

**Heritage Impact Statement Regarding
Proposals for a Single Bed First Floor Flat
at 42-44, Henblas Street, Wrexham
Wrexham CBC**

**For
Wales Air Ambulance**

December 2023

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 In a wider portfolio of projects to inject investment into Wrexham Town Centre Wales Air Ambulance instructed a Heritage Impact Statement in connection with an application for Planning Permission to Wrexham County Borough Council with regard to a proposed First Floor Flat at 42 - 44 Henblas Street considered for a Housing Authority Leasing scheme and designed to the 'Property Standards For Leasing Schemes In Wales' requirements.

1.2 This Statement forms part of that application and should be read in conjunction with all the submitted information, in particular the submitted drawings.

1.3 Because the application site is in an important location within the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area this Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared to ascertain the impact of the proposals on the heritage asset.

1.4 This Statement involves an examination of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, its character, significance and importance to the heritage asset. The proposals for 42-44 Henblas Street will be examined and how they affect the heritage asset. This will then be used to reach an assessment of the impact of the scheme on the heritage asset.

1.4 The legislative background to Heritage Impact Statements is outlined within The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Government Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 24, The Historic Environment May 2017, and The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment no 2) Regulations 2017.

These give the context where an HIS will be a statutory requirement including development affecting Listed Buildings and where Conservation Area Consent is needed.

Guidance is also provided in the Welsh Government publications, 'Setting of Heritage Assets in Wales', and 'Managing Change in Conservation Areas in Wales 2017.'

In the local context, the importance of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Character Assessment and Management Plan, which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in January 2009, is acknowledged.

1.5 National guidance on such matters indicates that the level of information provided in a Heritage Impact Statement should be proportionate to the significance of the Heritage Asset and to the potential impact of the proposals on that asset.

2.0 Background and Context

2.1 Wrexham has a long history. There is evidence in the area of Mesolithic and Bronze Age activity and of a Roman settlement in the area. After the withdrawal of the legions in the late 4th and early 5th centuries AD the area was certainly one of conflict between the Celtic/ Romano British and Mercian/ Anglo Saxon invaders. Norse attacks were increasingly evident from the 9th Century. The Normans do not appear to have established early control of the area although a motte and bailey castle in the area was built by Hugh 'Lupus' d'Avranches, first Norman Earl of Chester.

2.2 By the early 13th century Wrexham was firmly under the control of the Princes of Powys which allowed the town to develop as a trading and administrative center. The death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282 led to the loss of Welsh independence and a Marcher lordship was established in the area.

2.3 Wrexham continued to develop as a commercial and administrative center during the late mediaeval period and the 16th and 17th centuries despite setbacks caused by support of the Glyndwr rebellion and the Royalist cause in the English Civil War.

2.4 From the mid 18th century onwards the coming of the Industrial revolution saw dramatic expansion of activity in the area with such developments as the Bersham ironworks and numerous collieries. Wrexham became established as the regional center of several industries including leather working and brewing.

2.5 Wrexham was incorporated as a Borough in 1857. In the middle to late 20th century Wrexham, in common with many towns and cities, saw the decline of its heavy industries with the closure of its mines, steelworks, brickworks and breweries.

3.0 The Heritage Asset

3.1 Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area and 42-44 Henblas Street– Description, Statutory Designations and the Heritage Asset

The move to designate areas of historic importance rather than just individual buildings grew during the 1960s and culminated in the 1967 Civic Amenities Act which introduced the concept of Conservation Areas. This was consolidated in the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act and further in the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in March 1974 and was therefore a relatively early designation. There have been a 5 number of amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area, the latest being in April 2007. Wrexham Town Centre was designated as a conservation area because it illustrates the growth and development of the Market Town and Regional center from the mediaeval core based on St Giles' Church through the development of the commercial and service area of the late mediaeval period through to the rapid growth of the 18th and 19th centuries. This long period shows a diversity of architectural styles and periods. Wrexham Town Centre has a number of buildings worthy of recognition as buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest but it is the overall character of the townscape and open spaces which create the character which is worthy of protection and enhancement.

3.1.1 The Site:

An existing two storey Store with a flat roof, and a mixture of painted rendered and steel-clad walls. The shop front is modern with large glazed windows and plastic cladding features at ground floor and tall metal frame strip windows and high level windows at first floor. The existing First floor has an aspect looking out onto a flat roof area where other adjacent buildings have flats looking out onto it. The Flat roof is within the existing curtilage of 42-44 Henblas Street.

42-44 Henblas Street is within the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Character Assessment.

The Markets: Henblas Street and Bank Street:

These streets combine to form a special part of Wrexham, and have a very intimate and personal character. In particular, Bank Street has a medieval character, being very narrow and enclosed by small-scale buildings and tiny shopfronts. This part of town still remains traditionally the domain of privately or family owned businesses and shops, which extends into the stalls within the Butcher's and General markets.

The humble small scale buildings lining the south side of Henblas Square, Henblas Street and Bank Street are largely of early 19th century pre- Victorian style and are all that remain of that period following re-development in the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries. They are a mixture of styles but broadly follow a pattern of 2 storey, narrow fronted, domestic scale buildings with sliding sash windows to the upper floors and traditional shopfronts below. They are a mixture of brick, painted brick or render finishes with slate roofs. The former hippodrome cinema opened onto Henblas Street and encompasses much of the area to the rear of this street. It was closed in

1997 and the site is now due for redevelopment following a period of neglect and subsequent fire in 2008.

The curve of Henblas Street and intimate rhythm of the fenestration creates interest and anticipation, which culminates in the tightly enclosed area at the bottom of Bank Street where the ornate entrance to the Butcher's Market faces the curved corner entrance to the General Market opposite. Both market Buildings are Grade II Listed Buildings.

Within this area it is evident that efforts have been made to reinstate traditionally detailed shop fronts and hand painted fascia signs have restored traditional charm.

Wrexham Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 1.4.9 The Council's vision for this housing strategy is to; **“Provide the right homes for the right people in safe and attractive communities.”**

To help to achieve this vision, the Council aims to create sustainable, good quality housing in the town center, which, in turn, will generate employment, training opportunities and improved leisure facilities. To support this, the Council will carry out improvement work to existing infrastructure and facilities, such as shops and unused buildings. This regeneration work will be carried out in a way that complements and enhances local heritage and traditional buildings in the vicinity.

3.2.1 Assessing the Heritage Asset In the publication, 'Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment in Wales', March 2011, Cadw set out the principles behind conservation philosophy which guides their decision making in managing change in the historic environment. The Cadw guidance acknowledges the foundation provided by an earlier English Heritage publication, 'Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance,' 2008. Both publications give detailed guidance on the assessment of the built heritage and propose four categories into which they might be grouped. These are assessed below in relation to the designated Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area. The Assessment is made with regard to the Heritage Asset as a whole which comprises the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area.

3.2.2 Evidential Value Evidential value ... Those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity. Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area exhibits Evidential Value in abundance. From the mediaeval core and street pattern surrounding St Giles' Church to the phases of growth through the 18th and 19th Centuries, of which 2, Regent Street is a prominent example, the changing imprint of human activity can be traced.

3.2.3 Historical Value An historic asset might illustrate a particular aspect of past life, or it might be associated with a notable family, person, event or movement. Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area illustrates moderate Historical Value. The whole area illustrates the establishment and growth of a market town from the association with the Princes of Powys in the early mediaeval to its establishment as a sub-regional and regional center through the importance of trading and markets and its incorporation as a Borough in 1857.

3.2.4 Aesthetic Value Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. As the center of the urban area of Wrexham CBC, the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area has moderate aesthetic value. This is largely centered on the mediaeval core surrounding St Giles' Church but with many other buildings in the surrounding area.

3.2.5 Communal Value This derives from the meanings that an historic asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. It is closely linked to historical and aesthetic values but tends to have additional or specific aspects. Communal value might be commemorative or symbolic. Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area lies at the center of and covers much of the area of the town of Wrexham and sits within the County Borough, a community of approximately 135,000 people. It lies at the center of the character of the town and wider area and therefore has high Communal Value in the Heritage Assessment.

3.3 Summary In terms of the guidance offered by Cadw, the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area offers a strong contribution to the Heritage Asset through all of the four categories of Evidential Value, Historical Value, Communal Value and Aesthetic Value. It is difficult to single out any particular strength but perhaps the Evidential and Historical elements stand out as particularly important.

4.0 The Proposals and the Impact on the Heritage Asset

4.1 The Proposals

4.1.1 The planning application to Wrexham CBC involves a proposed First Floor Flat utilizing existing space otherwise used as staff recreation and storage. We propose a new window to the side elevation within the existing steel cladding to the street and also a new window onto the first-floor enclosed courtyard to provide general amenity and it is this which will be examined in terms of potential impact on the Heritage Asset and **“Provide the right homes for the right people in safe and attractive community.”**

The building will be refurbished internally which is clearly important in bringing the building back into a beneficial and sustainable use, but these works in themselves do not require planning permission other than change of use, and are not the subject of this Heritage Impact Statement.

4.1.2 The Design Philosophy underpinning the proposals is clear.

The intention is to use an existing first floor space to **“Provide the right homes for the right people in safe and attractive communities.” We have been in close contact with Catherine Sheil _ WCBC Physical Regeneration Officer, who has been advising us with regards to making sure that our proposals meet all of the space standards required for ‘Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW)’.**

4.1.3 The existing window to the flat roof courtyard will be replaced with a ‘conservation style’ window matching the character of the existing windows and a new Lounge window providing amenity to the flat within the existing steel cladding. **This has been considered after consultation with WCBC Planning officer Amy Brittain and specifically arising out of consultation within the Pre-Application Ref: ENQ/2023/0216.**

4.2 Impact of the Development on the Asset

4.2.1 The Historic Asset comprises the application site of 2, Regent Street and the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area in which it sits.

4.2.2 The Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area will be positively impacted in that an important building will be renovated in an appropriate manner and its position and future secured.

4.2.3 Similarly, with regard to 42-44 Henblas Street itself, the proposals will re-establish a beneficial use and secure a sustainable future for this important building. The changes proposed are proportionate and directed towards this end and they are executed with appropriate design and materials.

4.2.4 The proposals are limited and well considered. The original window to the courtyard will be in keeping with existing conservation style windows.

4.2.5 The restoration and reinstatement of interest and detail at street level will have a very little impact visually, however the addition of much needed social housing would benefit the area.

4.3 Impact on Views to and from the Asset

4.3.1 The Heritage Asset of the building and the wider Conservation Area will be affected only in a positive way as only one window to the side street/alley public elevation will be added and will be consistent with all of the other adjacent first floor flats.

4.3.2 The only real impact on views will be that the adjacent buildings are mostly brick gables and roof tops with the exception of one residential window from the street scene. The flat will be fully refurbished in an appropriate manner therefore will be a wholly positive development.

4.4 Summary

4.4.1 The proposals have no adverse impact and many positive aspects on the Heritage Asset and as such are compatible with the Asset. This follows the guidance regarding new work as detailed in section 28 of Cadw's 'Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment in Wales', March 2011.

4.3.2 The five points detailed in section 14 of that report are stated and addressed below, Cadw's words in italics: New work or alteration to a significant place will normally only be acceptable if:

- a. ***The Need for the work is fully justified. The works have been justified in terms of restoring a sustainable retail use on the site in Henblas Street and by ensuring appropriate design and detailing.***
- b. ***And there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place; The impact of the proposed changes upon the building and wider Conservation Area are limited, and can be easily judged. They are intended only to afford better use of the existing building and secure a sustainable future.***
- c. ***The proposal would not materially harm the values of that asset which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed; It is contended that the proposals have a wholly positive effect on the value of the Heritage Asset and by contributing to a sustainable use for the site will greatly help it. Use and restoration of more appropriate materials will also aid this objective.***
- d. ***The quality of the design and execution must add value to the existing asset Following the design philosophy, the design choices and materials used are of high quality, wholly appropriate and are compatible with the site, neighboring retail units and surrounding street scape.***
- e. ***The long term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, largely reversible or be designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future; These proposals do not prejudice the future of the site in any way and could be reversed. They have a benign, in fact very positive effect, upon the Heritage Asset.***

5.0 Conclusions

- The Heritage Asset, which comprises the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area and the application site of 42-44 Henblas Street, are important to the Town and wider area and it is important that any development respects this.
- To **"Provide the right homes for the right people in safe and attractive community."**
- The restoration and reinstatement of interest and detail at street level will have a very positive impact on the building and area.

- The proposals are of a scale, design, and materials which are appropriate for the existing building and locality and compatible with the Heritage Asset.
- The proposals will have a wholly positive impact upon the area restoring a building in an appropriate manner. The sensitive restoration of this building will preserve and enhance the character of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area and follows the relevant legislation and guidance.
- The quality of the Heritage Asset has been assessed and the impact of the proposals on the Heritage Asset considered. The conclusion of this is that the proposals are compatible with guidance on new works, appropriate, and will have a positive impact on the character of the 42-44 Henblas Street and the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area within which it sits.
- The existing enclosure within the alley will be utilized as a secure bicycle store and we will create an internal Bin Store Area at Ground Floor off the shared Lobby.

6.0 Site Photographs





