

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed Conversion of Upper Floors to
12No. Apartments at

23 & 24, HOPE STREET
WREXHAM
LL11 1BD

For

NORTH BLOCK Ltd.



D S Jones & Co.

Architectural & Planning Consultants.

CONTENTS.

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.0	DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND SURROUNDINGS.....	3
3.0	PROPOSAL.....	5
4.0	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT.....	6
5.0	DESIGN.....	10
6.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	13

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

1.1

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for full planning permission for the conversion of the unused first, second and third floors to 12No. one bedroomed apartments. Minor changes are proposed to the layout of the ground floor accommodation in order to provide dedicated rear external access to the proposed apartments and the retail unit at ground floor is to be retained as a self-contained, effectively single storey unit of commercial accommodation.

UPDATE.

The Ground Floor of the building has recently had the benefit of the grant of planning permission for change of use from A1 Retail Use to A2, Financial and Professional Services under LPA Reference No. P/2023/0029. In preparation for the works of change of use to commence, the Applicant has been made aware by Consultants that provision of Water and Electrical Services to the proposed Apartments located on the upper floors via the rear access would not be possible. As such, the Applicant has been advised that statutory services would need to be brought into the building directly from Hope Street and as part of this, the creation of a new access to the building from Hope Street to serve the Apartment development would be advantageous.

1.2

This statement meets the statutory requirements of Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(Wales) Order (“the DMPWO”) 2012, as amended by Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016.

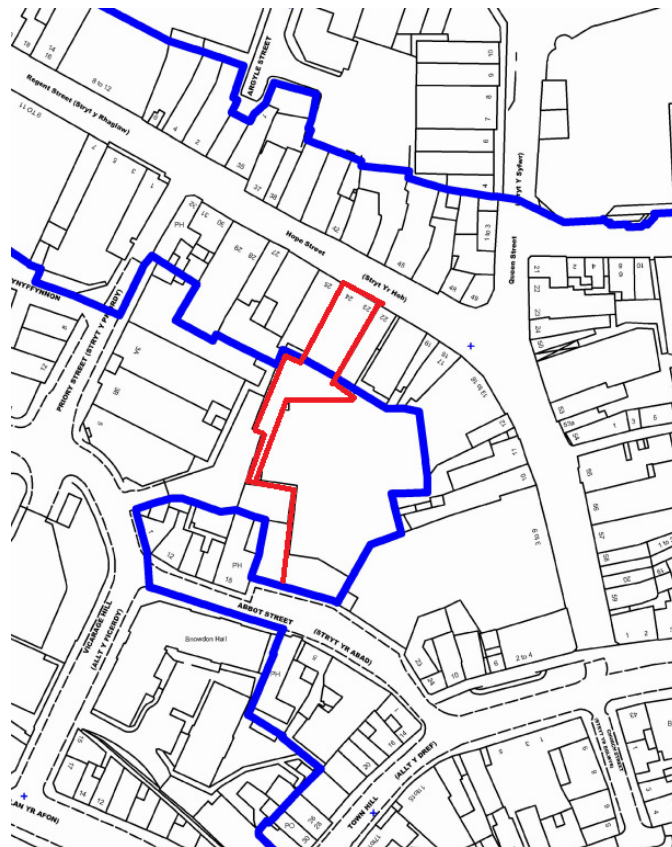
1.3

This Design and Access Statement provides an analysis of the application site and building and sets out the principles that have guided and informed the design and how they relate to adopted planning policy.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1

The application site comprises a reasonably modern 4 storey building which provides around 306 square metres of Retail A1 floor space at ground floor level with a street level frontage on to Hope Street at a point inside the Town Centre Conservation Area. Access via an internal staircase is provided to the first floor former retail space which has been unused for some considerable time due to lack of demand. A further second staircase at the rear of the building provides access and escape from the first, second and third floors. The second and third floors show evidence of previously having been used as storage, staff amenity and administration space in conjunction with the ground floor retail use but apart from a small kitchen and toilet facilities at third floor level, this space is no longer used in conjunction with the retail unit below.



Extract from the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Map – application site indicated with a red line boundary.

2.2

The application is located within the Town Centre settlement boundary, in a Shopping Area and with direct frontage on to a Principal Shopping Street and within the Town Conservation Area as defined by the Adopted Unitary Development Plan. Having said that, the subject building is not recognized as a “Building of Visual Interest” in the Wrexham Town Centre “Conservation Area Character Assessment and Management Plan.”

2.3

The application site has the benefit of service access to the rear from Abbot Street in order to receive deliveries to the retail unit and for emergency egress from the ground floor retail area and both access and egress to and from the proposed residential apartments.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL.

3.1

The proposal is to make minor alterations to the ground floor retail (now Financial Services) space and utilize the existing rear staircase to serve the first, second and third floors of the building which will be converted to provide 12No. 1-bedroomed Apartments as set out in the drawing forming part of this application for planning permission.

UPDATE.

It is now proposed to include an access to serve the Apartment development to the frontage of the building facing Hope Street. The previously proposed rear access and exit is still retained and will provide both access and emergency egress from the building. The proposed access from Hope Street will supplement the existing rear access and also allow the provision of incoming services directly from Hope Street.

3.2

The existing retail space at ground floor level is to be converted to a single storey, self-contained or individual unit of commercial accommodation by the removal of the existing public staircase between ground and first floor levels and the decommissioning and removal of the passenger lift located in the rear, south western corner of the building. The rear single storey outrigger which currently provides storage and fitting rooms will be remodelled to provide staff accommodation and toilets in addition to the current storage area and fitting rooms.

UPDATE.

The existing staircase between ground and first floor levels is to be removed and replaced with a more appropriate access stairway formed in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document K and with a direct linkage to a new access to Hope Street. There is therefore no physical connection between the ground floor accommodation and the access to the Apartment development and so this remains as a self-contained unit as previously proposed.

3.3

The existing modern, black brickwork façade and glazed shopfront will be retained to Hope Street save for the introduction of a simple balustrade to the external space at third floor level to enable this exterior space to be utilized as outdoor amenity space serving Apartment 10.

UPDATE.

The glazed shopfront is to be substantially retained except for the installation of a brickwork section to frame the new personnel door. The facing brickwork will be selected to match the dark blue / black facing brickwork above. The proposed access to the ground floor unit will also need to be altered to allow for the creation of a new pedestrian access. The proposals approved under the grant of planning permission referred to above will therefore need to be

subject to an application for approval of a non-material amendment in order to regularise the new access arrangements.

4.0 **PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT.**

4.1

The site has no recent planning history but is located inside the Town Centre settlement boundary as defined in the adopted UDP. Strategic Adopted Local Planning Policies PS1, PS2 and PS4 of the UDP are relevant to the proposals as are Policies EC7, S1, S3 and GDP1. Local Planning Guidance Note LPGN19 sets out an assessment of the Town's Character Areas and sets out a Strategy for Change.

4.2

Policy PS1 states that new development for housing etc will be directed to "*within defined settlement limits*".

4.3

Policy PS2 states that "*Development must not materially detrimentally affect... townscape character... or the quality of the natural environment*". The proposals which involve the retention of the existing building façade will have a neutral impact upon the character and appearance of the Town Centre in this location.

4.4

Policy PS4 states that "*Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and... help to reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.*" The proposed development of residential apartments within the upper floors of the application site will have the joint benefits of utilising underused spaces within this existing building, will provide much needed residential accommodation in a highly sustainable location within the Town Centre where car ownership will be rendered unnecessary and reliance upon travel on foot, by bicycle and by public transport will be encouraged.

4.5

Policy EC7 is relevant to the consideration of the application because of the site's location within the Town Centre Conservation Area. This policy states that *"Within....conservation areas, the priority will be to preserve and / or enhance those buildings, structures.....which contribute to the unique character of the area. New buildings and alterations or additions to the existing buildings in conservation areas....must reflect the design and character of the area as a whole...."* The proposals can be shown to preserve the existing building and the contribution that it makes to the street scene and wider character of the Town Centre.

4.6

Adopted Policy S1 states that *"Non-retail proposals on ground floor frontages in the principal shopping streets.... will not be permitted if they have a detrimental effect upon the character, vitality or viability of the area."* The proposals involve the retention of the existing retail use at ground floor level in compliance with this particular Policy.

UPDATE.

The provision of a new access to serve the upper parts of the building from Hope Street does not of itself introduce a non-retail use to the ground floor frontage but merely constitutes an alteration to the appearance of the building which is not detrimental in any way to the character of the building or the vitality and viability of the area.

4.7

Policy S3 in the Adopted UDP states that *"In order to sustain and enhance it's vitality and viability, Wrexham Town Centre will be the preferred location for non-shopping uses..."* Such uses could include residential apartments such as those proposed where *"they are readily accessible to public transport facilities... are of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the Town Centre and would help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole."* As has been demonstrated above, the re-use of the

redundant first, second and third floor spaces will bring individuals in to the Town Centre in a highly sustainable location, increasing natural surveillance in the evening and night time hours, preserving the external appearance of this particular building which plays an important role in the street scene. All of the above elements of the proposals taken together, contribute positively to preserving the character of the area and enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.

4.8

The proposed development can further be shown to be in compliance with the aims and objectives of UDP Policy GDP1 which requires that -

“All new development should:-

- a) Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*
- b) Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.*
- c) Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.*
- d) Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.*
- e) Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.*
- f) Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.*

g) Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.

h) Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.

i) Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.

j) Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.

k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area

4.9

The proposed development will occupy an existing building where scale, design, layout and use of materials is not a relevant consideration as part of this application for planning permission because it is not proposed to alter the external appearance of the building. The subject building will continue to contribute positively to the appearance of the locality, as it has done for many years, in compliance with part a) of this policy.

UPDATE.

It is now proposed to introduce a pedestrian access to the frontage of the building for the reasons outlined above. This will not have a negative impact upon the appearance of the building and the building will continue to contribute positively to the appearance of the locality and street scene.

4.10

The development will enhance personal and community safety by increasing the use and natural surveillance of the rear service area for pedestrian access on a more regular basis thereby discouraging anti-social behaviour in this private area. The application site can be served safely on foot and by bicycles

in the interests of pedestrian and highway safety and is located in the Town Centre near to the Bus and Train Stations. The site can therefore be shown to occupy a highly sustainable location.

4.11

The change of use can be undertaken without any negative impact upon the amenity of adjacent neighbours and other nearby residents. Statutory services are all available adjacent to the site and can be provided without costs to the public purse.

UPDATE.

It has become clear in making preparations for commencement of building work to implement the change of use to Financial and Professional Services, the provision of Statutory Services to serve the Apartment development will not be possible to the rear of the building due to the distance between the rear of the building and the public highway at Abbott Street. The Applicant has been advised that the only way to achieve the separate connections of Water and Electricity to the upper floors is by means of a new access to the building from Hope Street to provide access for residents and services to first floor level from where access can be provided throughout the other upper floors.

4.12

The development of the site will not result in the loss of habitat or ecologically valuable land and the site is not within an area prone to flooding. The development represents sustainable development in accordance with the aims and objectives of this particular planning policy.

4.13

Local Planning Guidance Note No. 19 indicates that the site is located within the Historic Core of Wrexham where the Strategy for Change includes :-

- Conservation
- Restoration

- Encouragement of Diversity

The proposals include the conservation of the existing front or street elevation in its entirety. The change of use of the first, second and third floors represents a diversification of the existing use which will bring the building back in to full, beneficial use. All aspects of the proposal can therefore be clearly shown to be in compliance with Adopted Local Planning Guidance.

UPDATE.

The reasons for the inclusion of a new access from Hope Street to serve the Apartment development have been set out above. The careful selection of matching materials will ensure that the proposed new access will preserve and enhance the appearance of the building when viewed from Hope Street. This is in conjunction with consented amendments to the front elevation of the building at ground floor level following the grant of planning permission under LPA Reference No. P/2023/0029.

4.14

In terms of planning policy, it has been shown that the development of the application site by the change of use of the first, second and third floor levels is in compliance with adopted local planning and supplementary planning guidance.

5.0 DESIGN

5.1

Good design is an all embracing concept. This statement considers the essence of good design in response to the following factors :-

- Use
- Amount
- Layout

- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance

The above objectives are key to good design, to the understanding of and response to context and should form the basis of any scheme and design statement.

5.2 **Use and Amount.**

The proposed development which constitutes the change of use of redundant and unnecessary space at first, second and third floor levels, will utilize space which is not required to support the retail use at ground floor level. The change of use and the resultant rental income will have the benefit of subsidising the rent required from the ground floor retail space in order to make the use of the whole building viable, thereby protecting the long term use of the retail space, preserving employment and further enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. It is proposed that all apartments should be one bedroomed in order to attract single professional persons and couples. It is shown on the drawings submitted with the application that 12No. apartments can be provided within the original part of the building at a rate of 4No. per floor.

5.3 **Layout.**

The proposed site layout includes the building itself and the rear service / access area which will provide access for delivery vehicles to serve the retail unit and provide resident's access to the proposed apartments. It is anticipated that tenants will not require the use of a motor car but will rather take advantage of this highly sustainable Town Centre location and availability of public transport in order to avoid car ownership.

5.4 **Scale.**

The proposed development is to occupy the existing first, second and third floor levels together with a dedicated access at ground floor level. There is to

be no alteration to the scale of the building and therefore the impact is neutral.

5.5 Landscaping.

Soft landscaping is not relevant to this application for planning permission.

5.6 Appearance.

As outlined above, the principal external elevation of the building which has a direct impact upon the street scene will be retained as existing. As such the outward appearance of the building will be preserved and will continue to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Town Centre in this location.

UPDATE.

The principal elevation of the building to Hope Street already has consent for amendments to the design of the ground floor frontage as part of the grant of planning permission referred to above. The provision of a new street level access to the front of the building to serve the apartment development above will further alter the external appearance of the Hope Street elevation but in a positive way. The careful selection of materials and the fact that this change will be made at the same time and in context with the consented changes to the shopfront at ground floor level will preserve and enhance the appearance of the building as it is brought back into full, beneficial use.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In summary, the proposed development identified as part of this application for planning permission has striven to achieve the following aims and objectives :-

- Provide much needed residential accommodation within redundant spaces above a ground floor retail unit;
- Maintain the character and preserve the form of the existing built development in the area generally in order to successfully assimilate the proposed development in to the surroundings;
- Provide a development which achieves the aims and objectives of adopted UDP policies for this type of residential development.

In conclusion, this Design and Access Statement has demonstrated that the proposals are in accordance with adopted local planning policy and supplementary planning guidance for the conversion of non-residential space to residential use in the Town Centre.

In consideration of the above and the other information provided as part of the application, officers are respectfully requested to view these proposals favourably and resolve to grant planning permission.

D.S. Jones & Co. May 2021 (Updated July 2023).

For and on behalf of North Block Limited.