



WREXHAM GENERAL MARKET REMODELLING & REFURBISHMENT

DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT

P03

AUGUST 22, 2022



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On behalf of Wrexham County Borough Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PREFACE

In August 2021 Lawray Architects and their Design Team, were appointed by Wrexham County Borough Council to undertake full RIBA Stage 2-6 work for the refurbishment and remodelling of the General Market within Wrexham Town Centre.

Included within this appointment was the review of initial concept designs for the General Market, which were assessed and further developed by Lawray Architects as a series of layout option appraisals. These option appraisals were subsequently reviewed by WCBC and preferred concept design layout proposals for the market were confirmed, which formed part of the RIBA Stage Two Report issued to WCBC in November 2021. A RIBA Stage Three Report was subsequently issued to WCBC in January 2022, which developed proposals further and allowed for a stakeholder engagement and review process.

Proposals for the General Market were finalised in April 2022 following detailed feedback and confirmation from WCBC. This Design Access Statement provides a conclusion to the Stage 3 process and forms part of the Full Planning Applications for the market building.

1.2. OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

The project is to remodel and refurbish the General Market to meet the current and future needs of the building and to improve the markets' offer. The refurbishment needs to provide accommodation that enables the General Market to become adaptable and designed to offer a quality 'retail offer', add value and act as a catalyst for investment within Wrexham Town Centre.

There is a real need to reverse the current decline of the General Market building and create an attractive and vibrant place. It is a key priority that the refurbishment of the Wrexham indoor markets, improves the quality of the historic environment of Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, providing repair to the external fabric and invest in adaptations to the market buildings to enable future productive new uses of these historic assets. Refurbishment of the Wrexham indoor markets is central to the delivery of the Townscape Heritage Scheme.

This Design Access Statement focuses on the General Market specifically.

1.3. PRINCIPAL AIMS OF THE GENERAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Wrexham Council have outlined the principal aims of the General Market project, and provided further updated aims following the Stage Two and Three design developed, as follows:

Architectural Aims:

- Remodel the existing layout on feedback received from WCBC on the Stage Two & Three Designs.
- Create more attractive and functional entrances to draw people into the market building and allow for advertising space
- Review and re-design perimeter stalls and inner stalls to accommodate greater flexibility and enable a wider variety of traders (e.g. consideration of power points, water, waste, extraction).
- New central stalls within the General Market are to be fixed.
- Provide refurbished trader kitchenette and WC facilities in current position.
- Existing external historic shop fronts and flagstone floors to remain and to be refurbished as required.
- Provide good size storage facilities within the stall spaces.
- To ensure the scheme is accessible to all.
- Within the redesigned layout, allow for efficient and safe waste management for stall holders and wider market.
- To utilise all the space within the building.
- Improve decoration to internal building.
- Ensure roof glass doesn't bleach products on sale from stall holders

General MEP and Services Aims:

- Ensure roof ventilation is energy efficient and easy to use.
- Install new energy efficient heating system and improve overall energy efficiency of the building
 - The heating system for the General Market needs replacing, with a similar hot air system to be proposed to match that of the Butchers Market
- Ensure appropriate utilities are provided to each stall.
 - Sub-meters will be required for new supplies to individual stalls.
 - WCBC have confirmed services to central stalls to be electric supply only, located within the floor slab.
- Improve lighting system that will not impact on the building fabric.
- To provide the latest technology to enable people to access latest offers and updates on offer from the individual market stall holders along with promotion of events, including existing WIFI
- WCBC confirmed above ground grease traps to be included all individual perimeter stalls.
- CCTV system to be installed within the market, to be remotely monitored, with possibility of online streaming.

2. CONTEXT

2.1. WREXHAM TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Wrexham County Borough Council has through The Townscape Heritage Scheme, identified 31 buildings to be targeted and refurbished, to improve the quality of the historic environment of Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, repair the external fabric and invest in adaptations to the buildings to enable future productive new uses of these historic assets. The Townscape Heritage Scheme presents an essential opportunity to kick start wider regeneration activities within Wrexham Town Centre, with the Wrexham General and Butchers markets, central to the delivery of the adopted Town Centre Masterplan. The refurbishment of Wrexham's indoor markets have the potential to address physical, social and economic challenges by complementing a wider regeneration strategy for Wrexham Town Centre to stimulate further private investment.

2.2. LOCATION & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MARKETS

Both markets are situated within the historic centre of Wrexham and are located within the northern end of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, in what was the market quarter. Although a limited amount of the original historic fabric remains, both markets contribute a significant amount of character to the area as Grade II listed structures. Not only do they contribute to the visual experience of the area, but also provide physical links to important historical associations and the development of the town in particular through trade and industry.

The 'Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Assessment' describe the character of the Henblas area as follows:

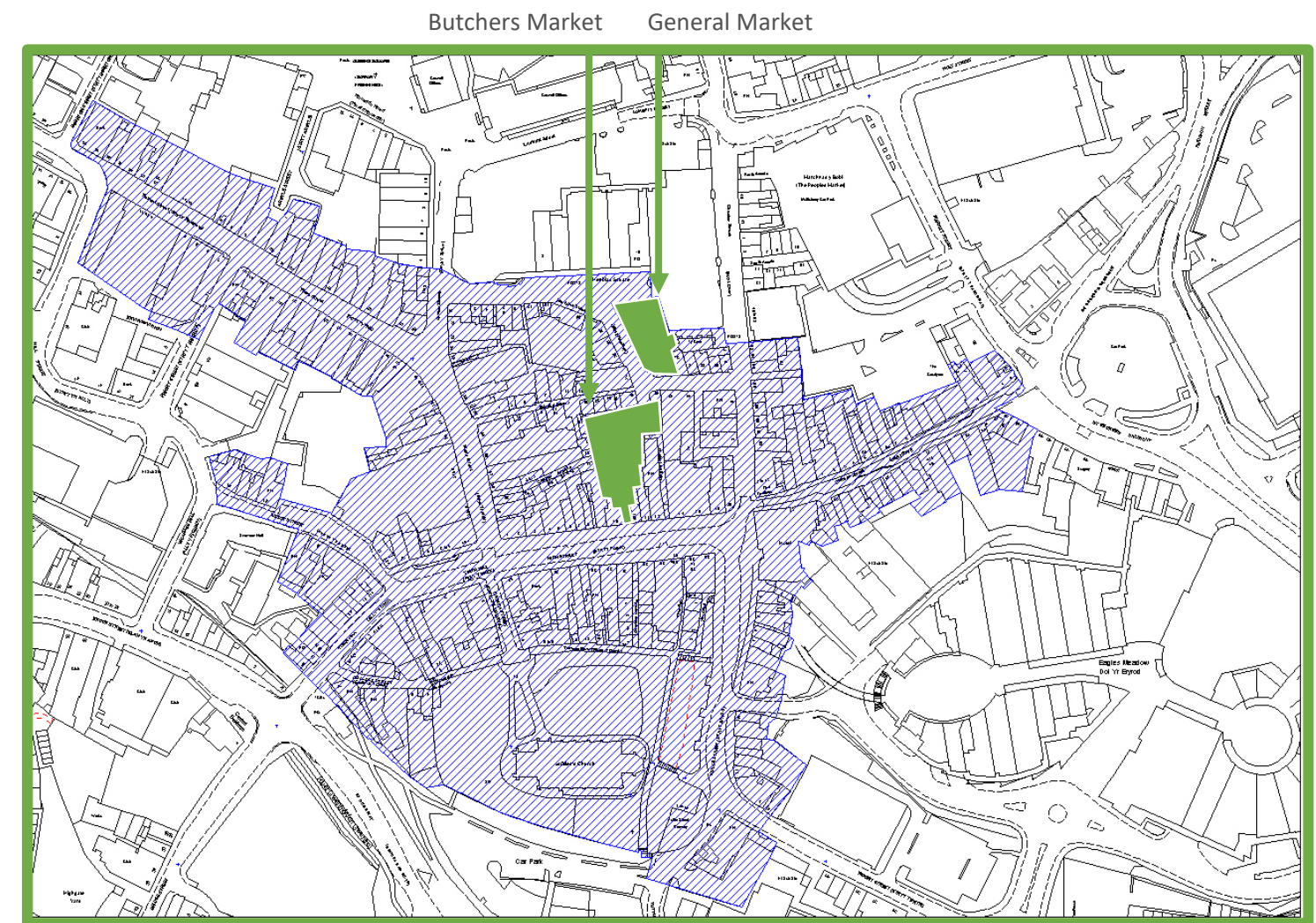
"3.17 These streets combine to form a special part of Wrexham, and have a very intimate and personal character. In particular, Bank Street has a medieval character, being very narrow and enclosed by small-scale buildings and tiny shopfronts. This part of town still remains traditionally the domain of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

3.18 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."

3.19 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."

Further to the above, a statement of significance for the key architectural landmarks of Wrexham concludes that: *"...some sensitive refurbishments have re- introduced character and brought empty buildings back into use through much needed repair and maintenance. However, greater investment is required to improve the condition of the historic environment of the town and restore a sense of vitality."*

Remodelling and refurbishing both markets will help to reinforce the distinctive character of the Henblas area and Wrexham Town Centre as a whole.



Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Plan

Henblas St to Butchers Market



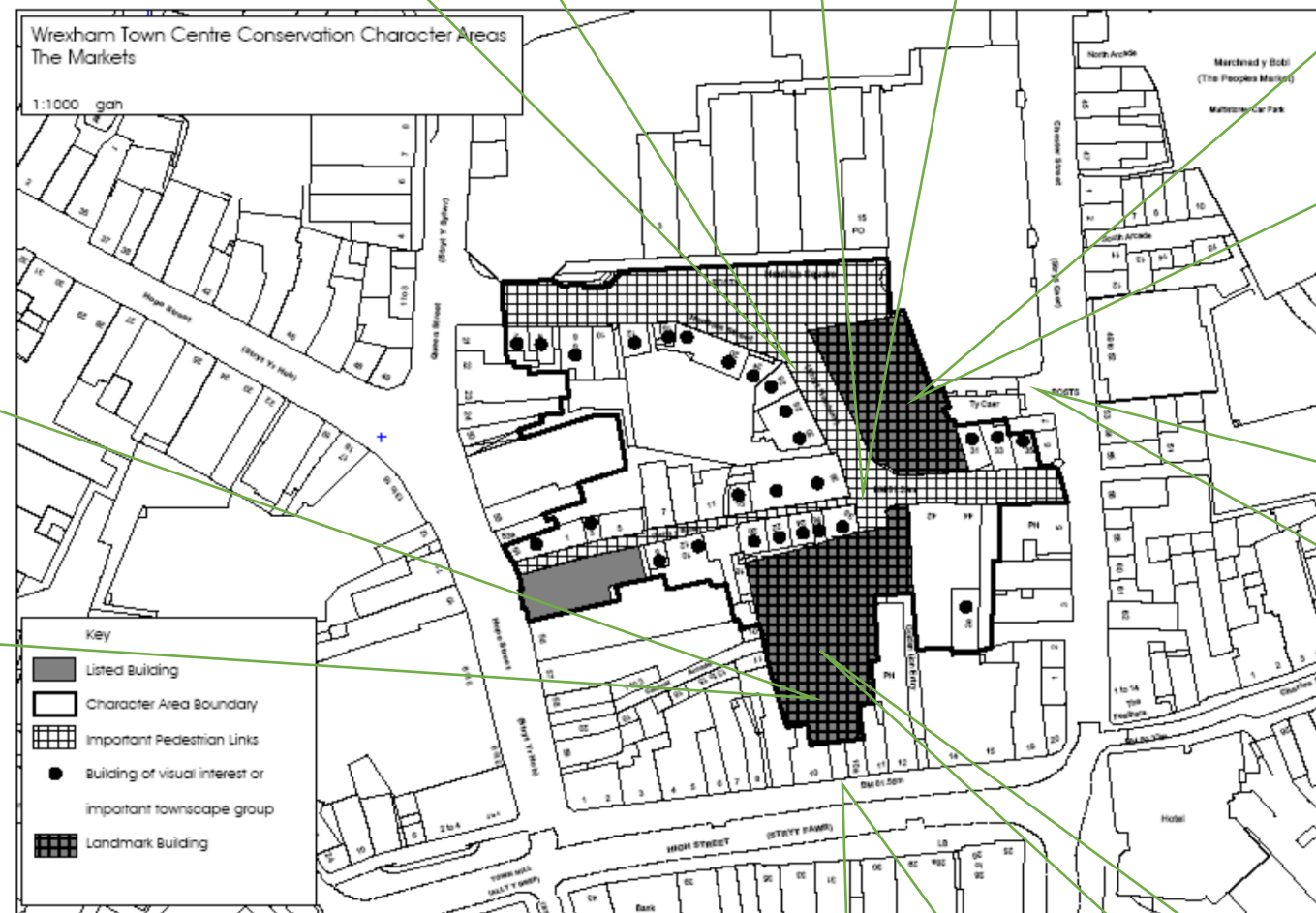
Butchers Market entrance from Henblas St



General Market interior



Main Entrance to Butchers Mark from High St



Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Character Area – The Markets



Rear access from General Market from Chester St



Butchers Market entrance from High St



Butchers Market interior

3. THE MARKETS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The Buildings

The General Market is a Grade II listed buildings and an excellent example of traditional, listed Victorian Indoor Market Hall.

Wrexham County Borough Council commissioned a Building Conditions Survey of the General Market. This highlighted the market is generally in a 'satisfactory' state of repair. Work is, however, needed to the infrastructure: sanitary, electrical, and mechanical services have all been highlighted as in a poor condition. The survey highlighted that the General Market is in need of redecoration.

Uses & Attractors

The General Market currently offers a limited range of products and services and there are a number of vacant stalls and there is a strong desire to reinvigorate the General Market building and bring potential new tenants and customers into the General Market.



Drone view of the General Market from Henblas St

3.2. THE GENERAL MARKET

The Building

The General Market was built in 1879 on the site of Manchester Square, which had previously been used as an open market. The building comprises of a top lit market hall and a row of six retail units along its west elevation to Henblas Street, and public conveniences to the south east corner. Both retail units and public toilets have recently undergone refurbishment and enhancement works and offer an attractive and active frontage to Henblas Street.

Material wise, the building is formed from red Ruabon brick walls, with ashlar dressing and terrocatta enrichment. A parabolic slate roof with continuous glazed clerestory tops the market, with ornately fenestrated glazed gables to the north and south.

There are four access points into the market; two are well placed and visible being off Henblas Street and on prominent corners, both benefit from beautiful, scrolled ironwork screens in double gates. The third entrance is almost hidden away with little announcement off Henblas Square, and the fourth access is almost a rear access off Chester Street. Whilst this offers the potential for a gateway off Chester Street, its public realm and off-track location make it difficult to exploit.

The General Market has fixed units to the perimeter with standalone units occupying the central space. Only one stack of standalone units occupy the central area due to its space limitations.



Interior view of General Market



Aerial View 1 of General Market



Front Entrance to the General Market



Aerial View 2 of General Market



Aerial View 3 of General Market

Users and Attractors

The General Market comprises of fourteen individual trading spaces, with three of these vacant at the time of this design access statement. The main market space, except for the wedding gifts/flowers business is leased by one occupier who provides children's, ladies/men's, socks/hosiery and other associated items. Within the internal units there is a clothing repair/alteration business and barbers. There was previously a café within unit No 7, but this unit is now currently vacant. From discussion with the Council, there is a desire to reintroduce a café back into the market and provide additional breakout seating.

The outdoor units, 21 to 29a Henblas Street have a good range of independent businesses that partly provide an active frontage from a ladies' boutique, key cutting, blinds supplier and a barber occupying unit No. 21, which helps to animate the entrance into the General Market building.

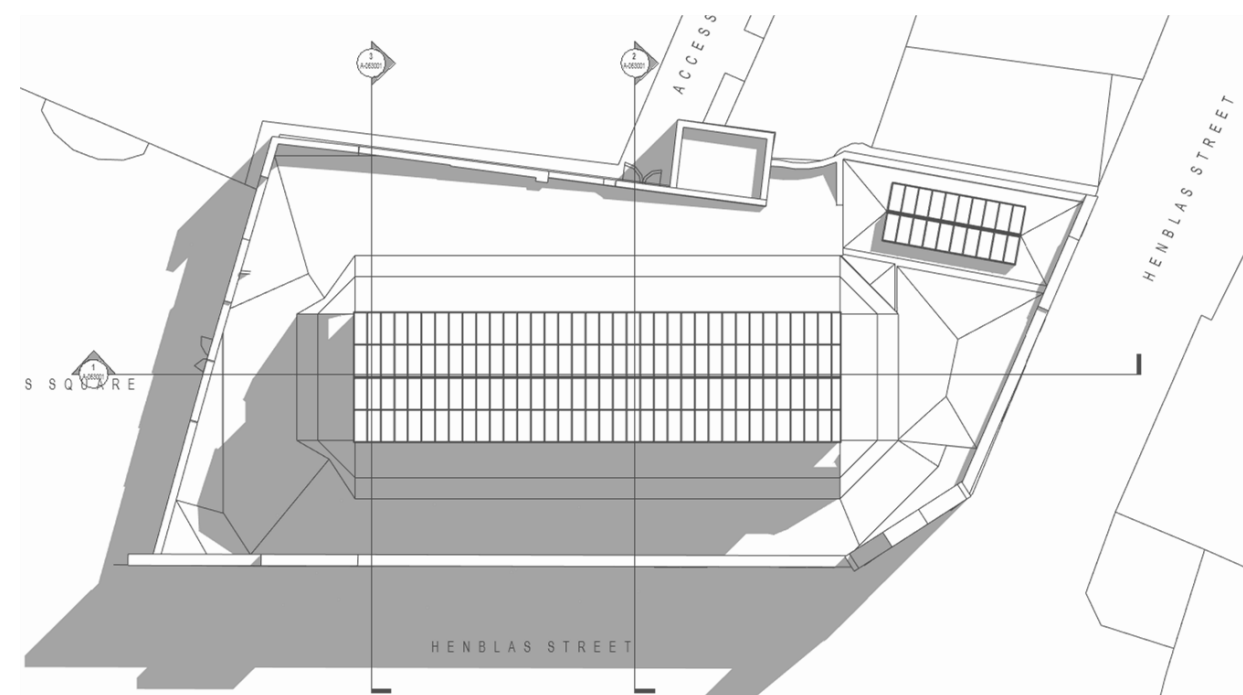
Facilities in the General market include:

- Storage space
- Toilets and small kitchenette for market traders only

Management

The General Market comprises some 285m² of accommodation, including the shop front units 21-29a along Henblas Street. A large portion of the internal market hall is occupied by a single tenant who has been in occupation for a considerable amount of time.

For the purposes of this document and from information provided by the Council, it has been confirmed tenants within the market hall will be decanted for the duration of the works.



General Market – Existing Roof Plan



General Market – Existing Ground Floor Plan

4. PROPOSALS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

WCBC provided an initial vision for the Butchers Market. As part of the Stage Two works, Lawray Architects developed concept designs of the Butchers Market into a series of diagrammatic layout option appraisals. These option appraisals were subsequently reviewed by WCBC and preferred concept design layout proposals for both markets were confirmed, which formed part of the Stage Two Report issued to WCBC in November 2021.

A subsequent Stage Three Report developed these proposals further and amplified the considerations into two developed design proposals for the Butchers Market. Stage Three proposals for the market were finalised in April 2022 following detailed feedback and confirmation from WCBC.

The Butchers Market Remodelling and Refurbishment – Issues and Opportunities

Issues

- Building conditions survey for the General Market identify areas for improvement in sanitary, electrical, and mechanical services
- The General Market appears cramped. Limited views through and up to Victorian roof space and have limited circulation space
- General Market lacks coherence and paintwork to structure feels dated

Opportunities

- Wrexham indoor markets are identified as one of the main destination areas of Wrexham Town Centre and a unique selling point in Wrexham townscape heritage scheme.
- Heritage character could underpin a distinct and speciality offer that has atmosphere
- The markets could accommodate a wider breath of food and drink including restaurant, café and eating places.
- Wrexham indoor markets are an essential opportunity to kick start wider regeneration activities within Wrexham Town Centre. The refurbishment of Wrexhams indoor markets have the potential to address physical, social and economic challenges by complementing a wider regeneration strategy for Wrexham Town Centre to stimulate further private investment.

Threats

- Doing nothing and not delivering change

Wrexham indoor markets are both fine examples of Grade II listed Victorian buildings that have a real presence within the town. Although there are significant issues that need to be overcome to adequately remodel and refurbish both markets, there is a real opportunity to improve the fabric and historic heart of Wrexham by doing so.

Proposed visuals highlighting the following:



Formation of new café area within
General Market



Re-painted structural steel frame



Rationalised central stall layouts



Refurbished perimeter units



Proposed 3D section view of the General Market

5. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

5.1. BUILDING CONTROL

Engagement with Building Control took place early in the design process, with the means of escape strategy discussed as per below.

5.2. MEANS OF ESCAPE

The General Market currently has four access and escape points. Two located either end of the market leading onto Henblas Street, a third leading out onto Chester Road and a fourth leading out onto Henblas Square.

The proposals look to retain the three main egress routes onto Henblas Street and Chester Road but utilise the current lobby in front of the Henblas Square entrance as additional stall space. The General Market will have three egress routes spread evenly throughout the floorplan, combined with proposals to improve the overall circulation through the market by forming a new coherent central stall layout.

5.3. ACCESS

The General Market benefits from existing level access from all main entrances and this will remain as such within the proposed scheme. The new stall configurations will comply with ease of access for all.

6. STRUCTURAL REPORT

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Structural information developed by:



6.2. STRUCTURE GENERALLY

Wrexham County Borough Council have previously commissioned a Building Conditions Survey of the General Market. This highlighted that the market is generally in a 'satisfactory' state of repair, including the overall structures. Sensitive remedial works carried out if required.

Detailed discussions between both MEP and the Structural Engineer will be required going into Stage 4 technical design, given the need to replace most of the existing infrastructure, new services will need supporting from building structure.

6.3. UNDERGROUND DRAINAGE

New proposed underground drainage is limited, with most of the existing underground drainage runs to remain as existing. Please refer to the Structural Engineer's Report for full details.

The General Market has been in continuous operation for 170+ years and will remain as a market following the proposed works.

7. MEP REPORT

7.1. INTRODUCTION

MEP information to be developed by:



7.2. ABOVE GROUND DRAINAGE

Above ground drainage proposals for the General Market are limited.

Please refer to the separate Stage 3 MEP report for full above ground drainage proposals.

7.3. SUSTAINABILITY

Please refer to Section 4.0 of the MEP Stage 3 Report for full details. As highlighted within the report:

“A principle of WCBC’s design brief is to improve the energy efficiency of the market buildings. This is in line with the UK Government’s commitment to be carbon neutral nationally by 2050. The extent of potential energy efficiency measures however for the Victorian markets will be limited due to the listed status of these buildings and a need to preserve their rich character.”

MEP proposals have been carefully considered to ensure the character of the listed market is retained, but the building will still significantly benefit from the complete replacement of all existing ventilation, heating, and lighting systems with modern, energy efficient alternatives.

8. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1. INTRODUCTION

Please refer to the separate Heritage Impact Assessment.

Historic Impact Assessment and Historic Building Consultant duties to be conducted by:



8.2. HERITAGE CONSULTATION

Detailed discussions and meetings with both the Historic Building Consultant and WCBC's Conservation Officer have taken place during the Stage 3 design phase. Appropriate MEP proposals have been discussed, with proposals to be developed further during the Stage 4 developed design phase.

The Design Team will liaise with the Historic Building Consultant and the Conservation Officer for the duration of the design phase to ensure that the proposals for the Grade II listed General Market are appropriate.

9. CONCLUSION

The General Market is a real asset to Wrexham town and contribute significantly to the character and rich narrative of the remaining historic centre. It's vital that the General market Building is repaired and refurbished to ensure it's continued use and contribution to the historic townscape. It's also critical that the Wrexham indoor markets continue to develop to meet the needs of a constantly evolving customer base.

The proposals have been developed closely with WCBC and following various consultations with the tenants of both markets. The key aspect of the proposals is to broaden the appeal of the markets by creating a more coherent and adaptable series of spaces, which work to enhance the current offer but also entice new traders in.

The proposals look to reverse the current decline of the market building, act as a catalyst to further town centre investment and create new vibrant destination places within the centre of Wrexham. Construction and phasing works to appropriately deliver the indoor markets are considerable, but this opportunity will improve the fabric and historic heart of Wrexham.