Aubourn Architecture

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Introduction –

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Aubourn Architecture (the Agent) on behalf of Garob Oswald Road Ltd – In Administration (the Applicant). It is submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council to support the erection of 5no. light industrial units (Use Class B1 and B8) at the Former Cooperative, Well Street, Cefn Mawr, Wrexham LL14 3YE.

Included in this document is the project brief, a description of the existing site, and the design principles for the proposed development.

This document should be read in conjunction with the associated drawings and supporting documents submitted separately with this planning application.

Brief –

In July 2023, during the Change of Use application relating to the existing retail building on the site, the Applicant entered into administration.

Since that date, the administrators (CRG Insolvency & Financial Recovery) and the funding partner for the development have been considering various options for the site. This review led to us being commissioned to develop sketch proposals for the wider site, in order to maximise the commercial opportunity and ensure that the approved scheme is commercially viable, and therefore deliverable.

The result of the sketch proposals, and subsequent Pre-Application Enquiry, forms the basis of this planning application.

The administrators and funding partner have a proven track record of delivering development sites, often with complex planning issues to overcome.

SITE + CONTEXT

Cefn Mawr –

Cefn Mawr is a historic village located in the county of Wrexham, Wales, renowned for its scenic setting within the Dee Valley and its proximity to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The village has a rich industrial heritage, with ties to coal mining and ironworks, which have influenced its architectural character and layout.

Cefn Mawr benefits from its position on the edge of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), offering stunning landscapes and strong connections to local landmarks and natural amenities. The village is well-served by local facilities, including shops, schools, and community hubs, and enjoys good transport links to Wrexham and beyond.

This project site is situated within a community that blends historical significance with aspirations for sustainable development, aligning with local authority goals for preserving heritage while fostering growth.



Aerial map of the application site (edged red)

Existing Site –

The site is currently occupied by a redundant retail building, with associated forecourt, and is accessed from Well Street.

The site is bounded by a low stone wall fronting the highway and vegetation to the rear boundary which would be unaffected by any redevelopment.

There is also a community centre to the north-east of the site, and the car park serving this building is accessed via the site.

Given the length of time the site has been redundant, the site is in a poor state of repair.



Application site, looking South-West



Application site, looking East

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning History –

A full planning application was submitted for the "Change of use of building from Class A1 (Retail) to Class B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and Distribution). This application was approved on the 24th July 2023 under application reference P/2023/0008.

The consented scheme enables the existing building to be split into separate units and proposes alterations to the external elevations, including the introduction of new doors and roller shutters.

Pre-Application Enquiry –

A Pre-Application Enquiry was submitted back in April 2024 to obtain guidance on the initial design proposals, to support any subsequent planning application.

A copy of the Pre-Application advice received is included with the supporting documents, but the summary confirmed that the principle of development can be supported in line with local planning policy.

Limited information has accompanied the enquiry in regard to elevation design and scale, end users, operational hours, drainage and protected species. Consequently, I am unable to fully assess the impact of the proposed development. However, it is considered that the principle of development can be supported in accordance with LDP polices SP2 and EM1.

APPLICATION PROPOSALS

Overview –

The existing retail building will be retained and redeveloped into warehouses in accordance with planning permission P/2023/0008.

The remainder of the site will be developed into new, light industrial units with shared car parking / loading areas / vehicle access serving the whole development.

Use –

The lawful use of the site is A1 retail. The site has been vacant for a number of years and the last known use was a local needs convenience store. There is also an extant planning permission for a change of use of the site to Use Classes B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and Distribution).

The proposal would seek to develop additional units with same use classes as the recent planning permission (Use Classes B1 and B8).

Layout –

The proposed units are located to the east of the existing building, with shared car parking / loading areas / vehicle access along the frontage.

Early consideration was given to reducing the depth of the units and splitting these into two separate buildings; one to the northern boundary, fronting Well Street, and one to the south. This option was discounted to maintain the openness to the front of the site and provide greater separation distance to the residential buildings along Well Street.

The existing vehicular access into the site is to be maintained, as is the access to the community centre car park.

Amount –

The submitted design option proposes 5 x light industrial units, each with a Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) of approximately 105sqm.

Internally the floor area would predominantly be used for storage and distribution (B8), although consideration has been given to the possibility that some of the units may have office accommodation (B1).

There are 25 car parking spaces shown (1 per 100sqm of B8 use, and an additional 1 space per unit which would allow for 33sqm of office space), which is in accordance with the local parking standards.

3no. Sheffield Cycle Stands will be provided on site to provide secure and sheltered cycle storage for up to 6no. bicycles. It is considered that this will provide adequate cycle parking for the site to serve the development and promote sustainable travel opportunities.

A Transport Assessment for the proposals is provided with the supporting documents.

Scale –

The height of the proposed units are 5m, with a low (5 degree) roof pitch hidden behind a parapet. Theis height has been determined by the existing building on the site, which measures 5.1m in height.

Appearance –

The materials for the proposed units are mix of facing brickwork (low level external walls), insulated

cladding panels (high level external walls) and insulated cladding panels (roof). This provides a contemporary look to the development, whilst ensuring the buildings fabric is energy efficient.

The Applicant is also giving consideration to extending this materials palette to the redevelopment of the existing building. This would provide a coherent look to the development as a whole, whilst providing necessary thermal upgrades required by the latest Building Regulations. Any changes to materials and appearance of the consented scheme would be subject to a separate amendment application but is worth mentioning within this application.

Landscaping –

Landscaping is proposed between the existing stone wall, along Well Street, and the rear of the proposed units. This is proposed to soften the visual impact and create a landscape buffer.

Any planting would be subject to detailed design but is likely to consist of low maintenance shrubs and native tree species.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment is provided with the supporting documents which show little-to-no ecological value to the site. The landscape proposals will provide a small gain in terms of biodiversity and ecological enhancement.

Access –

Access into the site will remain via Well Street. Within the site, there are shared car parking/loading / turning areas and the existing access to the community centre car park will be retained.

Full vehicle tracking is provided with the supporting documents.

Summary –

The application proposals are for the development of 5no. light industrial units on a site which already has an extant permission for the change of use from Class A1 (Retail) to Class B1 (Business) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) under application P/2023/0008.

The application proposals are a more efficient use of the land surrounding the existing building and will facilitate the redevelopment of the site as a whole.

The proposed development represents a sustainable form of development that would not have any unacceptable impact and would sufficiently accord with adopted planning policy and guidance.

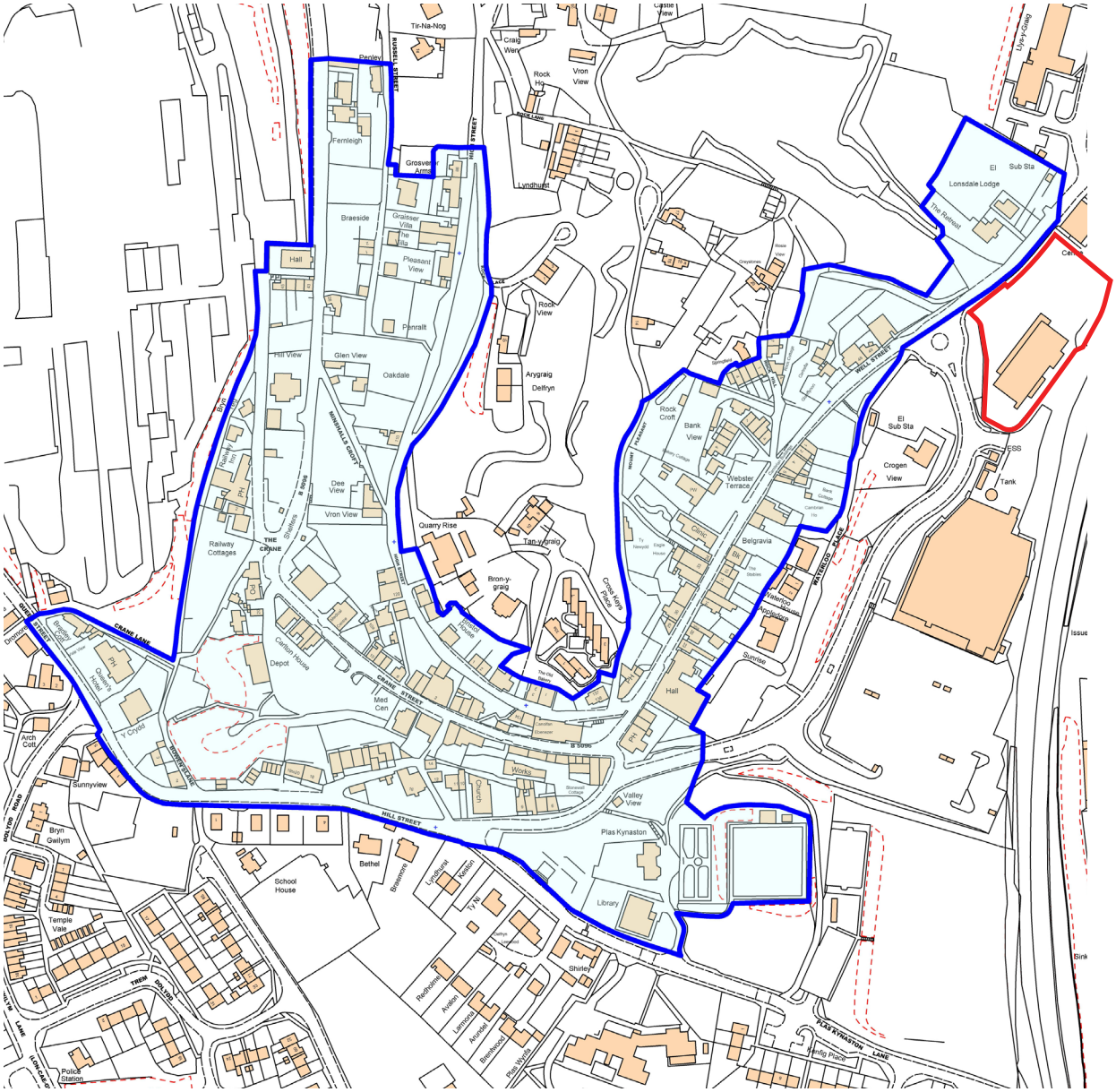
The Applicant is willing to discuss any issues that may arise during the consideration of the proposal with the Local Planning Authority.

CONSERVATION AREA IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Cefn Mawr Conservation Area –

The Cefn Mawr Conservation Area is designated to protect the village's historical and architectural character, which reflects its industrial heritage and connection to the nearby Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site. It includes a mix of traditional stone buildings, historic shopfronts, and narrow streets that embody the area's development during the 18th and 19th centuries as a hub for coal mining and ironworks.

The Conservation Area emphasizes the preservation of key architectural features, materials, and the unique layout of the village, ensuring that new development or alterations are sympathetic to its heritage significance. This designation supports the continued recognition of Cefn Mawr as an integral part of the Dee Valley's cultural and historical landscape.



Cefn Mawr Conservation Area (edged blue) and application site (edged red)

Assessment of Impact –

The application site borders, but lies outside of, the Cefn Mawr Conservation Area. Careful consideration has been given to the proximity of the Conservation Area to ensure the proposals preserve and enhance the character and appearance of this historically significant area.

Design and Materials

The design of the units incorporates materials and architectural elements that are sympathetic to the character of the adjacent Conservation Area. The simple materials palette and contemporary detailing has been designed to compliment the traditional palette seen in Cefn Mawr, helping to ensure visual harmony between the development and its surroundings.

Visual and Landscape Impact

The site's layout and landscaping have been designed to provide a transitional buffer between the Conservation Area and the new development. Planting schemes include native species that complement the surrounding green infrastructure, while boundary treatments such as hedgerows and stone walls are in keeping with local character.

Traffic and Activity

The proposals include measures to manage traffic and activity generated by the commercial units to avoid adverse effects on the Conservation Area's environment. Access and parking provision have been designed to integrate with the existing road network without increasing congestion or visual intrusion near the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

The development has been sensitively designed to respect the setting of the Cefn Mawr Conservation Area. The careful selection of materials, landscaping, and attention to local context ensures that the proposals will have no negative impact on the Conservation Area. Instead, the development will support the sustainable economic growth of Cefn Mawr while preserving its historical significance.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

The proposed development has been carefully designed to ensure there is no loss to biodiversity on the site, with landscaping plans incorporating measures to deliver a small net increase in biodiversity.

Existing Green Infrastructure –

The majority of the site comprises hardstanding, with the periphery and areas surrounding the building containing ruderal/scrubby vegetation. The east of the site also contains a line of trees, including species such as pussy willow, silver birch and maple. The understory primarily comprised ivy and bramble.

These have all been assessed as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. These features are retained and protected where possible to maintain the site's existing ecological value.

Proposed Green Infrastructure –

The landscaping scheme integrates a mix of native planting, pollinator-friendly species, and enhancements to existing green spaces. Key features include:

Native hedgerows and tree planting to strengthen ecological corridors.
Bird boxes and bat roosts to encourage wildlife habitation.

Step-Wise Approach (PPW12, Chapter 6) –

The development aligns with the Step-Wise approach for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience:

Avoidance: Existing green infrastructure has been retained where possible, and no protected habitats or species will be impacted.

Minimization: Construction activities will follow best practices to reduce disturbance to local biodiversity.

Mitigation: Enhancements such as native planting and habitat creation are included in the design.

Compensation: Not applicable, as no biodiversity loss is anticipated.

Net Biodiversity Benefits –

The project will deliver a small but measurable increase in biodiversity through:

- Increasing habitat diversity with native and pollinator-friendly plants.
- Creating nesting and roosting opportunities with bird and bat boxes.
- Ensuring sustainable management of landscaped areas to support long-term ecological resilience.

This commitment reflects the principles of sustainable development and supports the goals set out in Planning Policy Wales, ensuring the project contributes positively to the local green infrastructure network and enhances biodiversity on-site.

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CHARTERED PRACTICE

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