

16 Lord Street, Wrexham

Planning, Design and Access Statement

December 2024

Prepared By:
The Leith Planning Group,
4 The Crossroads Business Park,
Freckleton Street,
Kirkham,
Preston,
PR4 2SH
T: 01253 795548
E: sam@theleithgroup.co.uk
www.theleithgroup.co.uk

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 3

2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY 9

3 ADOPTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN 14

4 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT 23

5 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS 27

6 CONCLUSIONS 30

Appendices 1 – Marketing Brochure, Legat Owen, September 2022 32

Tables

Table 1-1 Schedule of drawings 5

Figures

Figure 1: Extract of the proposed ground floor plan – Page 6

Figure 2: Extract of the proposed first floor plan – Page 6

Figure 3: Extract of the proposed second floor plan – page 7

Figure 4: Extract of the proposed third floor plan – Page 7

Figure 5: Extract od the proposals map from the Adopted LDP – Page 14

Version History

V5 – 11/02/2024	Ready for Application Submission

1 INTRODUCTION

Instructions

1.1 The Leith Group has been instructed by Wrexham Property Holdings Ltd ("the Applicant") to prepare and submit a detailed Planning, Design and Access Application for the change of use of 16 Lord Street, Wrexham (the "site").

1.2 The Application seeks to gain planning consent for the change of use of the existing property from offices to residential use. The description of "proposal" reads as follows:

> "*Change of use of from offices (class E) to residential (class C3), comprising of 23 flats, including replacing* existing shop front windows with new domestic sized windows, installing new window openings and the erection of fencing and gates to the bike store and bin store.

Background and Site Context

1.3 The site comprises a part four-story building located within the City Centre of Wrexham. The site currently houses a council contact Centre at ground floor level with general office accommodation on the upper floors. The existing building is modern in form and use of materials, with the existing external fabric proposed to be largely unchanged within the proposed development.

1.4 The site benefits from pedestrian access from the property frontage on Lord Street within the main City Centre, with vehicular access and servicing space available to the rear and accessed from Duke Street and Egerton Street.

1.5 The building was previously under use by Wrexham County Council as a Job Centre and administrative offices, however, has remained vacant for the past 2 ½ years. This has been confirmed via the marketing brochure that we have included as part of Appendices 1 attached to this report.

1.6 Given the City Centre location, the site is well served with services and facilities including eating establishments, shops, banks, library, leisure facilities etc., and is also well placed for access to public transport connections. Bus stops are located within walking distance of the site on Lord Street, and the main bus terminal is also located within walking

distance of the site off Trinity Street and King Street. Wrexham Central and Wrexham General train stations are also within walking distance of the property and provide good overground national rail links.

1.7 The site is not understood to be listed, and there are no other known heritage assets within close-proximity that will be affected by the proposals. The site is not understood to be located within a defined conservation area. The site is not within an area at risk from flooding.

Planning History

1.8 The council have confirmed when formal pre-application was undertaken in July 2023 that there is no planning history on site, which is likely to be determinative or relevant to the assessment of this further scheme.

1.9 However, as detailed above, the scheme subject of this formal application was submitted to Wrexham Council in the summer of 2023 for formal pre-application advice. The council provided their written feedback on the principles of the proposed residential use of the upper floors of the building on the 3rd July 2023, and confirmed that:

> *"In light of the above and given that the existing office use on the ground-floor would be retained as part of the development, it is considered the principle of the development would be acceptable in this instance. This is, however, subject to compliance with UDP Policy GDP1 and LDP Policy DM1, as well as consideration being given to the wider material planning matters. "*

1.10 The pre-application addressed several other matters including amenity, privacy, affordable housing, noise, ecology etc, all of which have been addressed in detail within this detailed application submission.

1.11 Whilst it is accepted that there has been some changes to the proposed development since the pre-application discussions, including the proposed change of use of the ground floor, these amendments are deemed to be acceptable in principle given it secures additional much needed new homes in a central and sustainable location, and secures the reuse of a longstanding vacant property. In addition, all the documents supporting this formal change of use application demonstrate the acceptability and suitability of the scheme.

Application Submission Documents

1.12 The application to secure a change of use of the application site to residential use is supported with the following documents:

- Location Plan.
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans.
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans.
- Existing and Proposed Elevations.
- Proposed Site Sections.
- Existing and Proposed Roof Plans.
- Planning, Design and Access Statement.
- Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report
- Below Ground Drainage Scheme.
- Foul Drainage Technical Note.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) / Daytime Building Inspection.
- Bat Emergence Survey,
- Noise Assessment; and,
- Shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment addressing Nutrient Neutrality.

1.13 A schedule of the drawings that form part of the Planning Application is set out in the Table 1-1 below:

Table 1-1 Schedule of drawings

Drawing Title	**Drawing Number/Ref.**
Location plan	1JD02-MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-01-000-P1
Existing site plan	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-01-001-P
Proposed site plan	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-01-002-P
Existing floor plans	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-02-000-P
Existing elevations	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-03-000-P
Proposed floor plans	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-02-001-P
Proposed elevations	MHA-B1-ZZ-DR-A-03-001-P

Proposed Development

1.14 The Applicant is proposing to secure consent for the change of use of the existing property from office to residential. This will help to bring about a viable use to property within the Town Centre area, that has remained vacant for the past 2 ½ years.

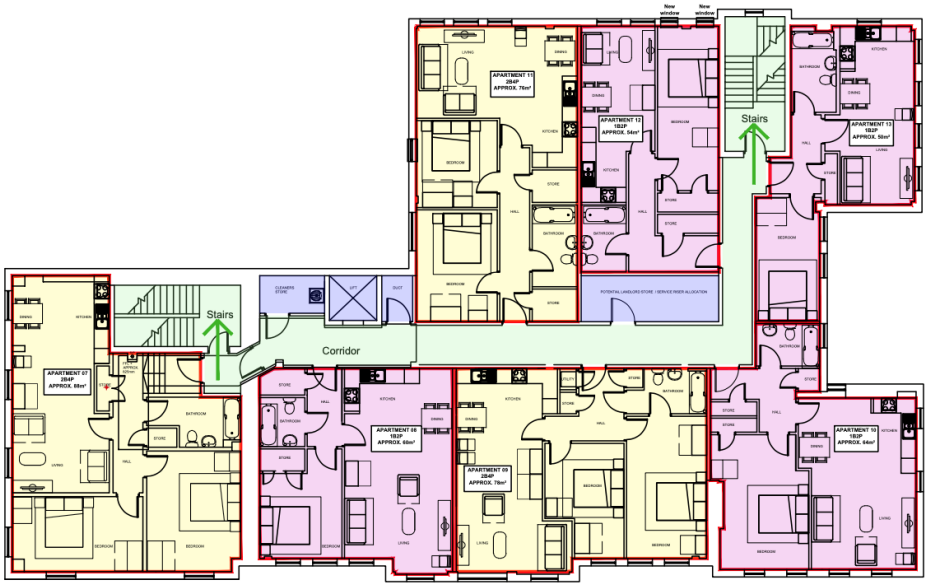
1.15 The scheme proposes a mix of 23 apartments, comprising of 9 no. two bedroom, four person units, 13 no. one bedroom two person units and 1 no. one bedroom one person unit.

1.16 The development proposes to retain the site access arrangements as per the existing. Details of the proposed floor plans are included below for ease of reference:



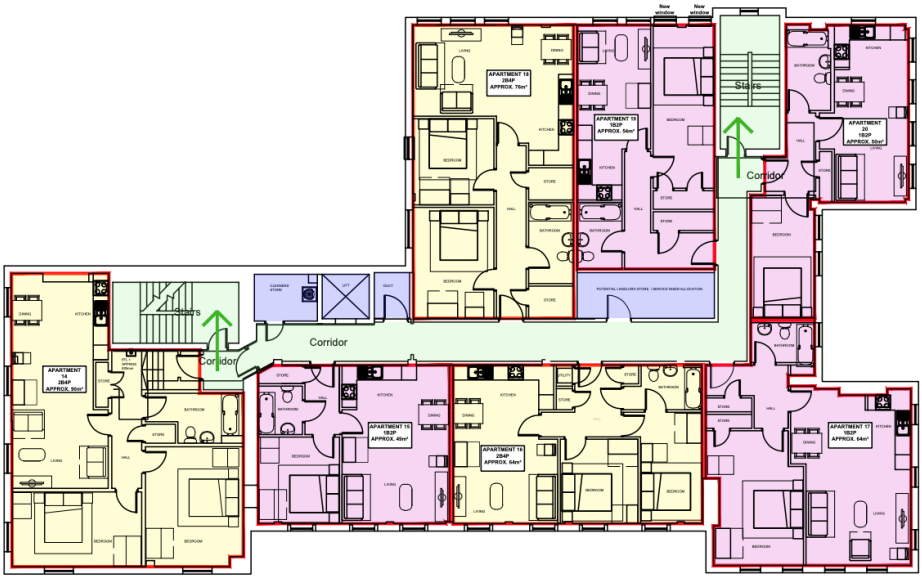
Proposed ground floor plan

Figure 1: Extract of the proposed ground floor plan



Proposed first floor plan

Figure 2: Extract of the proposed first floor plan



Proposed second floor plan

Figure 3: Extract of the proposed second floor plan

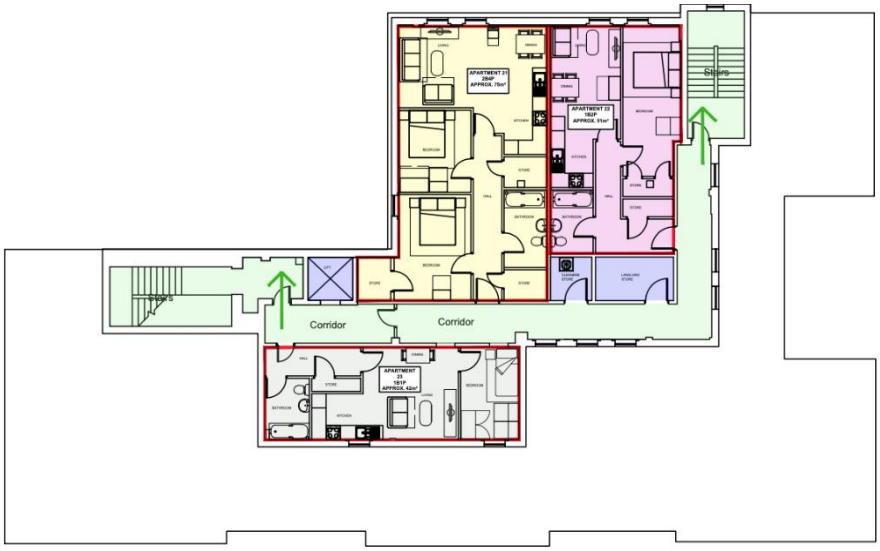


Figure 4: Extract of the proposed third floor plan

1.17 The scheme does not necessitate extensive alterations to the built fabric and external appearance of the site, with the only external changes comprising of minor fenestration alterations at ground floor level on the site frontage.

1.18 The scheme proposes an effective and efficient use of the site, and will sustainably deliver the design, access, drainage, noise and ecological requirements to meet the needs of the development, and without causing harm to the character and amenity of the existing building, neighboring properties or the wider City Centre. In fact, the scheme could help to support the vitality and viability of the shopping area through the contribution of additional footfall both during daylight and evening hours, offering a significant benefit to the local economy.

2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

2.1 In reviewing the development proposal for the site, due regard has been paid to the provisions of the Development Plan, which comprises Planning Policy Wales (February 2024), Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and the Wrexham Local Development Plan (adopted 2023). This section of the report will focus on the national planning policy position, with local policies addressed at Section 3.

Planning Policy Wales: Edition 12 (February 2024)

> *"2.3 The planning system should create sustainable places which are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly. Development proposals should create the conditions to bring people together, making them want to live, work and play in areas with a sense of place and well-being, creating prosperity for all."*

> *"2.6 Sustainable placemaking is an inclusive process, involving all of those with a professional or personal interest in the built and natural environment, which focuses on developing plans, making decisions and delivering developments which contribute to the creation and enhancement of sustainable places."*

> *"2.8 Planning policies, proposals and decisions must seek to promote sustainable development and support the well-being of people and communities across Wales… This will include seeking to maximise the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits, whilst considering potential impacts when assessing proposals and policies in line with the Act's Sustainable Development Principles."*

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the key planning principles in order to achieve the right development in the right place, and includes making best use of resources, facilitating accessible and healthy environments, creating and sustaining communities and maximizing environmental protection and limiting environmental impact.

> *"3.3 Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built*

environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surrounding area."

2.3 PPW goes on to address matters such as creating healthier places, and the Welsh language and states:

"3.25 The Welsh language is part of the social and cultural fabric and its future well-being will depend upon a wide range of factors, particularly education, demographic change, community activities and a sound economic base to maintain thriving sustainable communities and places. The land use planning system should take account of the conditions which are essential to the Welsh language and in so doing contribute to its use and the Thriving Welsh Language well-being goal."

2.4 In relation to previously developed sites such as that subject of this application, Planning Policy Wales confirms:

"3.55 Previously developed (also referred to as brownfield) land (see definition overleaf) should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development. In settlements, such land should generally be considered suitable for appropriate development where its re-use will promote sustainability principles and any constraints can be overcome."

2.5 With regards to the delivery of new homes, Planning Policy Wales advises:

"4.2.18 Maximizing the use of suitable previously developed and/or underutilized land for housing development can assist regeneration and at the same time relieve pressure for development on greenfield sites."

2.6 Planning Policy Wales goes on to address other matters including highways, the delivery of affordable homes, energy, drainage and flood risk and the wider natural environment.

2.7 **Summary:** The proposal as submitted comprises the re-use and development of a vacant and previously developed site within the defined settlement of Wrexham, and specifically within the defined City Centre. The scheme is well designed and will have no greater harm on neighbour amenity, the local landscape, visual amenity, flood risk, highways and the wider natural environment than the existing arrangement. In fact, given the proposed mix of house types and other additional site improvements, the scheme offers additional enhancement over and above the current position and will further help to support the vitality and viability of the City Centre with additional footfall.

2.8 The application has been supported with the required documentation and plans to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of Planning Policy Wales.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

2.9 Attention is drawn to the following provisions of the National Plan:

> *"**Policy 1 – Where Wales will grow:** The Welsh Government supports sustainable growth in all parts of Wales. In three National Growth Areas there will be growth in employment and housing opportunities and investment in infrastructure. The National Growth Areas are:*
>
> - *Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys*
> - *Swansea Bay and Llanelli*
> - *Wrexham and Deeside"*

2.10 It is noted that the National Growth Areas are complemented by Regional Growth Areas which will grow, develop and offer a variety of public and commercial services at regional scale. There are Regional Growth Areas in three regions:

- The South West
- Mid Wales
- The North

2.11 Wrexham is clearly identified within National guidance as a focus for new growth and development. The scheme subject of this application is clearly therefore acceptable as a matter of principle.

> *"**Policy 2 - Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking** The growth and regeneration of towns and cities should*

positively contribute towards building sustainable places that support active and healthy lives, with urban neighbourhoods that are compact and walkable, organised around mixed-use centres and public transport, and integrated with green infrastructure. Urban growth and regeneration should be based on the following strategic placemaking principles:

- *creating a rich mix of uses;*
- *providing a variety of housing types and tenures;*
- *building places at a walkable scale, with homes, local facilities and public transport within walking distance of each other;*
- *increasing population density, with development built at urban densities that can support public transport and local facilities;*
- *establishing a permeable network of streets, with a hierarchy that informs the nature of development;*
- *promoting a plot-based approach to development, which provides opportunities for the development of small plots, including for custom and self-builders; and*
- *integrating green infrastructure, informed by the planning authority's Green Infrastructure Assessment.*

Planning authorities should use development plans to establish a vision for each town and city. This should be supported by a spatial framework that guides growth and regeneration, and establishes a structure within which towns and cities can grow, evolve, diversify and flourish over time."

2.12 **Comment:** The scheme subject of this application relates to the re-use of a previously developed site, within a settlement boundary and on a site deemed suitable and compatible for the use proposed. The scheme will introduce a variety of 2- and 1-bedroom units in a sustainable city centre location. The proposals are therefore deemed to reflect and meet with the tests of policy 2 as laid out above as a matter of principle. The scheme's design and the other supporting reports submitted with the proposal further address the additional policy tests laid out above.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN's)

2.13 Technical Advice Notes are understood to provide detailed planning advice on a number of issues. In the preparation of this application, it can be confirmed that the provisions of the following TANS's have been duly considered, and the relevant provisions

addressed as required within the various plans and documents submitted with the application. The scheme is therefore deemed to be compliant with the following:

- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 2 – Planning and Affordable Housing.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 11 – Noise.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 – Design.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15 – Development and Flood Risk.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18 – Transport.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20 – Planning and the Welsh Language.

Summary

2.14 The development subject of this application proposes the delivery of much needed new homes on a previously developed site within the defined centre of the settlement of Wrexham. Such a proposal is wholly consistent with the provisions and aspirations of National Planning Policy.

2.15 The proposed development, in our view, secures an effective and efficient use of a previously developed site, within a suitable and sustainable location, and will help the Council in the delivery of new homes. The scheme has been well designed to reflect and respect the character of the existing site and wider local area, and to secure wider community benefit, including enhanced opportunities for social interaction and social integration. The scheme will have no greater impact on highways than the previous use of the site, where national policy will support car-free developments in accessible locations. With an increase in residents within the city centre, the scheme will help to bolster and support the vitality and viability of the main retail and commercial core, with the delivery of additional footfall, visitors and an increase in disposable income which will be of clear benefit to the local economy, and existing and future businesses in the local area.

2.16 The application has been submitted with sufficient information to ensure a thorough examination of the proposals and to demonstrate the suitability of the scheme as proposed. We are therefore of the view that the scheme is wholly consistent with the provisions of national Welsh planning policy.

3 ADOPTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.1 This section of the statement provides an overview of the local planning policies that are of relevance to the proposed development, and the determination of this application.

3.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan is the starting point for the determination of any application. An application must be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Applications which accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay.

3.3 The application site is noted from the provisions of the adopted Proposals Map (extract included below) to be within the defined centre of Wrexham but is not located within the Primary Shopping Area.

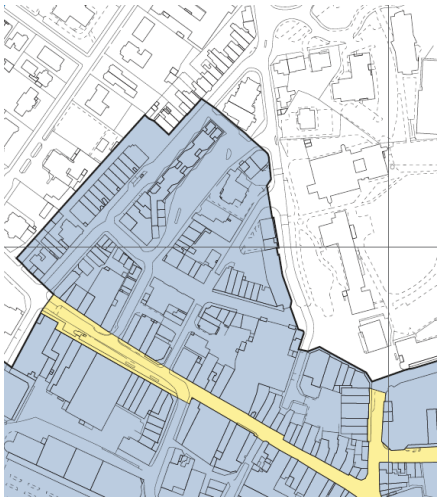


Figure 5: Extract of the proposals map from the Adopted LDP.

3.4 The adopted local policy framework is understood to comprise of the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013-2028) and relevant planning policy guidance notes. The policies deemed determinative to this proposal are listed below:

Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013-2028) (Adopted December 2023):

- **SP1: Housing Provision.**
- **SP2: Location of Development.**
- SP5: Planning Obligations.
- **SP7: Wrexham City.**
- SP11: Transport and Accessibility.
- **SP12: Design Principles and Masterplanning Framework.**

- SP13: Health and Wellbeing.
- SP14: Natural Environment.
- SP18: Climate Change.
- **H2: Affordable Housing Non-strategic Housing Allocations and Windfall Sites;**
- **H6: Conversion of buildings to self-contained flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation.**
- NE1: International and National Nature Conservation Designations.
- NE2: Local Designations for Nature Conservation and Geological Importance.
- NE6: Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality.
- DM1: Development Management Considerations.
- CF2: Provision of New Open Space.
- R1: Retail, Leisure and Commercial Centre Hierarchy.
- **R2: Development within the Wrexham City Centre Masterplan Area.**
- **R4: Development Outside Primary Shopping Streets.**
- T1: Managing Transport Impacts.
- T2: Active Travel.
- MW5: Sustainable Waste Management.

3.5 Of the policies detailed above, specific attention is drawn to the provisions of policies SP1, SP2, SP7, SP12, H2, H6, R2 and R4 which are noted to read as follows:

Policy SP1 – Housing Provision: *Provision is made for 8083 new homes of which 717 will be affordable, in order to deliver a requirement of 7750 over the plan period.*
In order to support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities, the Council will work with partners to ensure that all new residential development contributes to meeting the identified needs of the whole community. New development will be expected to:

i. Maximise the delivery of affordable housing where a need is identified, recognising the varying levels of development viability across the County Borough.

ii. Contribute to redress any identified imbalance between market and affordable housing within local housing market areas as identified in the most recent local housing market assessment.

iii. Ensure the sustainable use of housing land, including achieving a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare whilst having regard to the context of the site.

iv. Provide a mix of housing unit types and tenures to meet the needs of the County Borough; and

v. Make provision for specific housing needs such as gypsy and traveller accommodation, student accommodation, homes for the elderly, supported accommodation, nursing, residential and extra care homes where a need is identified.

3.6 **Comment:** The scheme as submitted seeks to secure planning permission for the delivery of 23 new homes within the centre of Wrexham. The proposed development includes a mix of one- and two-bedroom units and is deemed to represent an acceptable density of development in this location.

Policy SP2 – Location of Development: *New development is directed to the defined settlement limits and employment areas as identified on the Proposals Map.*

3.7 **Comment:** Within the tabulation detailed within the reasoned justification associated with Policy SP2, it is noted that Wrexham City is identified as a primary settlement and strategic employment area. The Plan indicates that a total of 3,662 units have been allocated within this location, as well as provision for windfall sites such as that proposed within this application. The scheme subject of this application is clearly therefore acceptable and policy compliant in relation to the location of and focus for new development.

Policy SP7 – Wrexham City: *Wrexham City as defined on the proposals map will be the focus for new development including housing, employment, commercial, retail, leisure, tourism, services, education, transport, infrastructure and the arts in order to strengthen the City's regional function as a settlement of national importance.*

3.8 **Comment:** As detailed at paragraph 3.7 above, the application site is located within the defined centre of Wrexham City. The site and scheme are therefore wholly compliant with the provisions of Policy SP7, and acceptable for new housing development as a matter of principle.

Policy SP12 - Design Principles and Masterplanning Framework: *All development will be required to be of a high quality, sustainable design which makes a positive contribution to the creation of locally distinctive places by complying with the masterplanning framework SPG and KSS schematics. Proposals must demonstrate how*

they have taken account of the local characteristics of surrounding areas and how innovative design solutions will enhance the quality of the built and natural environment.

3.9 **Comment:** The scheme as submitted secures a viable reuse of a longstanding vacant building in a prime location within the city centre. The building has been marketed for office use for a protracted period of time without real interest (see the marketing brochure included in Appendices 1), and its ongoing vacancy will over time be of detriment to the character, appearance and feeling of safety within the city centre. The development subject of this application seeks to deliver much needed new homes on suitable and sustainable site, with limited external alterations to the built fabric.

3.10 This scheme has also been submitted with a plethora of assessments and reports that assess how the development has considered the built and natural environment. These include the following.

- **Drainage Strategy:** The below ground drainage strategy has been designed to accommodate the proposed apartments. It is concluded within the accompanying technical note that discharge rates for this proposal would be increased three-fold from the existing office use. However, and considering the size of the catchment area, the impact downstream would be limited, with an approximate 6.5m3 increase in foul volume arriving at treatment works over a 24-hour period. This would equate to a very small litres per second increase and would not therefore be considered to have a significant impact on the capacity or efficiency of the existing wastewater treatment works. The scheme is therefore deemed to be acceptable in drainage terms.

- **Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Bat Roost Survey:** Both of these reports were requested during the pre-application for this scheme and requested to be submitted where necessary. During the preliminary survey, it was considered that an impact on bats and nesting birds is likely to occur in relation to the proposals for the site, and as such a nocturnal bat survey on the building was recommended to assess whether bats were roosting in the property. This further survey was conducted in July of 2024, which concluded that there was no evidence of bat activity either emerging or re-enter the building. The scheme is therefore deemed to be acceptable in relation to ecology. Within our pre-application Consultation, Natural Resources Wales were fully supportive of the ecological works undertaken for this scheme. They stated that they would not object on the

basis that the measures proposed throughout these reports are included as part of the decision notice.

- **Habitat regulation / Nutrient Neutrality Assessment:** This report was requested during the pre-application for this scheme. The attached HRA, takes into consideration the discharge rates as assessed in the Drainage Technical Note, identified key impacts that would likely arise as a consequence of the proposals that may impact the integrity of The River Dee (SAC), The Dee Estuary (SAC/SPA) and Bala Lake (SAC). Based on the information gathered from the screening process, the assessment concludes that no significant effects from the proposals are anticipated on these designated sites. The assessment has proposed mitigation measures during the construction of the development to minimise the contamination impacts of nutrient pollution into the above waterbodies. These relate to the storage of materials on site and ensuring sand and cement are not washed into watercourses. The report also includes dust control measures to be implemented during the construction phase.

- **Noise Assessment:** This report was requested during the preapplication for this scheme. The attached report considers the surrounding noise climate of the site, and provides a number of mitigation measures for the scheme to ensure that potential residents will not be impacted. The noise survey was conducted over a 24-hour period to assess the effect of the daytime and nighttime noise levels at 3 different positions at the property. A serious of glazing specifications have been recommended for windows on each of the facades of the building. The recommended glazing specifications are based of the results of the noise survey conducted for the property. Overall, the report concludes that where the mitigation measures are followed, it is considered that noise does not pose a constraint to the Proposed Development.

3.11 Overall, the scheme in our view will meet the provisions of Policy SP12 and represents a high-quality scheme which will make a positive contribution to the street scene and wider City Centre location, whilst ensuring a negligible impact upon the built and natural environment.

H2: Affordable Housing Non-strategic Housing Allocations and Windfall Sites; *Affordable housing contributions will be sought on developments of 10 or more units in*

accordance with the following quotas which should be taken as a starting point for negotiation on a site by site basis:

i. 30% on sites in the Rural East sub market area;
ii. 25% on sites in the in the North Wrexham & Gresford sub-market area;
iii. 10% on sites in the Rural West & Chirk and the South Wrexham sub-market areas;
iv. 0% on sites in the North West Settlements & Cefn Mawr and Rhos sub market areas

Affordable housing will be expected to be delivered on site in the first instance and only in exceptional circumstances will off site or commuted sum contributions be accepted in lieu of on-site provision.

3.12 **Comment:** As established within the pre-application submission for this site, the site is within the South Wrexham Housing Market Area, and as such would be subject to providing a 10% affordable housing contribution. The proposed development comprises of 23 units, therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the above policy, the proposal will require a delivery of 3 affordable units. We would aim to provide affordable housing via a commuted sum of contributions in lieu of onsite provision which would be secured through a s106 legal obligation. The commuted sum payable could be triggered on occupation of 50% of the residential units.

Policy H6 – Conversion of Buildings to Self-Contained Flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation*: Proposals for the conversion of existing buildings to self-contained flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation will only be supported where:*

i. Conversion is possible without major alterations or extensions which would significantly alter the character and appearance of the building and locality; and
ii. In order to ensure that the cumulative impact of development would not lead to the over concentration of HMOs in the locality to the detriment of community cohesion or residential amenity:
a) The proposal does not result in more than 10% of all residential properties within a 50m radius of the boundary of the application site being HMOs; and
b) There is a gap of at least two class C3 dwellings or other buildings not in use as HMOs between the development and any existing HMOs; and
iii. The proposal does not have an adverse effect on local parking provision; and

iv. The proposal will not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties or adversely impact upon the operation of nearby business premises; and

v. Provision is made for a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers of the development, including the provision of a drying area, bin storage and cycle parking and private outdoor amenity space.

3.13 **Comment:** As shown on the submitted existing plans, the scheme does not require significant alterations to the appearance of the building, with only minor changes proposed to the building fenestration at ground floor level on the site frontage. These changes do not result in visual harm and sit well with the character of the existing building and wider street scene.

3.14 The development relates to the delivery of 23 flats and does not seek to increase the provision of HMO's and will not therefore lead to a proliferation of such uses in this location.

3.15 The parking provision on site will remain unchanged from the lawful use of the site. As stated within Policy 12 (regional Connectivity) of Future Wales, planning authorities must act to reduce levels of car parking in urban areas, including supporting car-free developments in accessible locations.

3.16 It is considered that the location of this development within Wrexham Town Centre is highly sustainable, given the sites close proximity to bus and train services, and the level of bicycle storage to be provided on site. As such, we would consider the scheme to offer an enhancement in relation to the parking position than the former office use.

3.17 Overall, and given the character of the wider locality, the scheme will not result in harm to the character of amenity of the City Centre or neighbouring uses.

Policy R2 – Development Within Wrexham City Centre Masterplan Area: *Development proposals within the defined Wrexham City Centre Masterplan Area should:*

(i) Support the regeneration, renewal and enhancement of Wrexham city centre; and

(ii) Be compatible with the Wrexham City centre masterplan vision, objectives and aims.

3.18 **Comment:** The development as proposed will deliver much needed new homes on a suitably located site within the city centre. In addition, the scheme will secure the viable reuse of a longstanding vacant building in a central location, which whilst having been marketed for a protracted period of time, has simply remained empty to the detriment of the character and appearance of the city centre. The scheme will therefore be in clear compliance with the provisions of policy R2 and will support the regeneration, renewal and enhancement of Wrexham city centre.

Policy R4 – Development outside Primary Shopping Streets: *Outside the primary shopping streets of Wrexham city centre support will be given to ground floor retail, professional services, food and drink, office, hotels, educational establishments, leisure, commercial and other proposals that would enhance vitality and viability. Support would also be given to the conversion of upper floors to residential uses within the city centre.*

Outside the primary shopping streets of Wrexham City Centre, ground floor residential uses would be supported where they do not harm the vitality and viability of the street, but would not be supported in Chester Street (south from Holt St, Charles Street, Church street, town hill and Yorke Street).

Support for residential within the city centre is subject to consideration of its compatibility with other uses in the same building we well as the use of neighbouring properties.

3.19 **Comment:** Policy R4 is supportive of residential uses within the city centre as a matter of principle, and specifically on sites outside of the primary shopping areas. Lord Street is neither within a primary shopping area, nor listed as one of the locations where ground floor residential uses will be precluded. The scheme is therefore understood to be acceptable as a matter of principle.

3.20 Additional policy considerations also include a number of Wrexham Local Planning Guidance Notes, with specific attention drawn to the following:

- 06: Access to and Use of Buildings.
- 10: Public Open Space in New Housing Development.
- 15: Cycling.
- 16: Parking Standards.
- 19: Wrexham's Town Character Areas.

- 21: Space Around Dwellings.
- 24: Designing Out Crime.
- 27: Developer Contributions to Schools.
- 28: Affordable Housing.
- 30: Design.
- 32: Biodiversity and Development.

3.18 It is our view that the scale, form and design of the development bring proposed adheres to the principles and requirements of the relevant guidance notes detailed above.

Wrexham Town Centre Masterplan (2016)

3.19 We are of the view that the proposals at 16 Lord Street, Wrexham are wholly in accordance with the policies and provisions laid out within the Masterplan and will create a viable and positive addition to the city centre.

Development Plan Summary

3.20 The development subject of this application proposes the delivery of much needed new homes on a previously developed site within the main settlement boundary of Wrexham. Such a proposal is wholly consistent with the provisions and aspirations of national planning policy and is therefore deemed to be acceptable as a matter of principle.

3.21 The proposed development, in our view, secures an effective and efficient use of a previously developed site, within a suitable and sustainable location, and will help the Council to deliver new homes on a site well suited to this use. The scheme will increase footfall within the city centre in terms of spend and access to shops, services and the evening economy, and will therefore be a significant benefit to the local economy.

3.22 Therefore, for the reasons set out above, it is our view that the development subject of this application represents an acceptable and appropriate form of development. The scheme is wholly compliant with the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, and will not result in any harm in relation to visual amenity, neighbour amenity, the wider city centre, nor highways implications as to justify refusal of this application.

4 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 requires Design and Access Statements to be submitted in support of Major development applications, and for developments consisting of one or more new dwellinghouses.

4.2 The substance of the Design and Access Statement is laid out in Part 2, article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012. Further guidance has historically been provided by the Design Comission for Wales as follows:

4.3 'Design and Access Statements in Wales, April 2017' notes that:

4.4 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (as amended) sets out that, as a minimum, the DAS must explain:

- The design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and
- How issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

4.5 The suggested structure (for this statement) broadly follows the stages of the design process so, as each stage of the process is undertaken, the content of the document can be developed rather than the whole document being prepared at the end.

i. Character - How does the proposal sustain or enhance local character and promote legible development, a successful relationship between public and private space, quality, choice and variety and innovative design?

ii. Access - How do the proposals ensure ease of access for all into the development and to all elements within the site?

iii. Movement - How does the proposal promote sustainable means of travel?

iv. Environmental Sustainability - How does the proposal achieve efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhance biodiversity, and demonstrate designing for change?

v. Community Safety - How has the proposal ensured attractive, safe public spaces and security through natural surveillance?

vi. Response to planning policy - This section of the document provides the opportunity to explain how the proposals have responded to relevant planning policy and guidance. The relevant policy and guidance should have been identified at the site and context analysis stage, this section should provide a summary of the design decisions that have been made in response to these policies.

Character

4.6 **Place Making:** The proposal aims to provide well needed and sustainable dwelling units within the Town Centre of Wrexham, which has been identified within the local plan policies above to be suitable for housing development.

4.7 **Scale:** The character of the building will not be materially altered as a result of the development and instead will be enhanced by providing a viable use to an empty building and assisting in wider street scene enhancements. The existing ground floor frontage will be infilled and replaced with windows that will match that of the existing first floor above. The brickwork and detailing around these windows will further match with the existing character of the building.

4.8 **Amount/Layout:** The internals of the property have been reconfigured to accommodate the proposed 23 apartments. The general configuration across the 4 floors is a central hallway that runs through the middle of the building and providing access to each apartment. Both stairwells and the elevator shaft will be retained to accommodate the new development. A majority of the internal load bearing walls will also be retained, albeit some small areas will be removed to accommodate apartments 04, 10 and 17, and providing more open and high-quality living spaces for future occupants.

4.9 **Use and Tenure:** The development will offer 23 apartments in a mixture of different tenures and sizes/configurations, in a density which is appropriate for this location. The proposal will provide long term benefits through providing sustainable housing in a central location, which will serve economic and social enhancements for Wrexham.

4.10 **Streets:** The proposal does not aim to significantly alter the streetscene. Additional bin and cycle store areas will be provided along Duke Street, which would not pose a

detrimental impact on the street scene due to being fenced off and visually hidden for properties on the opposite side of the road.

4.11 **Heritage:** The proposed development will not have any implications upon heritage

4.12 **Detail design:** All materials used to make the minor alterations to the external facings of the building have been chosen to reflect the existing character of the property.

Access

4.13 The main entrance ways along Lord Street and Egerton Street will be retained as part of this development. Each of these entryways can be used by the residents at all times. Each floor can be accessed via the stairwell located near the entryway from Egerton Street, with the stairwell at the rear of the property to be used in emergency situations. There is a communal lift for use by the residents. The communal circulation routes throughout the building can be seen on the proposed development plans.

4.14 The access by the rear stairwell will provide an emergency exit, in addition to providing access to the proposed bin store area. The rear stairwell is to be used as a fire exit when necessary, and will provide an escape onto Duke Street. The main communal stairwell is located by the entryway onto Egerton Street.

Movement

4.15 As outlined elsewhere within this report, the application site benefits from being located in a highly sustainable location, with convenient pedestrian access to a range of local retail and transport services and amenities. The site's proximity to multiple public transport nodes further enhances its accessibility credentials to pedestrians and cyclists. Consequently, the proposed development is considered to align with local policies SP11, T1 and T2 and National Planning Policy Tan 18 objectives regarding sustainable transport and accessibility.

Environmental Sustainability

4.16 **Landscape/habitat:** This application involves the change of use of an existing building within Wrexham Town Centre. As such, no landscaping has been proposed within this application.

4.17 **Energy and Resource Efficiency:** There are no restrictions for adapting the property in the future to accommodate the needs of climate change. However, as part of this

change of use application, which solely involves internal reconfigurations and minor external alterations, no renewable technologies are proposed as part of the scheme.

4.18 **Water and Waste Management:** A scheme for Below Ground Drainage has been submitted as part of this application. As shown in drawing ref: 77294-BACE-24-00-DR-C-500, a new foul sewer is proposed under the main central corridor, which will connect all the drainage networks required for the proposed water connections throughout each of the residential apartments. These proposed sewer drains will then connect to the existing sewer networks along Duke Street and Egerton Street. A further Drainage Technical Note has been included as part of this submission and concludes that the estimated litres per second increase in volume upon the sewer network would have a less than negligible impact.

4.19 Furthermore, appropriate waste recycling facilities have been provided as part of this application as part of a new service yard located on Duke Road. This area is considered to be wholly sufficient to serve the needs of the proposed 23 apartments.

Community Safety

4.20 The building will be highly secure and requires every resident to pass through two secure doorways before they can reach the main internal corridor between each individually locked apartment. This ensures that the development is safe and secure from crime in line with local and national design policy.

4.21 The property will be well lit for each entryway and communal corridor of the property to ensure there is a level of visibility when entering, existing and maneuvering around the communal areas of the property.

Response to planning policy

4.22 Sections 3 and 4 of this report have considered how the proposal relates and considers the relevant local and national policy guidance.

5 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Where there are other material considerations which “indicate otherwise”, the development plan should nevertheless be the starting point, with those other material considerations weighed in reaching a balanced decision. The issues involved are dealt with in the decision of the House of Lords in City of Edinburgh Council v Secretary of State for Scotland [1998] J. P. L. 224, HL. Material considerations can weigh both in favour and against the grant of consent.

5.2 It was held in Westminster City Council v Great Portland Estates [1985] A.C. 661 that whilst town and country planning was in general concerned with the development and use of land rather than circumstances of particular occupiers, there might be exceptions where the circumstances of a business occupier are of value to the community and so may be a relevant material consideration. In this instance, it is considered that the investment (both direct and indirect investment) and the improvements in terms of the effective and efficient use of this currently vacant site will provide value to the local community in proting an active use of the building, and a positive delivery of new homes. These facts should be accorded sufficient weight in the determination of this application.

5.3 In the case of this proposal, it has been demonstrated within sections 2 and 3 to be wholly compliant with the provisions of National Welsh Policy and the adopted development plan. The following material considerations are however also in favour of the proposal and would be material in the determination of any application.

Housing delivery

5.4 Ensuring that housing is provided in appropriate locations is one of the major roles of the UK planning system. In this case, the proposed conversion will deliver much needed new homes through the provision of 23 residential units. Therefore, this proposal will assist the Council in meeting its housing delivery targets, in a suitable and sustainable location, and this must be heavily weighted in support of this planning application.

Viability matters, and Social and Economic benefits

5.5 In *Sosmo Trust v Secretary of State for the Environment,* Camden LBC [1993] J.P.L 806, and *see Broughton v Secretary of State for the Environment and Chester DC* [1992] J.P.L. 500. Woolf J (As he then was) pointed out that the proper question to ask was not whether a particular development would be financially viable, which was a matter for

the developer concerned, but what would be the planning consequences of its non-viability if such was the case.The proposed development will result in direct and indirect investment into the local area. The existing building has been vacant for a few years, without any demand or interest during an extensive marketing exercise. The conversion of the property to provide well-designed residential accommodation will not only promote the effective and efficient use of the application site, but will ensure a key building within the city centre is put into viable use. This scheme will also ensure that the building does not fall into further despair, and further taking away its value as it remains vacant. Overall, his scheme assists in enhancing the attractiveness of the property for new occupiers and securing its long-term viability, with knock on benefits to the character, appearance, quality, viability and vitality of the settlement and street scene.

Value to local community

5.6 It was held in Westminster City Council v Great Portland Estates [1985] A.C. 661 that whilst town and country planning was in general concerned with the development and use of land rather than circumstances of particular occupiers, there might be exceptions where the circumstances of a business occupier are of value to the community and so may be a relevant material consideration. In this instance, it is considered that the proposal will provide value to the local community in delivering an active and viable re-use of the existing building and enhancing the overall character and appearance of the local area by bringing an existing building into full use, which should be accorded weight in the determination of this application.

Sustainability

5.7 Sustainable development is a cornerstone of Government policy and is always a material consideration. The site is in a sustainable location within close proximity of a number of alternative means of transport. The proposed development will comprise of the re-use and redevelopment of an existing building. The proposals ensure the effective reuse of the building to deliver new homes. This negates the need to review the release of greenfield sites to meet housing needs, limits the use of natural resources to deliver new homes, and secures the efficient and sustainable reuse of an existing vacant building in a prime location within the city centre. The development will help to increase footfall within the City Centre supporting the wider vitality and viability of the centre and local economy and will result in social gains which further weigh in favour of the grant of consent.

Decision making: Weighting Material Considerations

5.8 In reaching a decision on an application there is inevitably a balancing-exercise to be carried out. The phrases “overall advantage” and planning balance reflects this balance; ultimately the decision-maker must attach what weight they consider appropriate to the material considerations in question. The so called “overall advantage” or planning balance is nothing more than the weighing of often disparate planning considerations so that it can be said the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, or the reverse.

5.9 Whether a consideration is material and the weight that it to be placed on it is ultimately a matter for the decision-maker. We have identified a number of material considerations which weighs heavily in favour of the development proposed. As such, it is considered when viewing the Adopted Development Plan as a whole, and the material considerations there is a favorable case to be presented to the Local Planning Authority.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The Applicant is seeking approval from Wrexham City Council for the following development, namely:

> "*Change of use of from offices (class E) to residential (class C3), comprising of 23 flats, including replacing* existing shop front windows with new domestic sized windows, installing new window openings and the erection of fencing and gates to the bike store and bin store."

6.2 This application seeks to secure the change of use of the property from offices to residential use. This application is supported by a detailed suite of documents addressing the technical matters associated with the scheme and demonstrating the suitability of this site to deliver the new homes as proposed.

6.3 **National Policy:** The proposed development has been carefully considered and does not result in any harmful impact to the visual amenities of the local area, is not detrimental to the character of its immediate setting, does not impact on the capacity or safety of the surrounding highway network, and does not result in any detrimental impact to the natural environment. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development complies with the guidance set out with national guidance.

6.4 **Local Policy**: The proposed development will promote sustainable development in a key settlement location through the delivery of housing within an existing building, and thereby resulting in an enhancement of the existing building and its immediate setting. For the reasons set out within this submission and the supporting statements, it is considered that the proposed development wholly accords with the provisions of the Development Plan.

6.5 **Design and Access:** The proposal has considered all aspects of sustainable design in accordance with National and local Policy guidance, considering all aspects of character, movement, environmental sustainability, community safety and access.

6.6 This Planning Statement undertakes an assessment of the proposals against a series of national and local development plan policies, with due regard to relevant material considerations, and sets out the case in support of a positive determination of the application.

6.7 Whether a consideration is material and the weight that it to be placed on it is ultimately a matter for the decision-maker. We have identified several material considerations which weight in favour of the development proposed. As such, it is considered when viewing the Adopted Development Plan as a whole and the material considerations there is a favourable case to be presented to the Local Planning Authority.

6.8 The proposal will bring an existing building within the Centre of Wrexham back into a viable and sustainable use and promotes sustainable development through delivery of new homes on a site suitable and compatible for that use. The scheme secures the effective and efficient reuse of the application site, and does so without causing harm to neighbour amenity, the character of the local area, or the highway network. We therefore consider this to be an acceptable and appropriate form of development.

Appendices 1 – Marketing Brochure, Legat Owen, September 2022