Bishops House - Carport

Diocese of Wrexham



Design & Access Statement

inc. Heritage Impact

P1

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INTRODUCTION

Bishops House and its associated office accommodation block currently act as both a dwelling for the Bishop of the Diocese of Wrexham, the office/ working environment and archive of the Diocesan curial staff.

Site Location:
Bishops House
17 Sontley Road,
Wrexham
LL13 7EW

In 2021 Lawray Architects were appointed to develop an architectural scheme which sought to improve the historic presence of the site and increase the efficiency of space for use by the curial staff on site for Diocese office duties. Retaining the historical and cultural significance of the existing Grade II listed Bishop's house is of much importance. As part of the improvement works, the side porch which was a 1990's addition to a later extension onto the original house, was removed and replaced with a more appropriate design. Since these works occurred The Diocese of Wrexham are now seeking to improve the site's energy efficiency and resilience.

It is hoped that this application will gain the approval for the following:

- **Installation of photovoltaic solar panels across the entire surface of the existing carport roof to the rear of Bishop's House.**

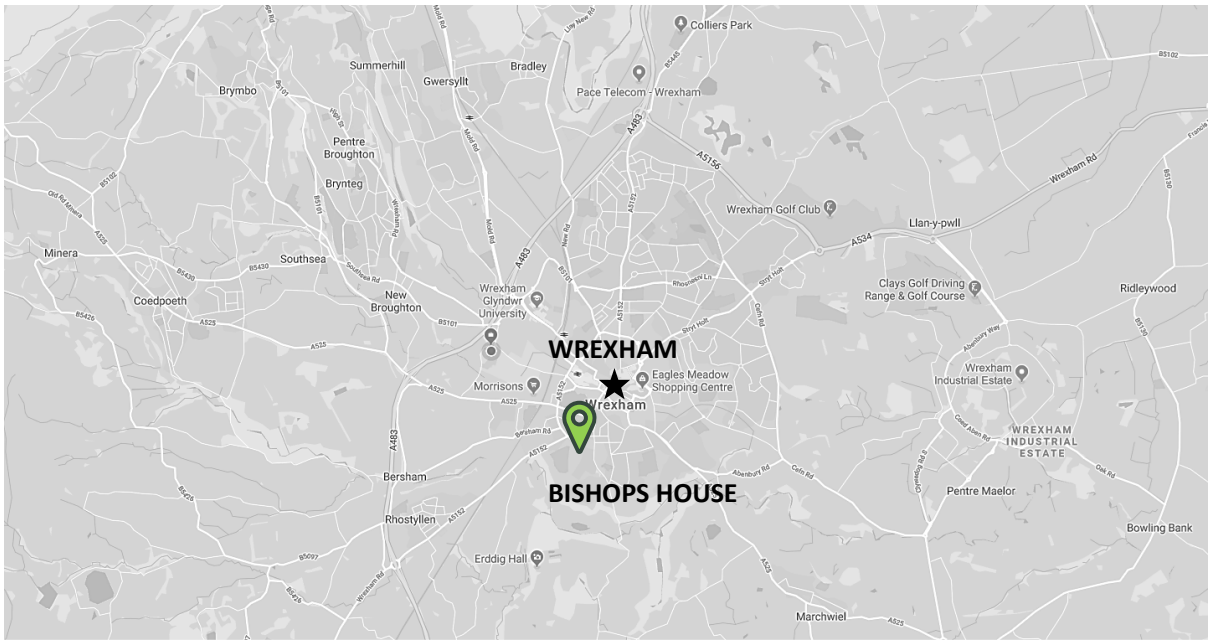
This document has been prepared to accompany a full planning application and listed building consent for the above-proposed works to the existing car port to the rear of Bishops House. It is a comprehensive document that aims to provide a written and illustrated commentary when reading in conjunction with the associated design drawings.

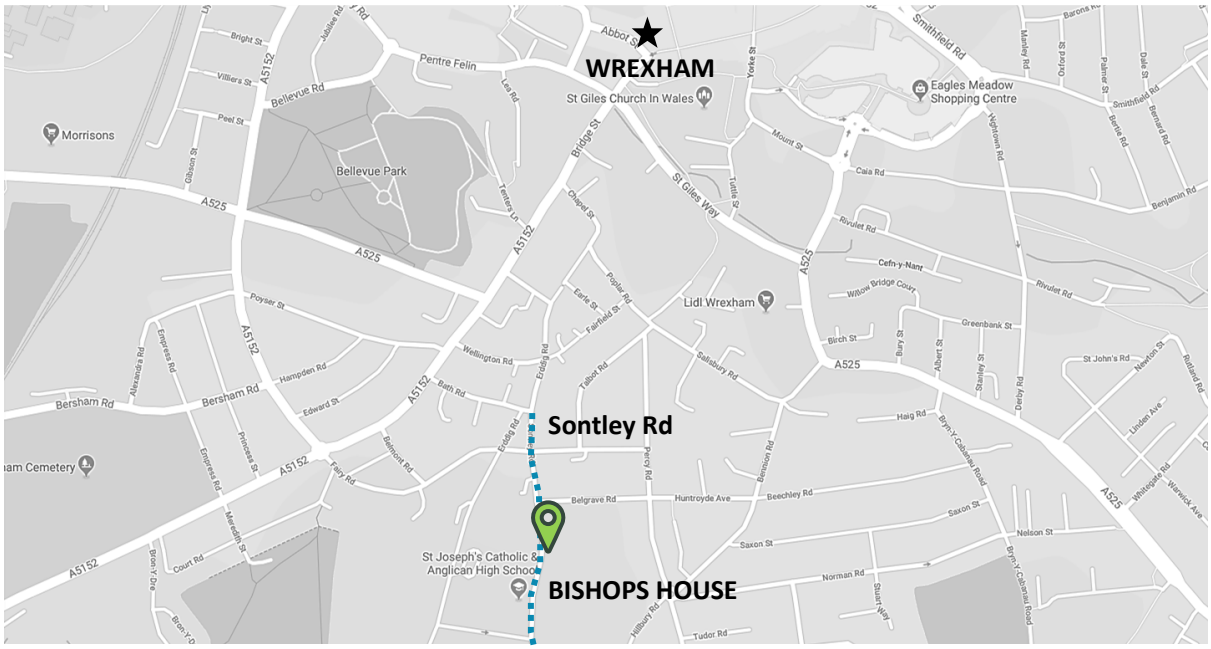
EXISTING

Location

The existing site and buildings are located to the south of Wrexham town centre, directly off Sontley Road, a minor route that heads to and from the town centre.

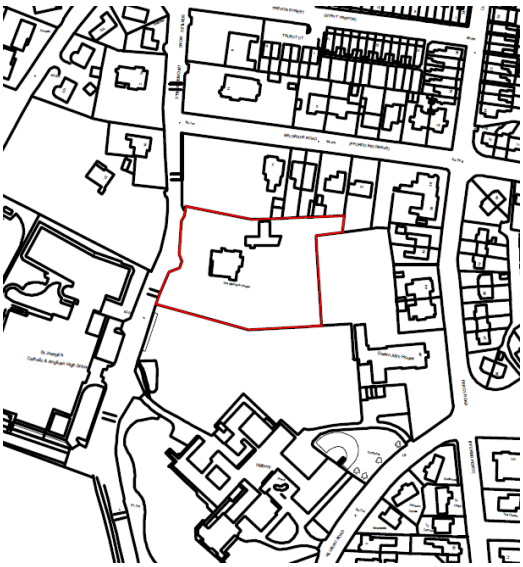
There are good and direct road links to Chester to the North, Oswestry to the South and Whitchurch to the East. The area is also serviced by a 2no. train stations operating Transport for Wales, the main station Wrexham general and the town centre station, Wrexham Central. These lines connect Wrexham to Chester and Liverpool in the North, as well as the other border town and villages, and also Shrewsbury, to the south.





Existing Site

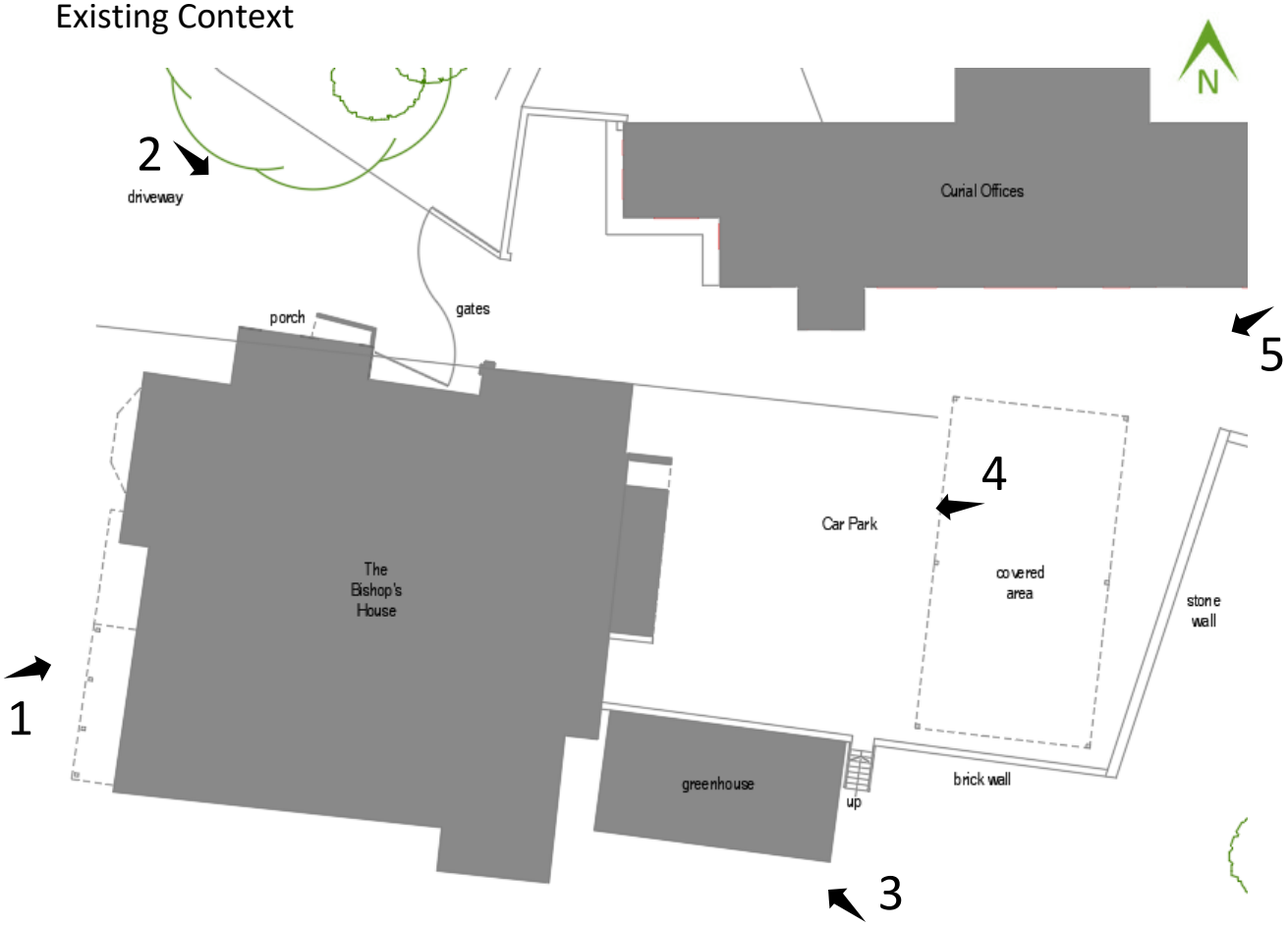




The Diocese of Wrexham currently has ownership of all the areas of the site outlined.

Site Boundary

Existing Context





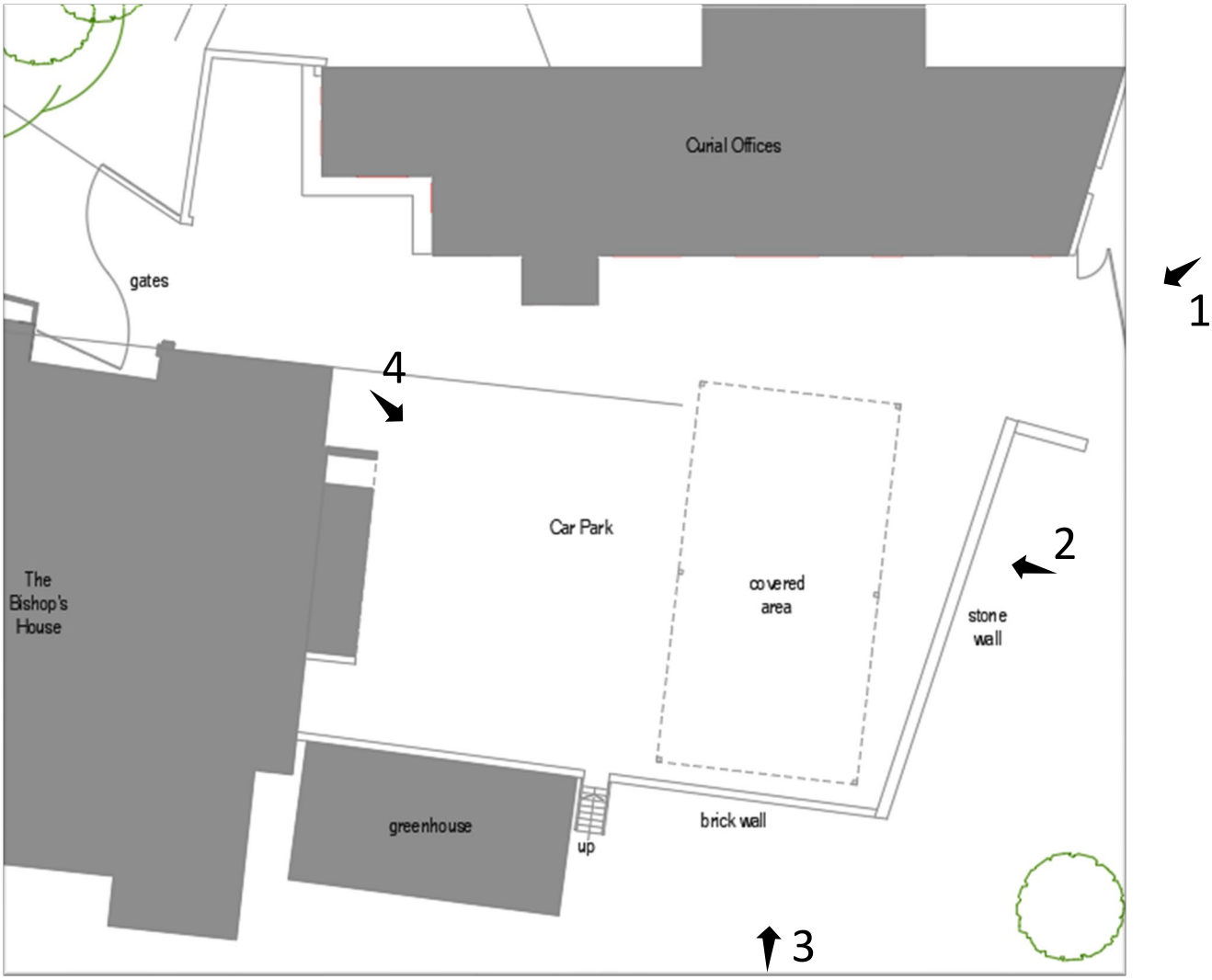

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Car Port Location & Context




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History

The house known by many as Bishop's House or Ty'r Esgob in Sontley Road, Wrexham was purchased in 1926, by the then Roman Catholic Diocese of Menevia, as a home for its new bishop, Francis John Vaughan. Succeeding bishops of Menevia and Wrexham have occupied it ever since. Currently, it is the home of Bishop Peter Brignall and the hub of the diocesan curial staff.

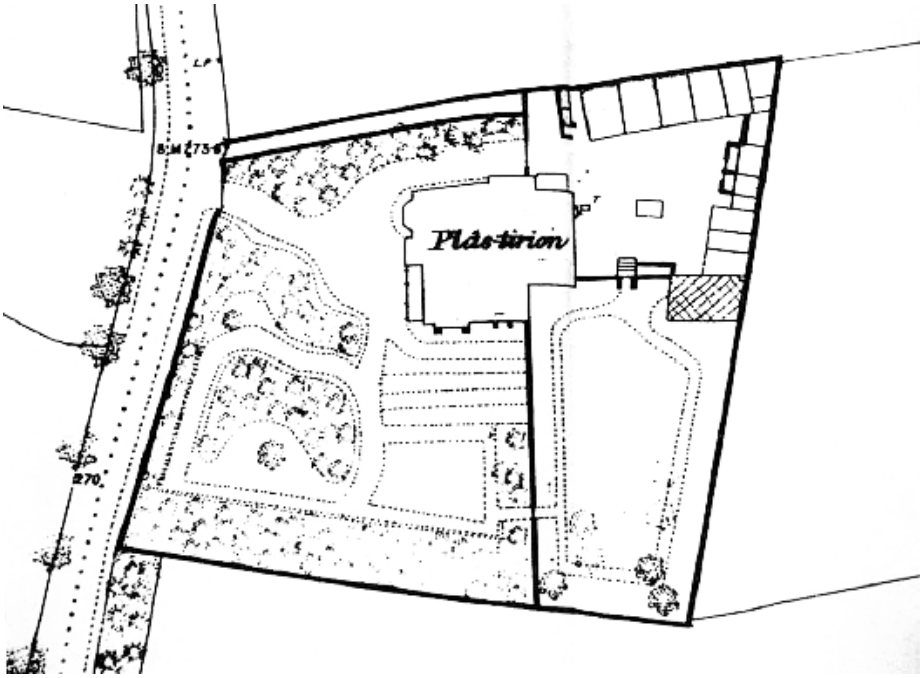


Known originally as Plas Tirion [Gentle Mansion], the house is a Grade II listed building, built as a single dwelling house in the Anglo-Italian style of brick with stone dressings and a slate roof. It is square in plan. Over the years, as well as being home to eight bishops, others who have lived in the house have included an army major, a book publisher and a wine merchant.

The house was built in 1865 on about four acres of land. Until then, it comprised two fields, given over to hay and to pasture.

The house was designed by James Reynolds Gummow. He came from a family of architects, responsible for many buildings in the town. The son of Michael Gummow, Wrexham's first borough surveyor, and Sarah, his wife, he was born on 24th January 1826. James designed several villas on Grosvenor Road as well as on Sontley Road at about the same time as Plas Tirion.

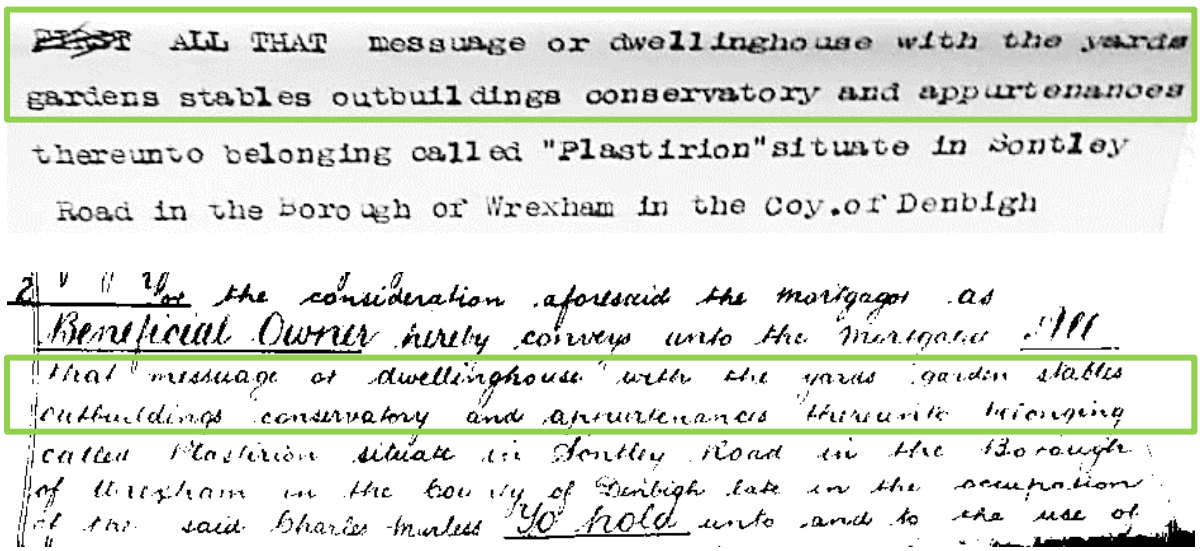
At this time, Wrexham was developing and expanding in a variety of ways. Entrepreneurs, especially from over the border in England, were attracted to Wrexham to work the rich mineral deposits found in the outlying areas of the town. The coming of the railway reached markets beyond Chester to the north and beyond Shrewsbury to the south. This gave rise to numerous job opportunities, increasing the prosperity of the town and district.



The house and grounds have seen various changes & conversions over the years, including the conversion of a historic coach house outbuilding into the current office block. As new owners have come in and changed the grounds as they see fit, the rear ancillary accommodation has changed.

There are numerous deeds and site plans outlining and identifying the house and its subservient outbuildings, usually listed as a dwelling house with 'the yards, gardens, stables, outbuildings, conservatory and appurtenance.

For the past 50 years, occupants have been familiar with a carport canopy located in the rear car park, featuring a steel frame structure and a corrugated metal sheeting roof, covering an area of approximately 65m².

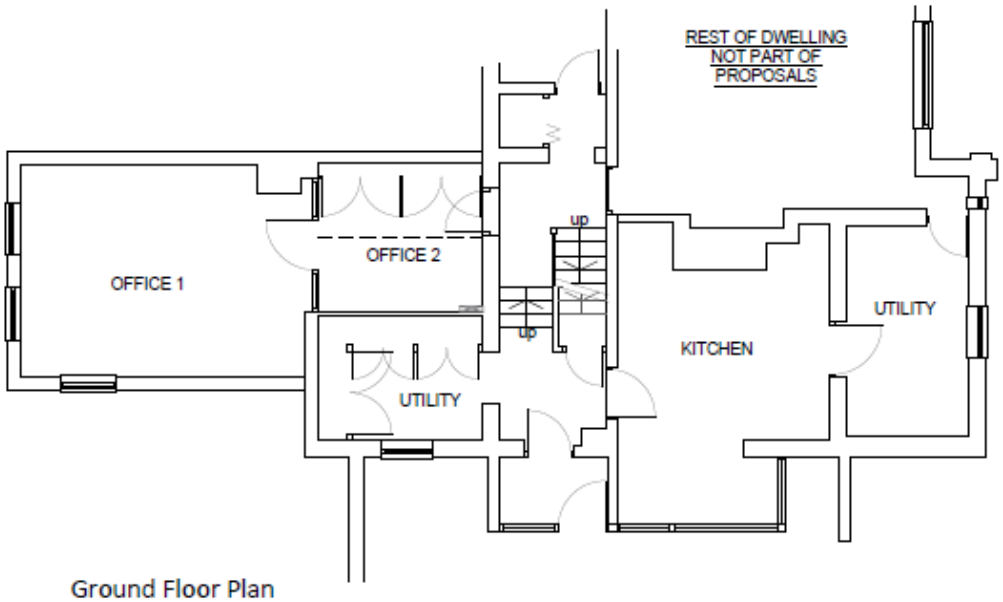

ALL THAT messuage or dwellinghouse with the yards gardens stables outbuildings conservatory and appurtenances thereunto belonging called "Plastirion" situate in Bontley Road in the Borough of Wrexham in the Coy. of Denbigh

the consideration aforesaid the mortgagor as Beneficial Owner hereby conveys unto the Mortgagee All that messuage or dwellinghouse with the yards garden stables outbuildings conservatory and appurtenances thereunto belonging called Plastirion situate in Bontley Road in the Borough of Wrexham in the County of Denbigh late in the occupation of the said Charles Mullen To hold unto and to the use of

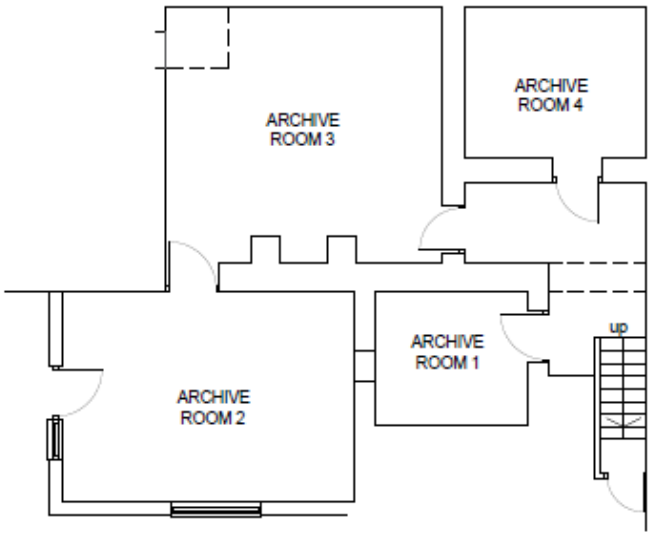
Existing Plans & Elevations

The existing grade 2 listed building is designed in the Anglo-Italian style, it is a two-storey brick-built building, with stone dressings and a slate roof. It has a three-window range and a short service wing to the rear.

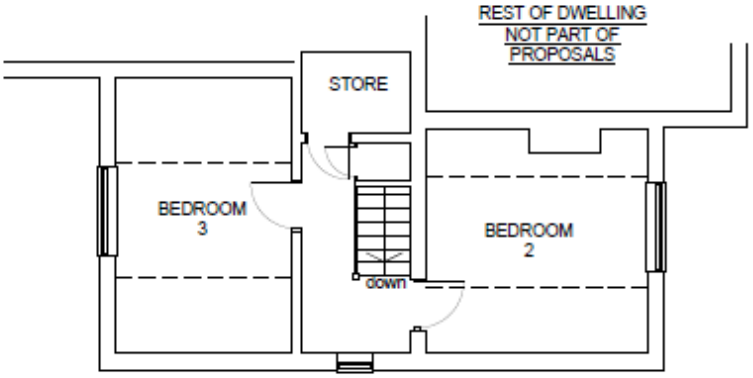
The interior of the house retains much of its original plan, with a central top-lit stair hall, separated from the entrance hall by a panelled archway. There is also an eighteenth-century style stair, with moulded tread ends and a swept rail. Some of the original joinery including the fireplace surrounds and plasterwork also survive.



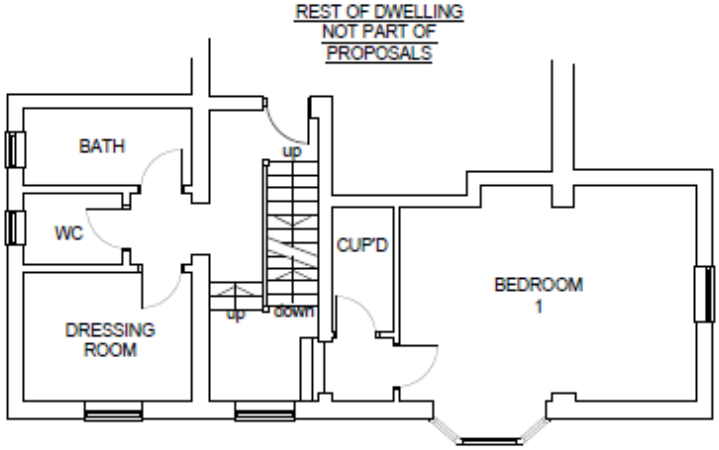
Ground Floor Plan



Basement Plan



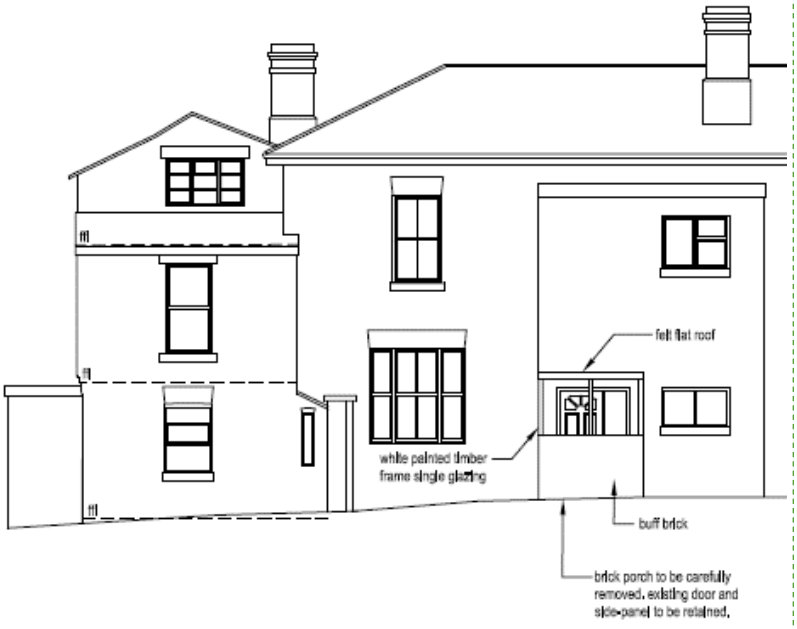
Second Floor Plan



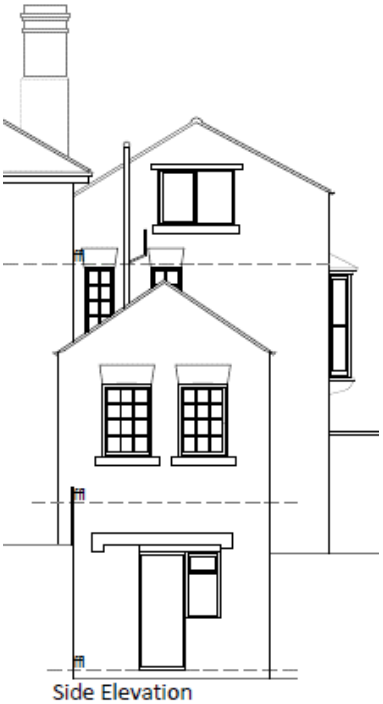
First Floor Plan



Rear Elevation



Driveway Elevation



Side Elevation

DESIGN INTENT

A design brief, created through discussions between the Diocese of Wrexham and Lawray Architects, has guided and led the development of the proposals resulting in the final designs being submitted with this application. A planning enquiry was submitted prior to this application in order to ensure that the proposed scheme achieved not only the ambitions of the client but also the informed suggestions and policies of the local council.

This application seeks to gain approval to install PV solar panels to the existing car port roof to the rear of the house, in order to:

1. **To improve building's energy efficiency and resilience.**
2. **Decarbonise through solar power helps to mitigate climate change and improve air quality.**

Proposed Plans



Access

Both vehicular and pedestrian entry onto the site is currently from two existing points off Sontley Road. They serve to provide separate access and egress points for cars and other vehicles. Both lead to and from the rear car park which is accessed through a set of gates, where a carport and limited parking is currently provided.







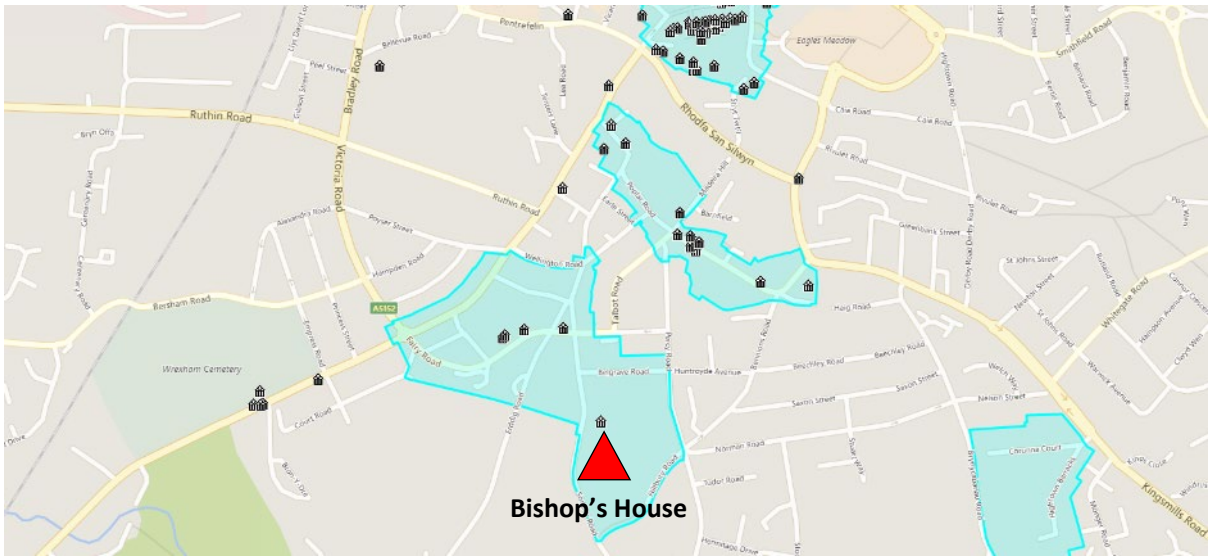
Two points of access onto the site and parking courtyard to rear, adjacent to existing office block. .

HERITAGE IMPACT

The existing Bishop's House dwelling is currently a Grade II listed historic structure, with the site also within a conservation area.

The blue areas below represent the Wrexham CBC Fairy Road conservation area, which includes an additional 4.no listed properties, although none of these are within an area of influence to the application site. As such, any changes made to Bishop's House would not directly affect the character or nature of these other listed structures, but an assessment would have to be made as to the impact on the character of the conservation area.





Bishops House

Bishops House, designed by J. R. Gummow for Thomas Williams, built in 1865 and formerly known as Plas Tirion, was designated in January of 1994. It was accepted on the grounds that it presented itself as a good example of work by the local architect. The listing below describes in detail some of the main features of the dwelling.

Exterior

Brick with stone dressings and slate roof. 2 storeys, square in plan, with 3-window entrance range, and a short service wing to rear. Anglo-Italian style. Central entrance, and advanced gable to the left. Stone porch with outer rusticated pilasters, coupled with panelled pilasters with foliate capitals. Modillion cornice to entablature which carries cast iron balcony rail. Round-arched entrance door within. Adjoining the porch, a canopy carried on ornate cast iron columns continues across the lower window of the right-hand bay. Stone canted bay window in gable to left of the entrance, with segmentally arched central light, and blind panels above transom of side lights. Upper windows renewed in round-arched openings set beneath steeply arched hood-moulds. Cornice forms open pediment in the left-hand gable, and in smaller dormer gable to right.

Garden front: 2 window range, with a tripartite canted bay window with renewed French doors to left, and French doors also renewed in the original opening to right. Stone swags and capitals to central pilasters of the bay window, which has rusticated outer pilasters. Heavy stone brackets carry entablature which forms balconette with cast iron rail above the right-hand window. Upper windows both round-arched, set beneath steep hood-moulds. Double cornice as sill band to these upper windows, and deep bracketed cornice to projecting eaves. Central stack with moulded stone cap, the chimney on the right-hand gable wall truncated.



It is interesting to note that some of the later extensions to the dwelling, such as the rear service quarters (above, RHS gabled) and the existing office outbuilding, are either barely mentioned or not described within the listing at all.

Assessment of Heritage Impact

The primary concern is whether the installation of solar panels to the existing carport roof will notably affect the views of Bishop's House, especially since they are proposed for a prominent location, which could distract from its historical significance and architectural character.

The most significant views surrounding the carport include the service quarters extension and the office block elevations, which do not appear to be mentioned in the listing description therefore it is assumed their historical or architectural significance is limited. To the east and south of Bishop's House are open rural grounds, therefore it is considered that installing PV panels on the carport roof would not compromise the site's overall significance.

The solar panels are also proposed to be discreetly integrated into the existing roof by using colour match panels. This will ensure that any visual impact to the grade II listed house is mitigated.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this document, alongside the developed design drawings and other supporting documentation, has provided a comprehensive and robust package of information, which outlines and explains the overall project brief, development strategies and the final design that is being submitted for approval.

It is felt that the proposals are complimentary of both the existing building and the local area, having been carefully considered not to negatively impact the views of Bishops House. The proposals should have no adverse impact to the character of the existing listed building or the conservation area and will improve the energy efficiency and resilience of the site whilst decarbonising the area and reducing energy bills.