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Architecture + Building Surveying + Town Planning

Wrexham University

Alive Hub Retention and Refurbishment

Planning Statement

12th December 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cassidy + Ashton have been instructed by Wrexham University to prepare and submit this full planning application. This application relates to Alive Hub at Wrexham University, Plas Coch Campus.

1.2 The application is for the following:

Retention and refurbishment of Alive Hub, including thermal enveloping/decarbonisation, replacement glazing

1.3 The demolition of Alive Hub was approved under application ref. P/2018/0666. The application has been subject to subsequent S73 applications, with the most recent application reference P/2023/0285.

1.4 The proposal concerns thermal enveloping of the building, along with replacement glazing, in line with the wider campus 'decarbonisation agenda'.

1.5 This Supporting Planning Statement sets out the context of the application site and that of the University Campus as a whole, before detailing the proposed development which principally seeks to deliver a decarbonisation scheme on campus, to act as a binding precedent to the wider campus and beyond.

1.6 The building is proposed for retention on the basis of a wider rationalisation and consolidation of facilities across the campus, which would see the Alive Hub re-utilised to accommodate more flexible working spaces. The University have adopted a new Active Learning Framework (ALF). This combines making the best use of the on-campus learning spaces with student-focused online learning content that can be accessed anytime, anywhere. The ALF provides a way of teaching which puts the student experience at its heart.

1.7 The application pack as a whole is comprised of the following:

- Location Plan
- Existing and Proposed Plans (DAY Architecture)
- Planning Statement (Cassidy + Ashton)
- Car Park Management Plan (Curtins)

2.0 SITE AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application site forms part of the wider Wrexham University Main Academic Campus, which totals c. 14 ha. The area subject to this application extends to circa 0.047 ha.
- 2.2 The campus site as a whole is comprised of the universities academic and residential buildings, together with its ancillary amenities, including sports facilities, car parking and open space.
- 2.3 The area subject to this planning application is Alive Hub, which is situated to the North-east of the campus, as indicated by Figure 1 below.
- 2.4 The site is situated West of Crispin Lane and North of K Block.



Fig. 1 Site Location [Source: Google Maps]

- 2.5 Situated 1 mile from the centre of Wrexham, the campus site is in close proximity to a suite of local amenities and public transport facilities.
- 2.6 Wrexham General Railway Station is located immediately East of the site, less than 100m from the Crispin Lane / Mold Road junction, providing services to Bidston, Chester, Holyhead, Cardiff, Birmingham, and Llanelli.
- 2.7 Walking and cycling are also key methods in accessing the site, with the town centre being easily accessible via these methods.
- 2.8 The building is currently used for staff accommodation.

WREXHAM UNIVERSITY – FUTURE STRATEGY

- 2.9 Wrexham University is a public research university with charitable status, which was established in 2008 from the former North East Wales Institute of Higher Education.
- 2.10 'Campus 2025' is the universities future strategy, which seeks to sustain its position in the higher education sector, delivering a 21st century appropriate learning environment.
- 2.11 Campus 2025 therefore presents the primary objective to provide a modern, flexible campus, with spaces which are able to adapt as teaching and learning styles evolve.
- 2.12 Higher education has a requirement to address the qualities and functions of the workplace environment, preparing students for life beyond education. Wrexham University are committed to investing in the campus to develop an environment where students want to stay, building a student centred, vibrant and sustainable campus.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposed development is for the retention and refurbishment of Alive Hub.
- 3.2 The demolition of Alive Hub was approved under application ref. P/2018/0666 (now P/2023/0285).
- 3.3 The proposal includes the external refurbishment along with thermal enveloping, replacement glazing as a strategy of decarbonisation.
- 3.4 The works to the ground floor are in the form of thermal enveloping and new glazing to the south elevation and the north-west elevation. The works also include extending the entrance to the south-east corner through infilling the inset ground floor. The same is replicated at the north-east corner to the proposed plant room.

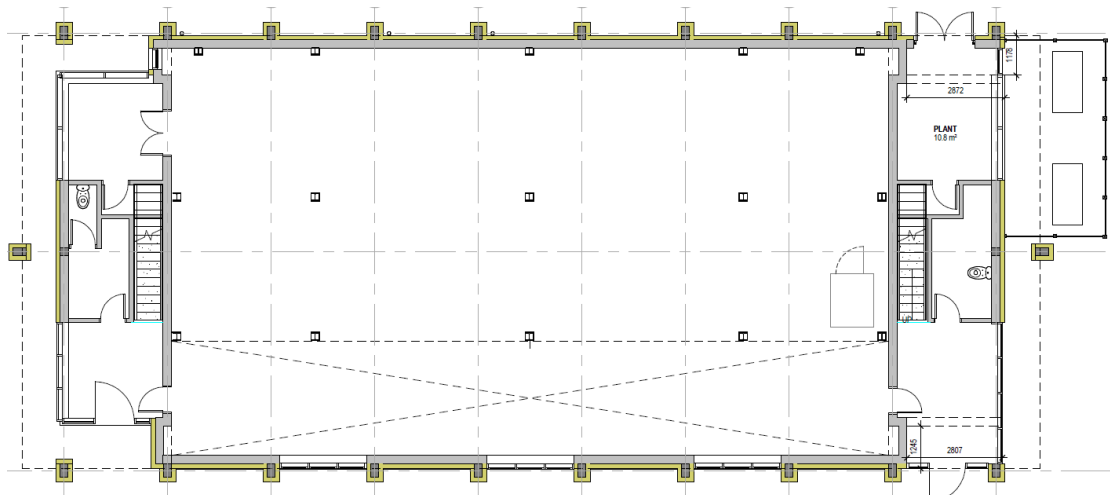


Fig. 2 Proposed Ground Floor Plan (DAY Architecture)

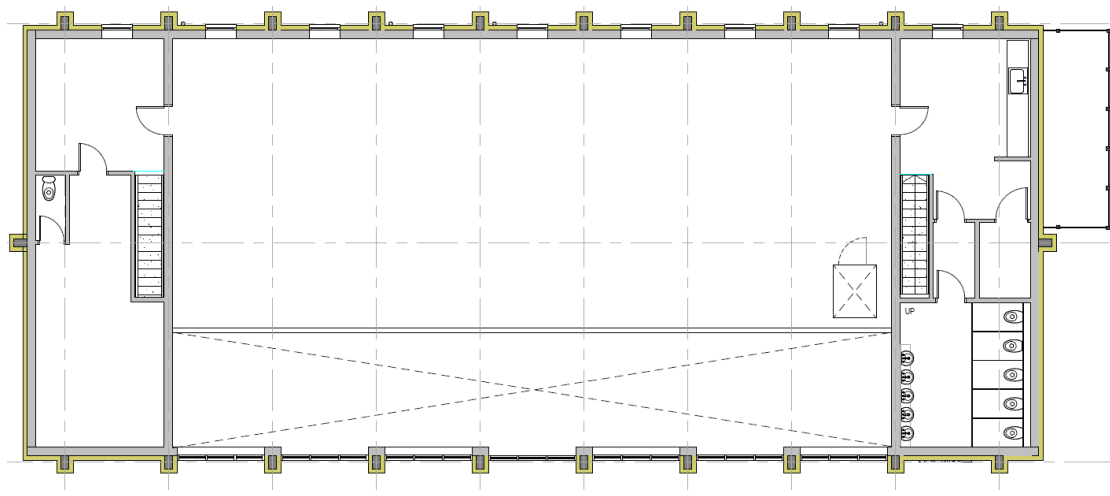


Fig. 3 Proposed First Floor Plan (DAY Architecture)



Fig. 4 Proposed South Elevation (DAY Architecture)

- 3.5 The proposal includes the replacement cladding and glazing to improve both the appearance of the building and its efficiency/functionality.

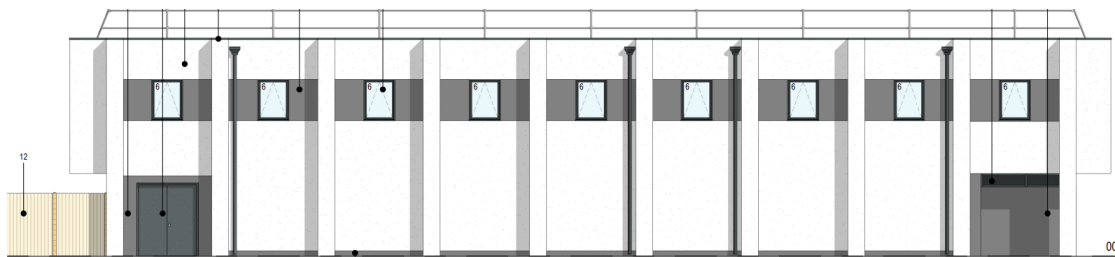


Fig. 5 Proposed North Elevation (DAY Architecture)

- 3.6 Designated plant space is allocated to the East of the building to facilitate the decarbonisation strategy.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Application ref. P/2021/0967 – removal of condition 18 of planning permission p/2018/0666. The application was approved 5th December 2022.
- 4.2 Prior to determining the application, in the interest of managing phosphorous discharge, a schedule of existing and proposed floor area was requested by NRW to conclude no net increase in floor area as a result of the campus redevelopment. A balance sheet demonstrated the GIFA both pre and post development. As a result, it was concluded that the net change in floor area as a result of the campus redevelopment permission would total -539m². This was in conjunction with a survey of water/waste facilities across the campus and associated improvements to efficiency of systems.
- 4.3 Following determination of P/2021/0867, a S73 application was submitted to vary the approved scheme for the engineering building (application ref. P/2023/0285). This being a much reduced scheme, the permission will now see a reduction in floor area equating to - 1,447m².
- 4.4 With this in mind, despite the proposed retention of Alive Hub - equating to a total floor area of 664m² across two storeys – the campus redevelopment as a whole will see a reduction in floor area equating to -783m². This is in excess of the -539m² approved through P/2021/0967.
- 4.5 This reduction in floor area is aligned with the overall improvement to the efficiency of systems, improving the performance / environmental sustainability of buildings, along with reducing waste water across the site through campus redevelopment improvements to facilities.
- 4.6 On the basis of the above, there will remain a net decrease in floor area as a result of the P//2018/0666 permission campus redevelopment.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 This section will set out a summary of national and local planning policy.

PLANNING POLICY WALES

- 5.2 The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.
- 5.3 **Paragraph 3.6.1** proceeds to highlight that adequate and efficient infrastructure – including services such as *education and health facilities* - is crucial for economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Commentary

The proposed development supports the above principle of PPW as it seeks to support a campus wide rationalisation and consolidation of facilities, which would see the Alive Hub re-utilised to accommodate more flexible working spaces.

- 5.4 **Paragraph 3.7** asserts that developments should seek to maximise energy efficiency and the efficient use of other resources. **Paragraph 3.8** sets out that good design can help to ensure high environmental quality.

Commentary

The proposed development supports the above principle of PPW as it seeks to facilitate decarbonisation of the building to act as a binding precedent to the wider campus and beyond.

- 5.5 **Paragraph 5.7.12** states that the Welsh Government expects all new development to mitigate the causes of climate change in accordance with the energy hierarchy for planning.

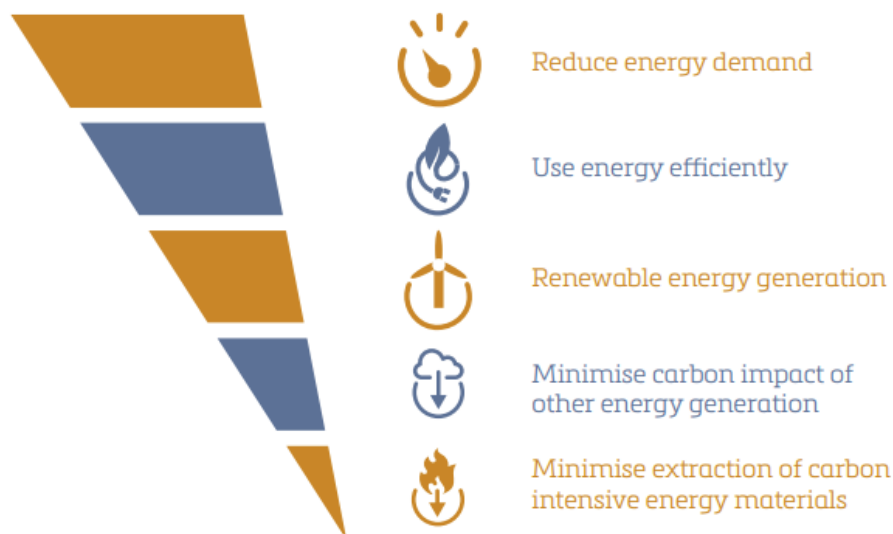


Fig. 4 PPW Extract, Energy Hierarchy for Planning

Commentary

The proposed development is consistent with the energy hierarchy for planning, through a decarbonised approach to development which includes thermal enveloping and replacement glazing to reduce demand and improve efficiency, whilst also incorporating renewable energy.

WREXHAM LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.6 The LDP was adopted on 20th December 2023. This Plan is a land use Plan that sets out the planning requirements for achieving sustainable development in Wrexham County Borough over the period 2013-2028.

5.7 **Policy SP18: Climate Change**

To mitigate against the effects of climate change and adapt to its impacts, development proposals will need to demonstrate that they have taken into account the following:

- i. Reducing carbon emissions;
- ii. Protecting and increasing carbon sinks;
- iii. Adapting to the implications of climate change at both a strategic and detailed design level;

- iv. **Promoting energy efficiency and increasing the supply of renewable energy;** and
- v. Maintaining ecological resilience
- vi. Avoiding areas susceptible to flood risk in the first instance in accordance with the sequential approach set out in national guidance. Highly vulnerable development, as defined in TAN15: Development and Flood Risk, should not be located within zone C2;
- vii. Preventing development that increases flood risk; and
- viii. Assesses the potential effects of climate change when preparing a Flood Consequence Assessment for the site.

Commentary

The proposed development is for the retention of a building consented for demolition under planning permission P/2018/0666. The proposal makes best use of the building and promotes energy efficiency, being a decarbonisation project. It is anticipated that the decarbonisation scheme will be precedent for the remainder of the campus and beyond.

5.8 Policy DM1: Development Management Considerations

Development proposals, where relevant, must:

- a) Accord with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape in terms of their siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping;
- b) Not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties/land; and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers/users of the development itself;
- c) Safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land, noise, light or air, or land instability, arising from development;
- d) Take account of personal and community safety and security in their design and layout;
- e) Prioritises walking, cycling and public transport use ahead of travel by car;
- f) Not give rise to highway safety, pedestrian safety or parking problems on site or in the locality;

- g) **Contribute to low carbon communities through energy efficiency, be designed to minimise the use of non-renewable energy, water and the production of waste both during construction and when in use;**
- h) **Not increase the risk of flooding but makes adequate provision for sustainably dealing with foul and surface water drainage and not result in an unacceptable impact upon the water environment;**
- i) **On sites which have previously been developed, new development proposals should make use of existing suitable building materials wherever possible for appropriate uses in order to re-use recyclable materials and reduce the amount of imported materials; and**
- j) **Ensure that any risks arising from past coal mining, as indicated on the constraints map, can be adequately managed.**

Commentary

The proposed development is the retention of a building consented for demolition under planning permission P/2018/0666. The proposal makes best use of the building and promotes energy efficiency, being a decarbonisation project. It is anticipated that the decarbonisation scheme will be precedent for the remainder of the campus and beyond. The proposal makes best use of an existing building therefore limiting embodied carbon impact associated with demolition and new build buildings.

6.0 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

HIGHWAYS / PARKING

- 6.1 The application site formed part of an approved landscape and parking area under the P/2018/0666 permission. The 2018 consented masterplan included the demolition of Alive Hub, to be replaced with car parking spaces.
- 6.2 The updated Car Park Management Plan produced by Curtins details the parking provision across the campus site and notably the current oversupply, with a 2023 traffic survey demonstrating a maximum parking accumulation of 74% (699 out of 943 spaces occupied).
- 6.3 On the basis of the above it is clear that the loss of 12no consented car parking spaces as a result of this development can comfortably be accommodated with a considerable surplus at present.

FLOOD RISK / DRAINAGE

- 6.4 The site is not located within an area at risk of flooding and the proposed development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The proposal is for retention of an existing building and decarbonisation (thermal enveloping, glazing) to improve the efficiency of the building as well as its appearance and functionality. The existing drainage regime will continue and no addition connections required.

DEE CATCHMENT / PHOSPHOROUS DISCHARGE

- 6.5 It is acknowledged that the site is located within the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation.
- 6.6 The proposed development will not impact phosphorous discharge as set out in Chapter 4 of this statement.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development is comprised of very minor infill development at the ground floor in the north-eastern and south-eastern corners of the building. The infill is to the recessed ground floor corners to meet the building line above.
- 7.2 The proposal is for the retention of the Alive Hub which is proposed to be retained in line with campus wide review of available space and providing flexible working spaces.
- 7.3 As set out above, the proposals will facilitate a decarbonisation project, to act as precedent for the remainder of the campus.
- 7.4 Although the Alive Hub is proposed to be retained, the ultimate overall floor area as a result of the campus redevelopment is at a net reduction on the originally consented scheme.

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