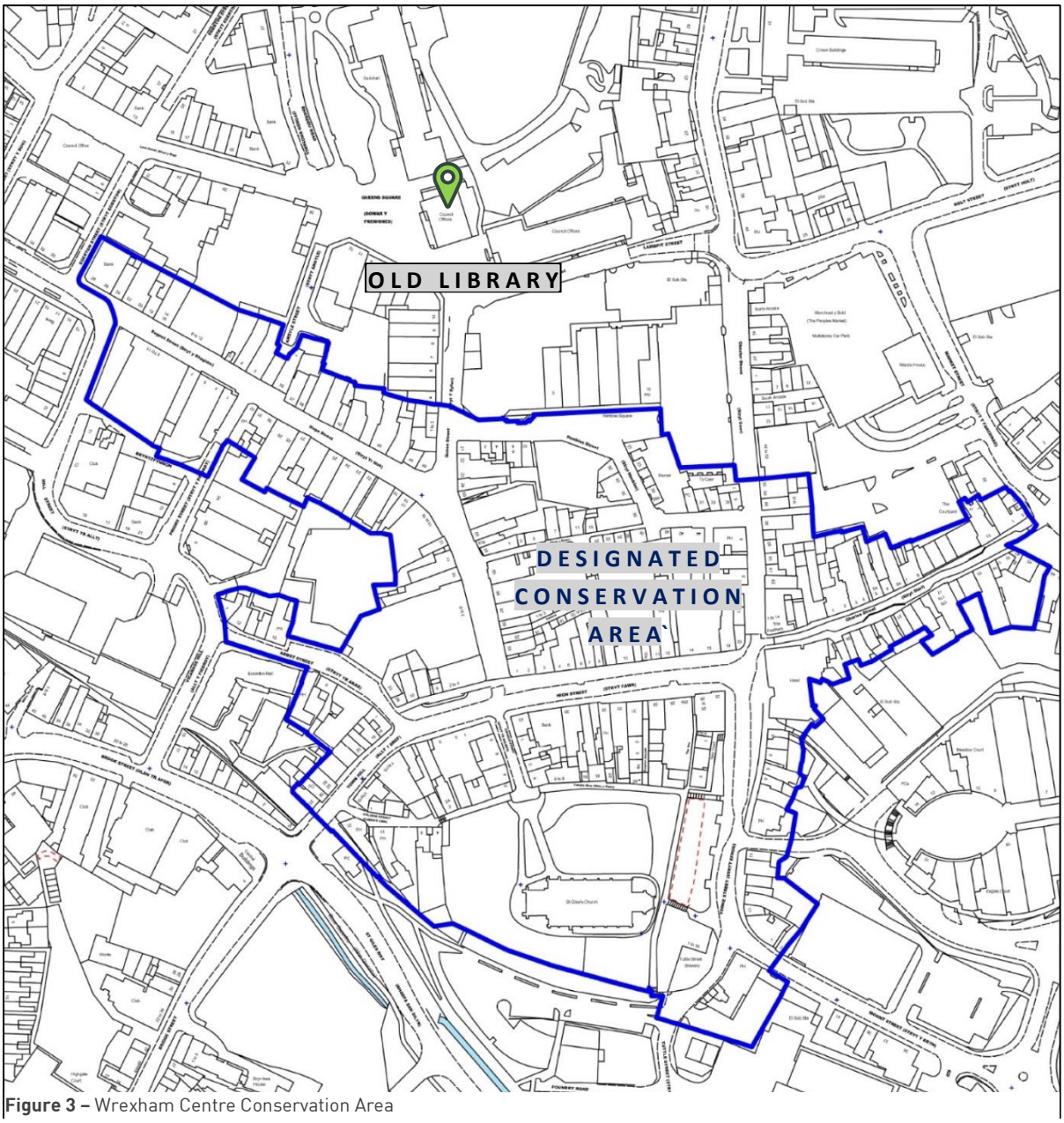


Figure 3 – Wrexham Centre Conservation Area

To the north-east of the Old Library is the open park area of Llwyn Isaf, which offers an important green space within the centre of Wrexham. With an expansive lawn, mature trees and flower beds offering a peaceful contrast to the more urban Queen's Square. The Old Library building enjoys a unique position between both of these areas.

To the east of the building lies a car park, which is located behind Lambpit Street and provides parking for the council building.

In terms of surrounding buildings, the Old Library is bordered by:

- **Wrexham Guildhall to the north** - built 1961 in a Neo-Georgian style, it has a red brick façade with three storeys of Georgian arched windows, a cantilevered gallery towards Llwyn Isaf, and a copper tower.
- **Wrexham Council Lambpit Street Offices to the south-east** – built in the early 1990s, the aesthetic of the building is a nod to the Neo-Georgian style of Guidhall. The building is four storeys, with a beige brick elevation to the first three storeys and slate cladding to the top fourth storey.
- **Rhosddu Road units 1-12 to the west** – an urban block of retail units formed with glazed shopfronts at ground floor, red brick walls at first floor and concrete tiles at roof level.
- **Henblas Square to the south** - a modern shopping centre constructed in 1999. The development is arranged over ground, first and second floors.

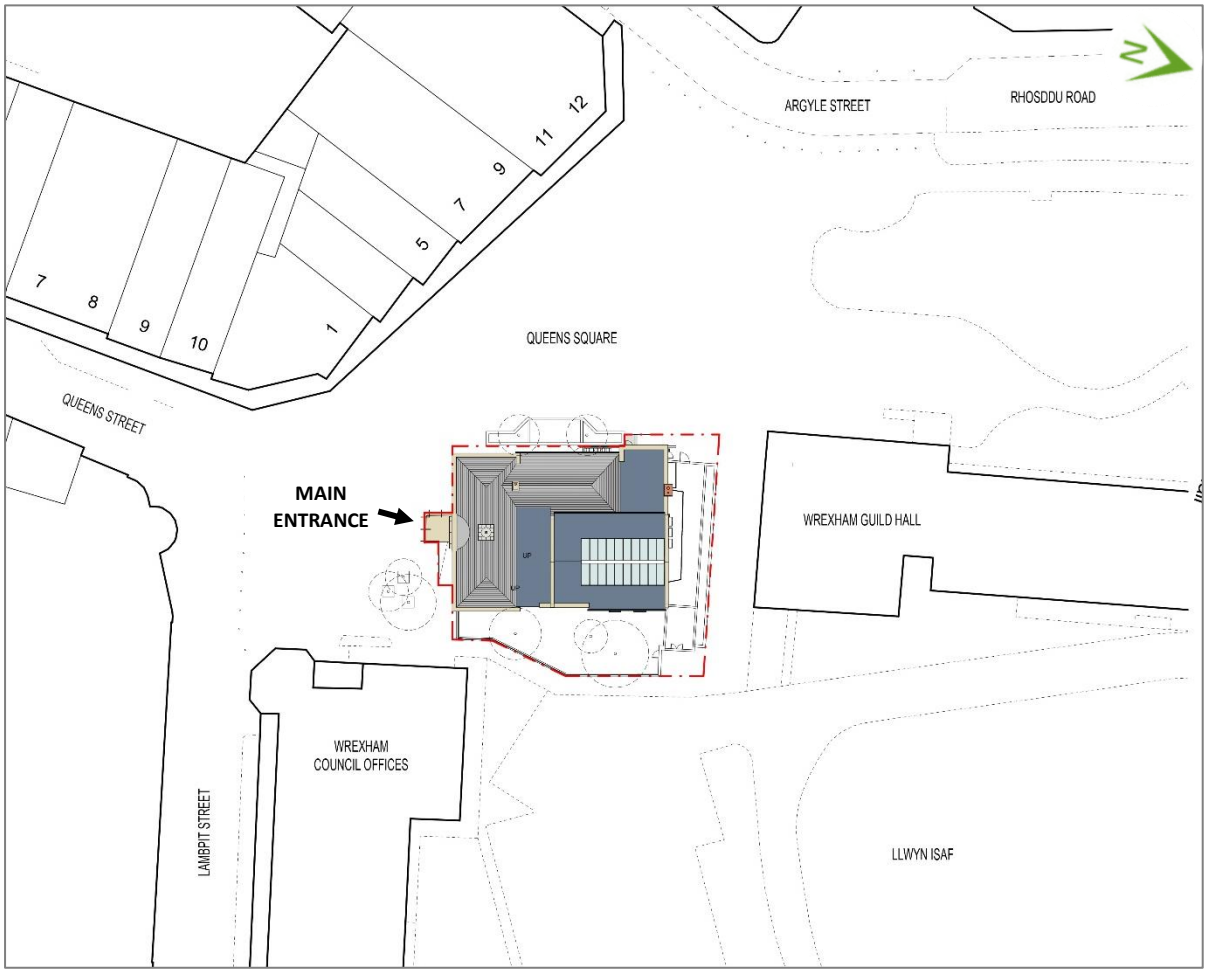


Figure 4 - Existing Site Plan

None of the surrounding buildings are heritage listed and are all of a simple, modern architecture. Building heights in the vicinity are consistent and range from three to four storeys. The predominant building material is brick, ranging from red to beige in colour with roofs a mixture of slate and concrete.



Figure 5 - View of Old Library and Lambpit Street Council Building from Queen Street



Figure 5 - View of Old Library and Rhosddu Road retail units from Queens Square



Figure 7 – View of Old Library, Guildhall, Rhosddu Road retail units and Henblas Square from Rhosddu Road

4.0 EXISTING BUILDING

The Old Library is a landmark building in Wrexham City Centre, with significant heritage appeal. Built as a carnegie two storey library and lecture hall in 1907, the building served as Wrexham's public library until 1973, where it later became council offices and is now vacant. The library is Grade II listed and owned by Wrexham County Borough Council.

Although the whole building is listed, it has been extended and remodelled throughout the years and can be split into various blocks:



Figure 6 - Birds eye view of the Old Library

- **Block 1** – this comprises the main building frontage and contains most of the original features of the building, including the decorative front elevation, with stone parapet and hipped slate roof.
- **Block 2** - Contains the main staircase and circulation zones, with a good portion of original features retained. Flat felt roof over the main staircase, with pitched hipped slate roof over the rest of the area.
- **Block 3** – A flat roof two storey extension to the north-west corner of the building.
- **Block 4** – A 1950s extension to the library building, with vaulted roof space at first floor.

As above, the overall building is a mixture of various blocks and forms, with a variety of slate pitched and flat felt roof areas. The primary material used in the construction is red brick, with sandstone used for window surrounds, string courses, cornices, and other decorative elements. This contrasts with the red brick and adds a sense of elegance and craftsmanship to the building.



Figure 7 - View of building frontage from Queens Square

View of block 1, illustrating the highly ornate front façade. Characterised by its red brick construction with stone dressings, hipped slate roof and central bell tower structure. Windows are lead painted metal, with arched heads to the ground floor. Ironwork gates to the front entrance are also present and feature intricate Victorian designs.



Figure 8 - Side view of building from the west side in Queens Square

View of blocks 2, 3 and 4 illustrating the side façade. The side elevations continue the use of red brick and stone detailing but are generally less ornate than the frontage. These elevations include smaller windows, some of which are rectangular, and others arched, maintaining the rhythm and style of the front façade. The raised planter and bench seating can also be seen facing Queen's Square, with courtyard area to the rear.



Figure 9 - Rear view of building from the north-east

View of block 4, illustrating the rear façade. The rear elevation is typically more functional in design, with fewer decorative elements. The material palette remains consistent, but the windows are smaller and less detailed, reflecting the less public nature of the rear of the building. The roofline on the sides and rear is more straightforward, with simple gabled roofs and chimney stacks adding to the verticality of the design.



Existing North East Elevation



Existing South East Elevation (Front Elevation)



Existing North West Elevation



Existing South West Elevation

Figure 10 - Existing Elevations

Externals – Condition

Roof
Pitched roofs are slate with lead flashings. There are signs of several slipped and broken slates, which require replacing. All flat roof sections of the building are covered felt, which require replacement. The vaulted roof of block 4 is a lightweight structure with felt roof and single glazed central rooflights, which require replacing. Rainwater goods are a mix of black cast iron and upvc that require refurbishment and, in some cases, replacement.

Walls
Walls are solid brick with stone feature work to the front elevation and flanks. Generally, external walls are in good condition, however there are some areas of repointing required to the flat roofed area to the rear, particularly at high level around parapets.

Windows, Doors and Metalwork
Metal windows to the front elevation form part of the buildings listing and require refurbishment in-situ. The windows are suffering from some minor corrosion but are difficult to operate and do not provide adequate ventilation in their current state. Windows elsewhere are a mixture of timber sash and timber casements. These are in various stages of decay and will need to be replaced or refurbished if possible, once assessed. External metalwork such as railings to the east side of the building would benefit from re-painting.

Interior – Condition

The Old Library is a building of architectural merit, with a beautiful exterior. This is also reflected within many parts of the interior, with a good portion of original internal features still present. However, the building has been adapted over the years to meet the needs of the user at the time. As a result, these changes have impacted the spatial integrity and aesthetic coherence of the Old Library, with spaces looking tired and in need of refurbishment.

Floors
Floors are a mixture of carpet or vinyl laid over solid flooring. In some instances, original parapet flooring remains beneath the current finish. A raised access floor has been provided at ground level to block 4, which needs to be removed.

Walls
Walls are generally painted plaster, with large areas of the building being given a wallpaper or chipboard finish to extend the life of the wall surfaces. These finishes need removing and walls taken back to plaster throughout ready for painting.

Ceilings
The Old Library enjoys high ceilings throughout, with original decorative cornices visible within blocks 1 and 2. Suspended ceilings have been provided to ground floor of block 4, which need removing. Artificial lighting has been added over the years, of which most is florescent strip lighting which provides an unpleasant working environment as well as poor energy efficiency.

Doors
Generally internal doors and fixtures are satisfactory, although very dated and would benefit from replacement.

Existing Ground Floor Plan

The overall footprint of the Old Library building is rectangular, but can be split into various blocks, as previously described and as follows:

Block 1 – This contains the main front entrance into the Old Library. The main entrance is recessed into the building and leads into the main lobby area. This lobby provides access into two large rooms both sides.

Block 2 – Contains the main staircase, which is accessed directly from the entrance lobby. A small kitchenette is located underneath the stair intermediate landing. Smaller rooms are located to the west of the plan facing Queen's Square.

Block 3 – This area contains the emergency egress points at ground and first floor, as well as a small room to the north-west corner, with windows facing the rear courtyard.

Block 4 – Covers the footprint of the 1950s extension and contains a large open plan office space, with smaller offices to the rear formed with stud partitions. Windows to the east face an existing raised garden area.

Externals – At the front of the building a new ramp has been formed to provide level access into the property. At the rear a brick high walled courtyard has been formed, which contains a stack of air conditioning units. This connects into a brick walled external bin store to the northeast corner of the Old Library. Along the east elevation is an existing raised garden area, which includes several mature trees and two large air condition units below windows. This area is enclosed by a low level wall with painted railings over. The west elevation facing Queen's square contains a raised planter, with bench seating and flagpoles. This area is used as the backdrop to various events.



Figure 11 - Existing Ground Floor Plan

Existing First Floor Plan

Block 1 – This contains the main open plan office space. Facing south towards Queen's Street.

Block 2 – Contains the main staircase, which leads directly to the main first floor circulation space, providing access to the first floor toilets and office space facing west and overlooking Queen's Square.

Block 3 – This area contains the emergency egress points at ground and first floor, as well as a small room to the north-west corner, with windows facing the rear courtyard.

Block 4 – Covers the footprint of the 1950s extension and contains a large open plan office space, with vaulted ceiling at first floor.

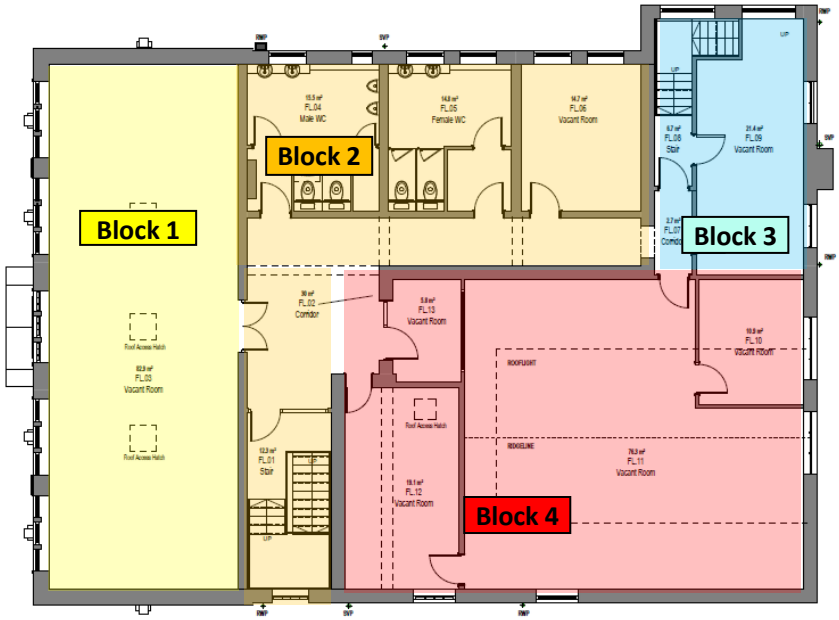


Figure 12 - Existing First Floor Plan

5.0 ARCHITECTURAL

5.1 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1.1 DESIGN INTENT

The refurbishment of the Old Library will focus on preserving the architectural integrity of the building, while adapting it to serve as a new Creative Hub for Wrexham. Key elements of the design intent include:

- **Conservation of historical features** - Original features such as the front façade, metal windows, and internal decorative elements will be carefully restored and preserved. Any necessary repairs will be undertaken using materials and techniques sympathetic to the original construction.

- **Internal reconfiguration** - The interior will be reconfigured to provide flexible spaces that can accommodate a variety of uses, including co-working areas, studios, exhibition spaces, and meeting rooms. The design will retain the building's original character while introducing contemporary finishes that align with the creative purpose of the new hub. Modern materials and finishes will be chosen to complement the building's historical fabric, creating a cohesive aesthetic that blends old and new.

- **New glass extension** - The addition of a contemporary glass extension to the rear of the Wrexham Old Library is a central element of the design, providing a new café space that will serve as a social and collaborative area for the Creative Hub's users and the wider community. The extension has been designed to be both functional and aesthetically pleasing, creating a dialogue between the historic building and its modern addition.

- **Improved thermal performance and energy efficiency** - The refurbishment and extension will incorporate measures to enhance the environmental performance of the building. This includes improving the property's energy efficiency through upgraded insulation, efficient heating and cooling systems, and the use of sustainable materials where possible.

- **Accessibility enhancements** - The refurbishment will ensure full accessibility for all users, including the installation of a new platform lift and the regrading of levels to the rear to provide level access. Accessible restrooms and wayfinding signage will also be included.

The vision is to create a flexible, energy-efficient, cultural hub that mixes culture, technology and sustainability led by purpose driven organisations, entrepreneurs and business. The projected longevity of the newly refurbished building will be a key contributing factor to the property's sustainability and to ensure the heritage and architecture of the Old Library is enjoyed for many years to come.

5.1.2 CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL FEATURES

The Old Library is a building of significant historical and architectural value, and its refurbishment will be carried out with the utmost respect for its heritage. The project will carefully balance the need for modernisation with the preservation and restoration of the building's original features. A Heritage Impact Assessment by Geraint Roberts Associates will be provided to support the proposed scheme, but a summary of the proposed heritage works are included below. Key conservation efforts include:

Refurbishment of the External Façade

- Brickwork and stonework conservation - The front external brick and stone façade of the Wrexham Old Library is one of its most defining features. The conservation work will involve a process of cleaning, repairing, and repointing the stonework using traditional mortar that is compatible with the original materials. This approach ensures the preservation of the building's historical appearance while addressing any damage or deterioration that has occurred over time.
- Existing stone detailing - such as parapets, window surrounds and cornices will be conserved with care, with necessary repairs using materials and techniques that match the original construction, ensuring that these elements continue to contribute to the building's character.
- Window and door restoration - Original windows and doors will be carefully restored rather than replaced, where possible. Where modern interventions are necessary for improved thermal performance, such as the addition of secondary glazing, these will be done in a way that minimises visual impact on the original features. If full replacement is required, new double glazed units will be installed to match the aesthetic of the existing.
- Existing metalwork – external railings will be repainted if required. The existing modern handrail to the rear egress ramp will also be replaced with a new heritage painted cast iron handrail to best match what has been installed to the front entrance.

Refurbishment of the Existing Roof

- Slate roof – any slipped, missing or damaged slates will be replaced with new to match existing. Review and renew existing lead flashings and improve details at key junctions.
- Stone parapet – clean and repoint existing stone copings. Re-bed all displaced coping stones on DPC.
- Rainwater goods - replace existing cast iron gutters, hoppers and downpipes. Review existing gutter outlets and improve gutter drainage at key junctions.
- Existing bell tower - refurbish and repair where required.
- Existing flat felt roofs - Recover existing felt with new.
- Existing chimneys - clean and repoint.
- Felt pitched roof and polycarbonate rooflight - replace with new insulated standing seam roof and thermally improved rooflights.

Interior Conservation

- **Original features** - the interior of the Wrexham Old Library contains historic staircases, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative beam mouldings. These elements will be restored through careful cleaning, repair, and refinishing.
- **Plasterwork and ceilings** – Blocks 1 and 2 of the Old Library contain a significant amount of decorative ceilings, cornices, and mouldings, which will be conserved and refurbished as required.
- **Flooring restoration** – Many areas of the building still contain original flooring, which have been covered with carpet or vinyl tiles. These include parquet flooring to the rear ground floor and first floor office spaces, as well as terrazzo flooring to the entrance lobby and mosaic tiling to the staircase intermediate landing level. Where original flooring materials survive, these will be carefully restored. This may involve sanding and refinishing wooden floors, or cleaning and repairing tiled surfaces. New flooring, where required, will be chosen to complement the historical character of the interiors, ensuring a cohesive aesthetic throughout the building.

Sensitive Additions and Extensions

- **Sympathetic design of the glass extension** - The new glass extension will be designed to complement the historical features of the original library without overshadowing them. The extension's modern materials and minimalist design will create a clear distinction between old and new, ensuring that the original building remains the focal point. The connection between the extension and the historic building will be carefully detailed to ensure that the new work is both functional and respectful of the existing structure.
- **Reversibility of interventions** - Where possible, new interventions will be designed to be reversible, allowing future generations the option to remove or alter these additions without damaging the original structure. This approach reflects a commitment to safeguarding the long-term heritage value of the Old Library.

The conservation of historical features is a cornerstone of the Old Library refurbishment project. By carefully restoring and preserving the building's original elements, while thoughtfully integrating modern amenities and extensions, the project ensures that the library's historical character is maintained and celebrated. This balanced approach allows the building to continue serving the community while honouring its past.

5.1.3 INTERNAL REMODELLING

The original layout of the Old Library will be respected as much as possible during the refurbishment. This includes preserving key rooms and spaces that reflect the building's historical function, such as reading rooms, entrance lobbies, and other significant areas. Where alterations are necessary to accommodate new uses or accessibility improvements, these will be done in a way that minimises the impact on the historic fabric as much as possible. Proposed interventions will also look to be reversible, ensuring that future generations have the option to return to the original layout if desired.

Layout proposals have been split into floors and blocks as below to ensure intentions are clearly described.

Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Figure 13 - Proposed ground floor plan

Block 1

Layout - The existing layout of block 1, containing the entrance lobby and rooms either side will remain as current.

Floors - Existing carpet tiles will be removed throughout this area and new vinyl flooring installed to the side rooms. The existing terrazzo floor and tiled floor to the entrance lobby will be cleaned, refurbished and revealed as part of the proposals.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. The existing opening into side room GL.02 will be infilled with a contemporary minimalist glass partition and glazed door, which

will provide a modern intervention that contrasts well against the historic fabric. The existing single door opening into side room GL.03 will be stud infilled.
Ceilings - Within these existing spaces, new raft ceilings will be installed below the current ceilings to contain new MEP services. These ceiling rafts will be offset from the walls, with uplights installed to perimeters to highlight existing cornices above. Please refer to the proposed ceiling plans submitted as part of the overall application for further details.
Doors and windows – The main entrance door into the lobby area will be retained and refurbished, along with the existing metal windows.
Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included on the layout plans. These will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 2
Layout - The existing layout of block 2 will remain largely the same, but an additional accessible WC (GL.12) will be installed next to the existing one and the opening blocked up between this area and room GL.03, which will allow for the formation of a new toilet lobby area and cleaner store. The position of the staircase and tea point will remain as existing. While a new platform lift will be installed to existing room GL.14, along with a service riser. The lift will provide much needed access to the first floor and the riser will allow services to be taken between levels in a concealed way.
Floors - Existing carpet tiles will be removed throughout this area and new vinyl flooring installed. The existing terrazzo floor to the lobby area and tiled floor to the staircase will be cleaned, refurbished and revealed as part of the proposals.
Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. New glazed partitions will be formed between; the lobby area, the staircase, room GL.03 and the open plan flexible space GL.07. New stud walls will form the new rooms described above.
Ceilings – Over the staircase and room GL.03, new raft ceilings will be installed as described previously, to highlight the original features of the building. All other areas will have open high-level ceilings with exposed services. These services will be powder coated in a single colour, creating a modern linear run of services above these spaces.
Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required.
Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 3
Layout – A new kitchen will be installed within this block, with kitchen store cupboard. A new accessible WC will also be formed, providing WC provision to the new glass extension. The existing corridor leading to the rear emergency egress point will remain.
Floors – New vinyl floor finishes will be installed over the existing solid concrete floors.
Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. New stud walls will form the new rooms described above.
Ceilings – This block will have open high ceilings with exposed services. These services will be powder coated in a single colour, creating a modern linear run of services above these spaces.
Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required. The existing windows between the new accessible WC, kitchen and glass extension will have the sills lowered to ground level to form new door openings between these spaces.
Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 4

Layout – Existing stud partitions here will be removed to form one large open plan flexible space. Two stores will be located to the bottom corner of the area to provide storage for furniture and plantroom.

Floors – The raised access floor will be removed to reveal existing parquet flooring, which will be refurbished. The stores will have vinyl flooring.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. New stud walls will form the new rooms described above.

Ceilings – This block will have open high ceilings with exposed services. These services will be powder coated in a single colour, creating a modern linear run of services above these spaces. A timber battened feature ceiling will run from the entrance lobby to the new glass extension. This will highlight the main circulation route between the front and back of the building.

Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required. The existing window opening between the new open plan area and glass extension will be widened and sill lowered to ground level to form a strong access route between the two spaces.

Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Proposed First Floor Plan

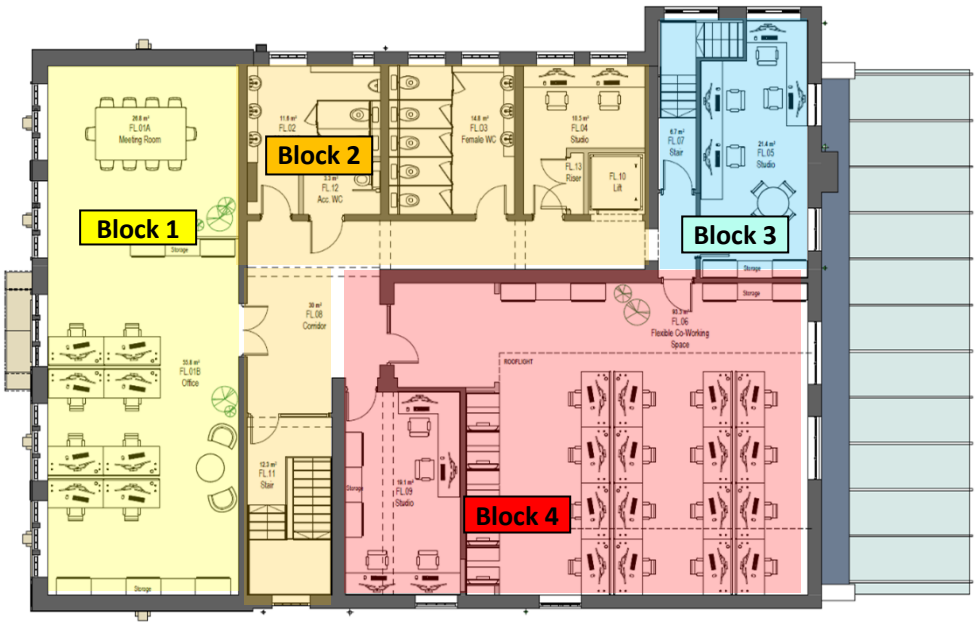


Figure 14 - Proposed First Floor Plan

Block 1

Layout – The existing open plan vaulted room will remain and form a new large open plan office space.

Floors – Existing carpet tiles will be removed to reveal the existing parquet flooring, which will be refurbished.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted.

Ceilings – New raft ceilings will be installed as described previously, to highlight the original features of the building.

Doors and windows – The existing double door will be refurbished, along with the existing metal windows.

Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 2

Layout - The existing layout of block 2 will remain largely the same, but a new accessible WC (FL.12) will be installed within the current male WC to provide an accessible toilet at first floor level. The internal layouts of both existing male and female WCs will be updated to make the best use of the space available. The position of the main staircase circulation corridors will remain as existing. While a new platform lift will be installed to existing room FL.04, along with a service riser. The lift will provide much needed access to the first floor and the riser will allow services to be taken between levels in a concealed way.

Floors - Existing carpet tiles will be removed throughout this area and new vinyl flooring installed.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. New glazed partitions will be formed between the landing area and the flexible co-working space FL.06. New stud walls will form the new accessible WC.

Ceilings – Over the staircase, landing and corridor, new raft ceilings will be installed as described previously, to highlight the original features of the building. All other areas will have open high ceilings with exposed services. These services will be powder coated in a single colour, creating a modern linear run of services above these spaces.

Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required.

Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 3

Layout – The existing corner room within this block will remain as a single office space.

Floors – Existing carpet tiles will be removed to reveal the existing parquet flooring, which will be refurbished.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted.

Ceilings – New raft ceilings will be installed as described previously, to highlight the original features of the building.

Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required.

Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

Block 4

Layout – Both rooms will remain as current. One forming a large co-working space (FL.06) and the other a smaller open plan office (FL.09).

Floors – Existing carpet tiles will be removed to both rooms. To FL.06 the existing parquet flooring will be refurbished, and to FL.09 a new vinyl finish will be installed over the existing solid concrete floor.

Walls – all existing walls to be taken back to plaster and painted. The existing door opening between both rooms will be stud infilled. A new stud wall will be formed within the larger room FL.06 to create areas for stud pods and a void area above to run hidden service containment.

Ceilings – The smaller room Fl.09 will have new raft ceilings installed as described previously, which will highlight the original features of the building. The larger room FL.06 will have vaulted ceiling with exposed services. These services will be powder coated in a single colour, creating a modern linear run of services above these spaces.

Doors and windows – New internal doors will be installed throughout. Existing windows will be assessed, refurbished, or replaced with new as required.

Fixtures and fittings – Placeholder positions of furniture have been included, but these will be finalised as part of the detailed design development.

5.1.6 GLASS EXTENSION

The addition of a contemporary glass extension to the rear of the Old Library is a central element of the design, providing a new café space that will serve as a social and collaborative area for the Creative Hub's users and the wider community. The extension has been designed to be both functional and aesthetically pleasing, creating a dialogue between the historic building and its modern addition.

Architectural Approach: The design of the glass extension is intentionally contemporary, offering a striking contrast to the solid brickwork of the existing building. The extension is conceived as a lightweight, transparent structure that allows the historic building to remain the focal point of the site. The use of large glass panels maximises natural light within the café, creating a bright and welcoming environment. The transparency of the structure also ensures that views of the historic building are preserved from all angles, maintaining the visual integrity of the site.

Form and Functionality: The glass extension is designed to be a flexible, multi-purpose space. During the day, it will function primarily as a café, providing a relaxed environment for socializing and informal meetings. The open-plan layout allows for easy reconfiguration of the space, enabling it to host events, workshops, and exhibitions as needed.

Materials and Sustainability: Sustainability is a key consideration in the design of the extension. High-performance, double-glazed glass will be used to ensure excellent thermal efficiency. The structural elements of the extension will be formed from powder coated steel columns and beams, which provide a strong, durable frame and a visually light, minimalist aesthetic. The design of the glass extension's façade will be characterized by a rhythmic arrangement of vertical steel mullions, which create a consistent and harmonious pattern across the exterior.

Green Wall: A distinctive feature of the new glass extension will be the internal green wall, located on the rear gable wall of the existing library building at ground level. This living wall will be secured directly to the building, carefully integrated to avoid damage to the original fabric while providing a striking visual element within the café space. The green wall will be composed of a variety of plant species chosen for their ability to thrive indoors and contribute to improved air quality. The lush greenery will create a natural focal point, adding a sense of freshness and vitality to the interior. It will also provide a soft, organic contrast to the clean lines and hard surfaces of the steel and glass structure, fostering a calming, biophilic environment for visitors.

5.1.4 IMPROVED THERMAL PERFORMANCE AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The refurbishment of the Wrexham Old Library presents a valuable opportunity to enhance the building's thermal performance and energy efficiency. These improvements are designed to reduce the building's environmental impact, lower operating costs, and provide a more comfortable environment for occupants while respecting the historic nature of the structure.

Passive Upgrades

Roof insulation - The existing roof spaces will be upgraded with modern insulation materials that provide improved thermal performance. Insulation will be installed in a way that minimises disruption to the historic fabric and includes placing insulation within roof voids to the pitched slate areas, installing insulation above structure to the flat roof areas, installing an insulated standing seam roof over the existing structure to block 4. This will help to reduce heat loss through the roof, a major source of energy inefficiency in older buildings

Existing window enhancements – the existing metal windows to the front of the building will be refurbished and secondary glazing installed behind to improve thermal efficiency while preserving the historic appearance of the original windows.

Refurbishment and/or replacement windows – the rest of the windows throughout the building will be assessed and either refurbished with new slimline double glazing installed, or new replacement timber windows installed to match existing if required.

Air tightness and draft proofing – a comprehensive draft-proofing program will be undertaken to seal gaps around windows, doors, and other openings. This will include the installation of high-quality seals around existing doors and windows, as well as ensuring that all new openings, such as those in the glass extension, are fitted with air-tight seals.

Active Measures

Improved ventilation – refurbishing and /or replacing the existing windows will allow them to be opened and used to ventilate the building more easily. This will provide the main ventilation strategy for number of areas. The large open plan office at first floor will also be naturally ventilated via actuated rooflights at high level.

LED lighting - All lighting within the building, including the new glass extension, will be upgraded to energy-efficient LED fixtures. These provide excellent luminosity with lower energy consumption and longer lifespans, reducing both operational costs and environmental impact.

Smart controls - The building will be equipped with smart lighting controls, such as motion sensors and daylight sensors, to ensure that lights are only used when necessary. This will further reduce energy consumption and improve the building's overall energy efficiency.

Renewable Energy Sources

Air source heat pumps and new radiators - will be installed to service the building and replace the existing gas boilers to form a new low-carbon heating system and remove reliance on fossil fuels.

5.1.4 ACCESSABILITY ENHANCEMENTS

The refurbishment of the Wrexham Old Library places a strong emphasis on creating an inclusive environment that is accessible to all members of the community. The design aims to overcome the challenges posed by the building's historic nature while meeting contemporary standards for accessibility. Key improvements include:

Entrance and Access Routes

- Main entrance – Recently formed DDA compliant ramped access to front entrance to be retained.
- Rear egress - Existing level access and a DDA compliant ramp to the rear to be retained.
- Accessible routes - Internal circulation routes within the library will be reconfigured to provide clear, unobstructed paths that accommodate wheelchair users and individuals with other mobility aids. This includes widening doorways and corridors where necessary and ensuring that flooring materials are smooth, slip-resistant, and free from trip hazards.

Vertical Circulation

- New lift installation - A key aspect of the refurbishment is the installation of a new platform lift to provide access to the first floor of the building. The lift will be strategically located to minimise the impact on the historic fabric of the library, while providing easy access to the first floor. It will be designed to accommodate wheelchairs and include features such as tactile buttons, audible floor announcements, and braille signage for visually impaired users.

Restroom Facilities

- Accessible WCs: New accessible WC facilities will be provided on each floor of the building. These WCs will be designed in accordance with current accessibility standards, offering ample space for manoeuvring, support rails, and emergency call buttons. Fixtures and fittings will be selected to be easy to use, with lever taps, low-level basins, and accessible flush mechanisms.

5.1.5 MATERIALS

The material selection for the Wrexham Old Library refurbishment has been carefully considered to balance the preservation of the building's historical integrity with the introduction of modern elements that enhance functionality, durability, and sustainability. The materials chosen reflect a commitment to quality, aesthetics, and environmental responsibility.

Externally, most materials will be to match existing, with most of the works to be refurbishment/repair of the existing facades and repair/replacement of existing windows and doors. Historical materials will be preserved and restored, while new materials—such as steel, glass, and contemporary finishes—will be used in a way that allows them to be read distinctly against the existing building. Creating a clear but harmonious contrast between old and new.

As per the external strategy, internally, any original features and finishes will be repaired and revealed. While new finishes will be suitably contemporary to ensure modern interventions are legible against the historical backdrop.



Figure 15 - Proposed material palette

6.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 ECOLOGY

A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal and Roost Assessment was undertaken in August 2024 by Richards Moorehead & Laing. The full detailed report has been included within this application however, the report executive summary is as follows;

- No Priority habitats would be disturbed/lost as part of the development. No statutory designated sites occur on or within 1 km of the site.
- There is an area of problematic species buddleia, which must **not** be caused to spread by the works. If disturbed, a precautionary working method statement (PWMS) by an approved contractor should be written, to include a biosecurity risk assessment, control, eradication, and management of this species. This should be written in consultation with the landowner/occupier.
- The site has little value for protected or notable species, and none were recorded on site with the exception of herring gulls (a species of conservation concern). Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAM's), which include pre works site surveys have been advised.
- It is recommended that no further emergence surveys for bats are required unless refurbishment is delayed for more than one year from the date of the last emergence survey conducted. If bats are found roosting within the structure, during the recommended pre-deroofing checks, then Reasonable Avoidance Measures have been advised.

Potential biodiversity enhancements are included as follows, with confirmation on what will be included as part of the proposals:

- **Provisions for bats**
  Given the listed nature of the building additional habitat provision will not be possible without altering the external appearance of the building and will not be proposed as part of this scheme.

- **Provision for nesting birds**
  Given the listed nature of the building additional habitat provision will not be possible without altering the external appearance of the building and will not be proposed as part of this scheme.

- **Removal of problematic plants have been advised**
  The problematic species of buddleia will be removed in accordance with the advice provided.

- **The provision of native planting in landscape proposals**
  A new planting bed will be formed to the north-east corner of the building and will contain native planting.

6.1 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Paragraph 6.21 of Planning Policy Wales defines green infrastructure as *"the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks."*

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides a context for the delivery of multi-functional green infrastructure. Its protection and provision can make a significant contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources, and in particular to protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in terms of the diversity within and connections between ecosystems and the extent and condition of these ecosystems, so that they are better able to resist, recover from and adapt to pressures. This means that the development of green infrastructure is an important way for local authorities to deliver their Section 6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

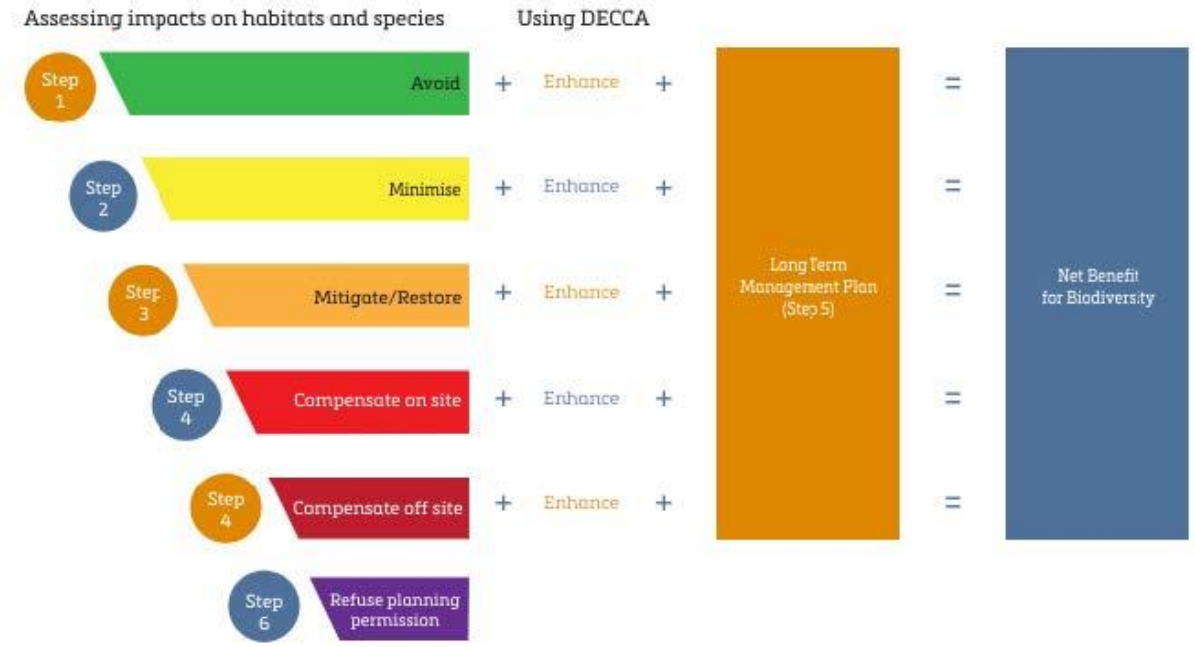
The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

The DECCA Framework and Net Benefits for Biodiversity: The DECCA framework is used for evaluating ecosystem resilience based on five attributes and properties specified in the Environment (Wales) Act. These are: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience.

A summary of the definitions is described below:

- ***Diversity:*** *maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.*
- ***Extent:*** *incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.*
- ***Condition:*** *The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.*
- ***Connectivity:*** *This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity.*
- ***Aspects*** *of ecosystem resilience (adaptability, recovery and resistance): ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.*

Paragraph 6.4.11 of Planning Policy Wales states that *"planning authorities must follow a step-wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Enhancement must be secured by delivering a biodiversity benefit primarily on site or immediately adjacent to the site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact."*



Paragraph 6.2.12 of Planning Policy Wales states that *"a green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15) has been applied.*

Following review of the Preliminary Ecology Assessment, it is understood that the biodiversity value of the current site is considered to be very low. However, by reusing an existing building on an urban site and providing a new planting bed within a limited site boundary, the proposals are considered to be proportionate with the development. No other provisions through enhanced landscaping are possible given the site boundary only incorporates the building itself and small portions of existing planting. On this basis, it is considered that this application demonstrates compliance with PPW and follows the Step-Wise Approach.

6.3 DRAINAGE

An existing drainage CCTV inspection survey was recently undertaken by MetroRod and reviewed by JP Structural to develop existing and proposed drainage information for the scheme. Both the CCTV drainage report and the existing and proposed drainage information has been included within the application to support the scheme, but a summary of the works are included below:

SuDS and SAB Application Requirement

The overall scheme is fundamentally a refurbishment, with the inclusion of a small one storey extension to the rear of approximately 80m2. Noting the size of the new construction area, the urban / town centre location and considering the listed status of the building, WCBC's Technical Flood Risk Officer confirmed the extension, and overall scheme does not require SAB approval.

Existing Drainage

Existing surface water and foul drains serving the existing building all fall to an existing combined drainage system around the perimeter of the site – please refer to existing drainage drawing for further details.

Proposed Drainage

All existing surface water downpipe and foul drainage stack positions are to remain as existing, with two new surface water downpipes located at the rear of the building to serve the new glass extension. An existing drainage pipe currently runs under this location, which will require removing and replacing with a new drainage run formed outside of this area, nearer Guildhall – please refer to the proposed drainage drawing for further details.

The new accessible WC and kitchen serving the new glass extension area will drain into an existing soil stack at the rear of the building near the existing chimney.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The refurbishment of the Wrexham Old Library into a new Creative Hub represents a thoughtful and sensitive approach to revitalising a significant historical building, while adapting it for contemporary use. The design strategy carefully balances the preservation of the library's architectural heritage, with the introduction of modern interventions that meet current accessibility, sustainability, and functional needs.

By restoring and conserving the original features of the building, including the external façades, and decorative interiors, the project honours the legacy of this important civic landmark. At the same time, the introduction of a modern glass extension, with its sleek steel structure and high-performance materials, provides a distinct yet complementary addition that enhances the building's usability and ensures its relevance for future generations.

The integration of improved thermal performance and energy efficiency underscores the commitment to creating a building that is not only historically significant but also environmentally responsible. These enhancements, along with the carefully considered accessibility improvements, ensure that the Wrexham Old Library can continue to serve the community in a more inclusive and sustainable manner.

Overall, this project exemplifies a harmonious blend of old and new, where the rich history of the Wrexham Old Library is celebrated while embracing the opportunities of the future. The new Creative Hub will stand as a vibrant centre for innovation and culture in Wrexham, fostering creativity and community engagement in a space that is both historically rooted and forward-looking.

This conclusion encapsulates the overarching goals of the refurbishment project, emphasising the successful integration of conservation, modern functionality, and sustainability in creating a valuable community asset.