

Cassidy+
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Architecture + Building Surveying + Town Planning

**Wrexham University – Science &
Engineering**

**Listed Building Consent Application
Design and Access Statement**

20th December 2023

CASSIDY + ASHTON

10 Hunters Walk, Canal Street, Chester,
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cassidy + Ashton have been instructed by Wrexham University to prepare and submit this application for Listed Building Consent to Wrexham County Borough Council.

1.2 The application is for the following:

Application for listed building consent for internal refurbishment works for academic laboratories within C-Block

1.3 This statement sets out the context of the site, proceeding to outline and evaluate the design and access features of the proposed works and how good quality design principles have been considered and applied.

1.4 As per the Welsh Government and Design Commission for Wales' guidance, Design and Access Statements are a vital tool in ensuring the appropriate consideration of design quality and inclusive access when preparing planning proposals.

1.5 This statement is to be read in conjunction with a separately submitted Heritage Impact Assessment.

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

- Location Plan (DAY Architecture)
- Existing and Proposed Plans (DAY Architecture)
- Design and Access Statement (Cassidy + Ashton)
- Heritage Impact Assessment (Henderson Heritage)

- 2.1 The site to which this application is concerned is the Wrexham University Plas Coch Main Academic Campus.
- 2.2 The Campus is comprised of the Universities academic and residential buildings, together with its ancillary amenities, including sports facilities, car parking and open space.
- 2.3 Specifically, the application for Listed Building Consent relates to the Main Plas Coch Campus Building, C Corridor, Science & Engineering Quarter. The Main Building is the focal point to the arrival of all University users and visitors.



- 2.4 The Main Building is comprised principally of three academic corridors, A; B and C.

2.5 Application Ref. P/2021/0329 - listed building consent for internal alterations (B Corridor) – approved 17/08/2021

2.6 Application Ref. P/2022/0142 - listed building consent for internal alterations (C Corridor) – approved 16/05/2022.

- 2.7 The works subject to the above applications were comparable refurbishment works to those proposed subject to this application.

WREXHAM UNIVERSITY – FUTURE STRATEGY

- 2.8 Wrexham University is public research University with charitable status, which was established in 2008 from the former North East Wales Institute of Higher Education.
- 2.9 '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.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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 scope of this proposed development intends principally to modernise academic spaces within C Block of the Main Plas Coch Campus Building.
- 3.2 The proposed works will allow the existing provision to be brought up to modern day standards in a manner that is sympathetic to its historic character and appearance and the University's long term sustainable use and reputation.
- 3.3 The significance of the Listed Building has been considered in the design of these proposals, placing the priority to preserve and enhance its heritage value central to the scheme.
- 3.4 The proposals concern internal alterations with a view to modernise and enhance the learning facilities, removing previous modern additions.
- 3.5 The purpose of the proposed works is to locate Engineering faculty into the existing building and create a space with a Si Eng identity.
- 3.6 The proposal looks to make best use of underutilised rooms whilst improving the standard of facilities and its connections with the remainder of the building and facilities.
- 3.7 The existing layout of the rooms subject to this application are separated by internal dividing walls, within C34 and C36 in particular. The proposal will remove modern stud partition walls to C34 and C36, in addition to a modern mezzanine, associated plumbing and high level radiator.
- 3.8 This is demonstrated in the demolition plan below. The proposal will open up these modern partitions which are not original, creating larger spaces which can be better utilised for Sci Eng.

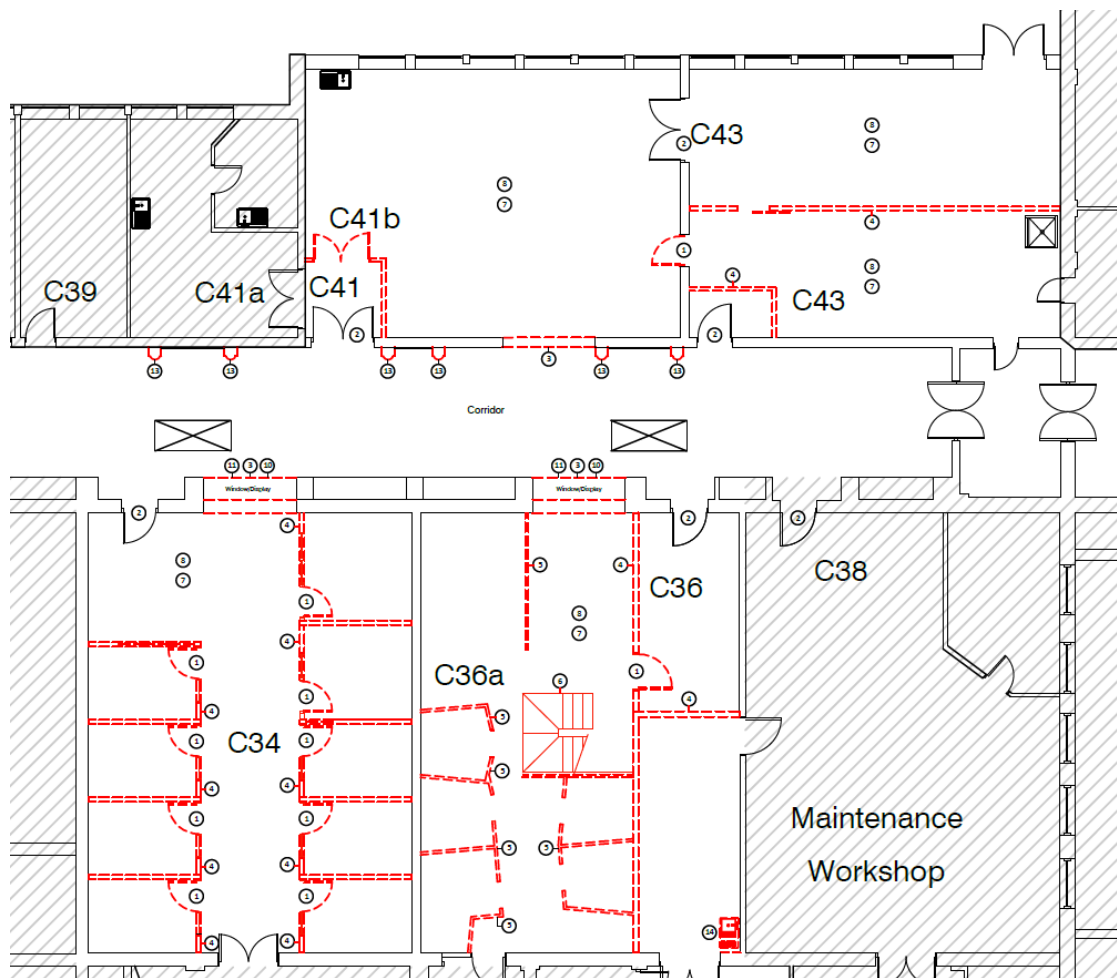


Fig. 2 Proposed Demolition Plan (DAY Architecture)

- 3.9 As shown above the proposal will open up 2.no display windows to C34 and C36a between corridor and lab room (retaining its present shape) and removing asbestos backboard and window sill to allow for views from corridor into lab space. To complement this, a new glazed window will be installed to the wall of C43 to the corridor. This has been designed to match the style of the existing display windows to the corridor.
- 3.10 The removal of modern additions as above (partitions, mezzanine) will not remove any features of significance and will better reveal the significance of these spaces as the space and proportions of the original former workshops will be revealed.
- 3.11 The works are detailed within the Heritage Impact Statement submitted with this application, which concludes that all proposals will not cause harm to the significance of the Listed Building and as such the proposal should be supported.

4.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 4.1 Design and access statements are a requirement of applications for Listed Building Consent. This Chapter will set out the design principles which have been considered in shaping the proposed refurbishment works.
- 4.2 Modern standards for laboratories and engineering are important. The University are required to provide modern facilities which are fit for purpose to accommodate the teaching and learning styles, whilst creating a student centered campus.

DESIGN

- 4.3 The proposed works set out in this application have been designed carefully and respectfully in response to the building's character and historic fabric.
- 4.4 The works comprise internal alterations which are generally reversible should the future requirement arise. As reported within Henderson Heritage's Heritage Impact Assessment, there will not be any detrimental impacts to the heritage value of the building.

EXISTING FACILITIES



Fig. 3 C Corridor

- 4.5 The display cases (as demonstrated within Fig. 3) are to be removed in two instances, the existing opening is to be made good to allow for installation of new window unit to facilitate visibility through.
- 4.6 Throughout the remainder of the corridor the display cases are to be retained. An additional new window is proposed into the corridor which reflects the form and layout of the display windows.



Fig. 4 Sub-divided spaces



Fig. 5 Sub-divided spaces

- 4.7 The existing sub-divided spaces are dated and underutilised. The proposal looks to repurpose the sub-divided rooms as Sci Eng laboratory spaces, with due consideration to the existing building fabric.

AESTHETIC CHANGES

- 4.8 The aesthetic changes to the corridor are in the form of amendments to display cabinets / openings.
- 4.9 2 no. display cabinets along the AA elevation (C34 and C36) are proposed to be carefully removed and existing opening to be made good to allow for installation of new window unit. This is to be accompanied with 2no new openings for installation of new Aluminium window unit.
- 4.10 Along the BB elevation, one new opening is proposed for installation of a new window unit.
- 4.11 The display cabinets are broadly being retained. This is comparable to the works within the B Corridor and elsewhere along C Corridor (P/2021/0329), which opened up the display cabinets

to the floor. This is a minor change – as supported within the Heritage Impact Assessment – which uses appropriate materials, scale, and form.

- 4.12 The proposal is a reversible addition that respond to the modern requirements of the spaces, whilst not harming the Listed Building.

ACCESS

- 4.13 Replacement of the existing internal dividing walls will allow for more flexible teaching spaces that are adaptable and allow the University to respond to student needs with dynamic teaching facilities.
- 4.14 An inclusive design has been prioritised. The teaching spaces have all been designed to allow full accessibility and to facilitate the highest standard of learning and interaction between students and staff.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.15 In line with modern standards of science, health and safety requirements are heightened. Maintaining health and safety within laboratories, particularly during *lone working*, is an increasingly important consideration in the design of such spaces.
- 4.16 The proposed opening up of the display cabinets to facilitate more open and visible working space will therefore enhance natural surveillance, particularly to lone workers.
- 4.17 It is therefore presented that the contemporary openings will achieve a higher standard of health and safety for the labs operation.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This Statement concludes that the scope of works subject to this application for Listed Building Consent are minor and generally reversible. On this basis, it is evidenced that the refurbishment works can be achieved whilst protecting the significance and value of the Listed Building.
- 5.2 The proposed works have been designed sympathetically to the Listed Building, whilst facilitating a contemporary learning / working environment.
- 5.3 The Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Henderson Heritage supports the proposals, concluding they are positive and will not harm the significance of the listed building. Ultimately, it is concluded that the works will preserve and enhance the continuing operation of the building.

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