

Heritage Impact Assessment to support the listed building consent application for 1-5 Church Houses (Alms-houses), Church Street, Ruabon.

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 The site
- 3.0 The proposals
- 4.0 Evidential value
- 5.0 Aesthetic value
- 6.0 Communal value
- 7.0 Proposed repairs/design and material proposals
- 8.0 Assessing the impact of proposals
- 9.0 Preferred options

1.0 Introduction

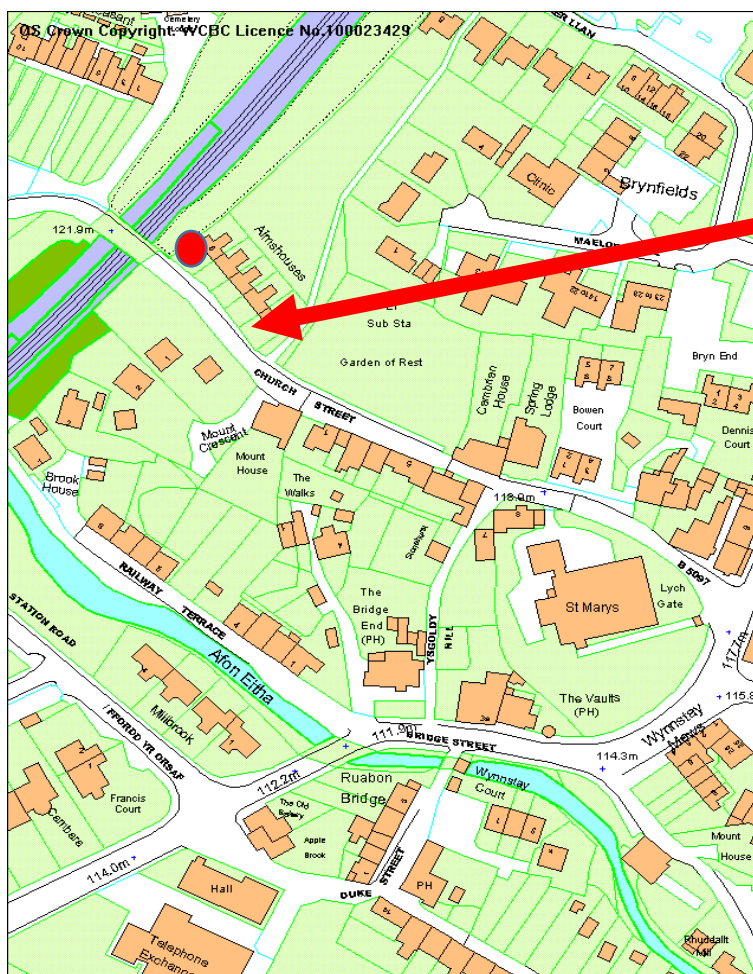
The Heritage Impact Assessment should be read in conjunction with the plans and drawings submitted as part of the Listed Building Consent application as well as the following documents which have been submitted in support of the application.

- Sdm joinery's window scaled drawings;
- Iron cast window repair details.

2.0 The Site

The site is situated in north-eastern Wales at Ruabon, off the B5097. The site of the Listed Buildings are located at 1-5 Church Houses, Church Street, Ruabon, LL14 6DR and are known as The Almshouses, next to the garden of rest for the Grade I listed building of St. Marys Church, located approximately 6 miles to the south of Wrexham town – the Cadw listed description of the individual buildings are referenced below.

The Almshouses are each individually listed Grade II listed buildings and lie within Ruabon Conservation Area in the village of Ruabon. Ruabon Mountain rises up to the west and the Afon Eitha, runs directly through the village. Ruabon Conservation Area, centres on the Grade I listed Church of St Mary's. The influences of the prominent Wynnstay Estate, as well as local industries, are reflected within the Ruabon Conservation Area which display various architectural styles, evident in the villages' development.



Location of the
Almshouses

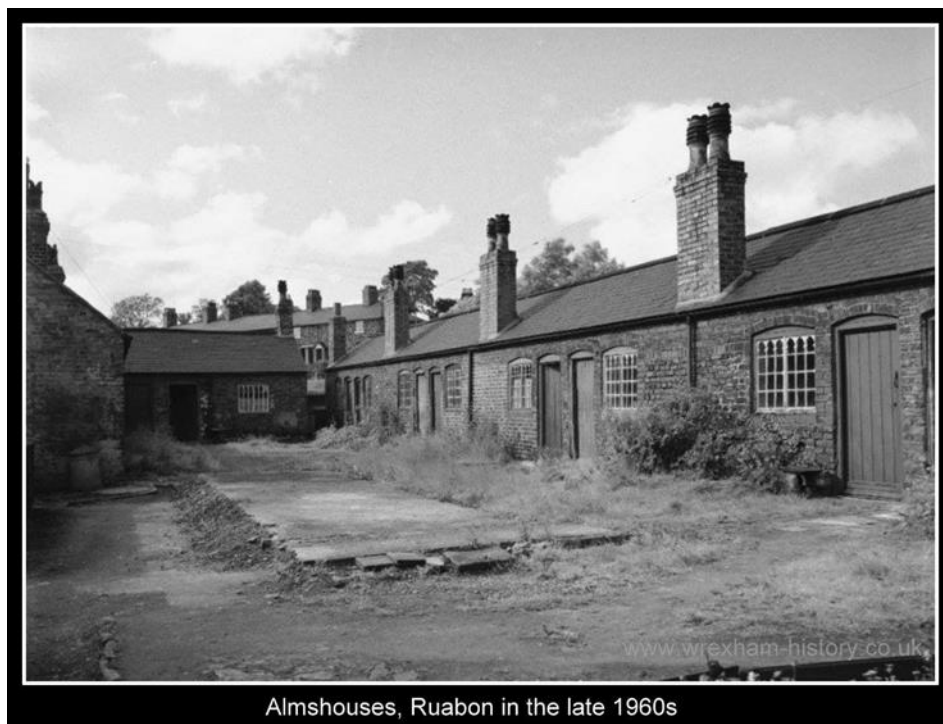
Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

Section 16 (2) and 66 (1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant listed building consent or planning permission, for any works or development, affecting a listed building, or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. National planning policy as per PPW 11 and TAN 24 reiterates this stance. Policies X and Y of the adopted Wrexham Unitary Development Plan seek to protect visual amenities and heritage assets.

The Alms Houses are said to have been endowed by Vicar John Robinson and built by Vicar Richard Davis in 1711. Originally arranged around a courtyard three sides of which have now been demolished. The houses were renovated and extended by the Trustees of Ruabon United Charities in 1979. The existing front doors have been replaced within the last 10 years, and are ill fitting and are not fit for purpose or replicating the original.

The similarly described listing descriptions note that the terrace of 5 single storey dwellings, are painted brick with a slate roof. Each unit has two windows which are 12-pane cast-iron casements with Gothic intersecting pointed heads on either side of entrances with front doors probably fitted circa 1979. Front doorways have been recessed creating a front porch before entering front door. Chimneys and front wall are shared i.e. 1 chimney per 2 units,; these have been altered. Rear elevations have extensions dating from circa 1979. Recent site inspections confirm the external appearance of the buildings have changed little since their listing subject to the deterioration as referred to below.



Almshouses, Ruabon in the late 1960s

Existing building front façades



Existing cast iron window casements intersecting round heads



Existing front window cill lead work with



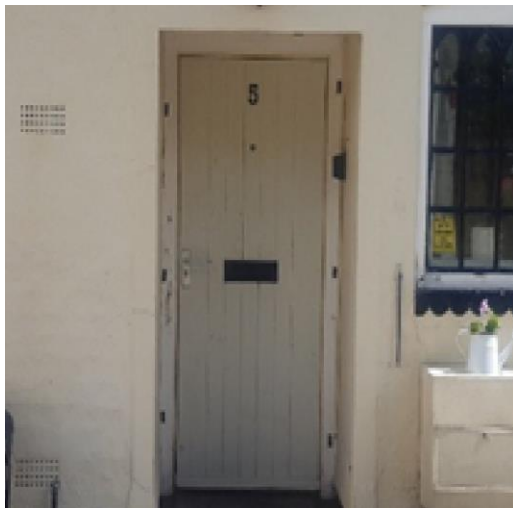
Existing front elevation render



Existing chimney details to front elevation



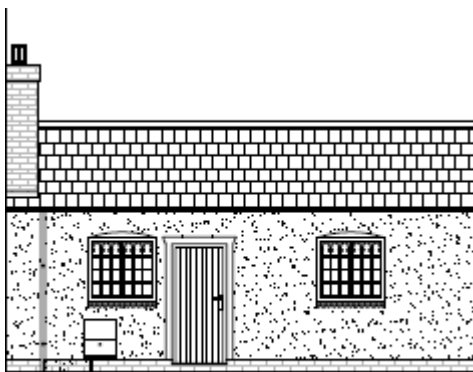
Existing wooden doors to frontage



Rear external windows



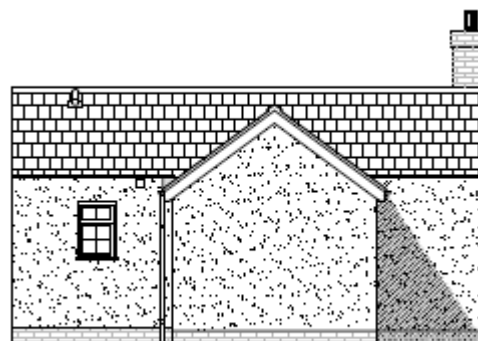
Lead window tray to front window elevation



EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION

The Almshouses, have no uPVC frames installed to their front elevations, but have kept the original cast iron lead window features therefore keeping the historic character, appearance and quality of the design for these is group of terrace buildings. The original stone boundary walls are intact forming an important boundary treatment that add significant character to the Conservation Area.

In this case the significance of the listed structures lies primarily in their architectural interest as 18 century almshouses which make a positive contribution not only to the immediate street scene but also the wider conservation area and also their collective group value with other listed buildings on Church Street.

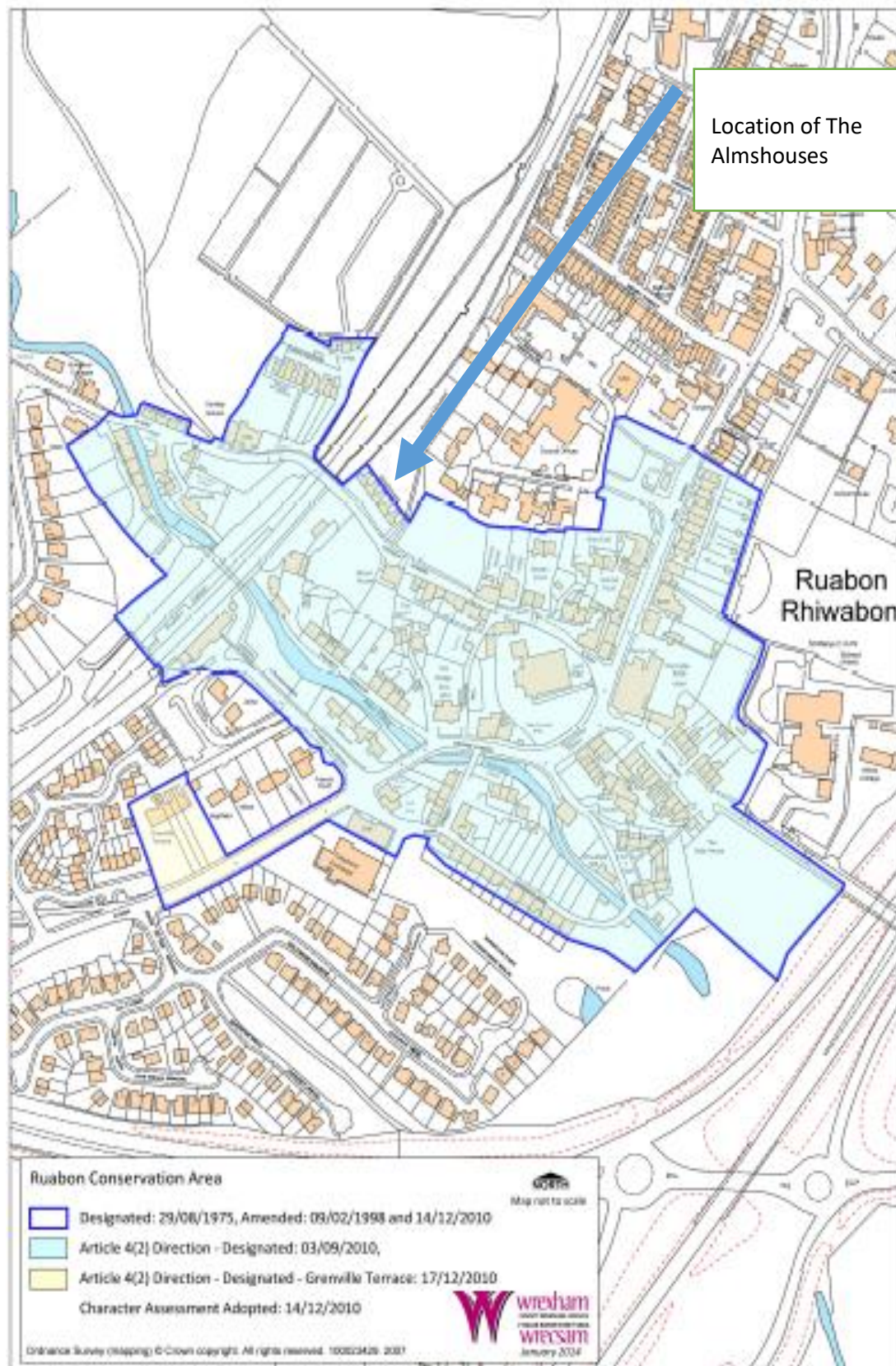
Conservation area

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the applicant to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas. This is also reiterated within Chapter 6 of the Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 24 'The Historic Environment' where there is general presumption in favour of the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area.

The Conservation principles have been considered during the proposals to understand the heritage values and assess the significance of the historic assets and how the proposed changes will affect the historical assets. We have applied four heritage values in order for the significance of the proposals of the assets can be assessed.

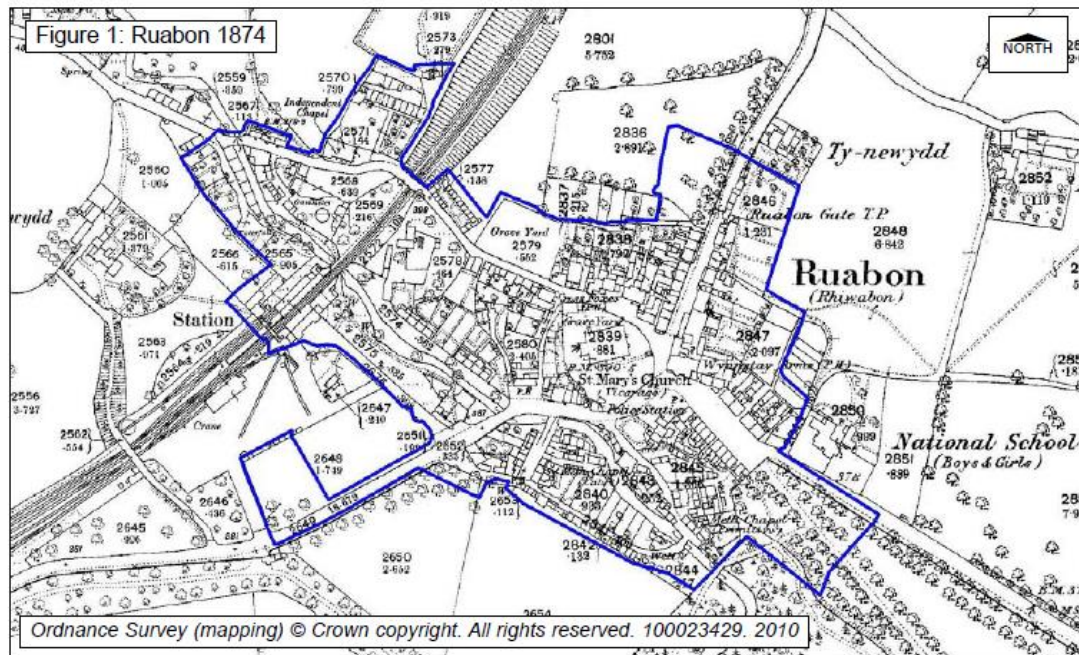
The Ruabon Conservation Area was first designated in August 1975 and its boundary amended in February 1998 and December 2010. The Ruabon Conservation Area Character Assessment and Management Plan was adopted in December 2010. The Ruabon Conservation Area article 4(2) direction came into effect in September 2010 and the Grenville Terrace article 4(2) direction came into effect in December 2010.

Ruabon Conservation Area Plan



The setting of the Historic Asset

history and development



Ruabon Conservation Area was first designated in August 1975 and its boundary amended in February 1998 and December 2010. Extending for 35 metres, the row of five single-storey houses is named Church Houses. Built as Almshouses in 1711, they were renovated and extended by the Trustees of Ruabon United Charities in 1979. They attained Grade II listed status in 1963.

The immediate area around the part of the CA in which the site is located is characterised by a number of notable historic buildings, not least the Grade 1 listed St. Marys Church, and of the heritage assets of varying scale, architectural style; collectively these buildings along with the other heritage assets, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA, and the therefore contribute to its significance.

3. Proposals

The building owners, Ruabon Alms House Charity, have requested support from WCBC House Proud Scheme to address the maintenance issues identified on the Alms houses. WCBC Private Lettings Agency who manage the properties on behalf of Ruabon Alms House Charity, have asked the House Proud officer to facilitate the necessary repairs that have been identified. The officer provides a project management service, managing all types of maintenance schemes and roofing schemes within Conservation Areas. The officer has a degree in Construction Management and is a time served Carpenter Joiner with 37 years of experience. All proposed works have been discussed with the Council's Conservation officer.

The inspection of the properties revealed the following maintenance and repair issues being identified:-

1. The timber windows to the front elevation of the properties of which there are 10 in total, are rotten as well as 4 rotten windows to the rear of these properties. The cast iron inserts to the front timber windows, are in need of refurbishment to prolong their life.

2. The window hinges to case iron inserts need replacing and new ones made for those that are missing.
3. There is a lead tray flashing under all the front windows and this has now exceeded its durability by allowing water ingress.
4. The existing timber front doors have been replaced in the past with an “off the shelf door” but have not been well fitted, the doors have been modified compromising the integrity and security and are not fit for purpose or in compliance with conservation policy/best practice.
5. The masonry paint finish is peeling away to 100% of the property.

In terms of the significance of the heritage assets

4. Evidential value

The original features are still in situ such as the gothic cast windows and are considered an important historic feature to the frontage of the properties and have a high Historic value.

The Alms houses during the time of construction were needed by the parish to house the poor or disadvantaged and continue to house tenants today, providing comfortable residential accommodation as single storey dwellings.

5. Aesthetic value

The Alms houses in Ruabon which are largely intact as per the original design, especially to the front elevation, retain many features and original materials still in situ which contribute to its aesthetic character and are a good example of this type of vernacular property style within the County Borough

6. Communal value

From meeting the tenants during our site visits it is evident of their historical importance, to this community of older generation, many of whom have lived there a long time and whose collective memories form part of the community value attached to the properties. The Alms houses have a long history of use for social type housing for older people and those in need within parish.

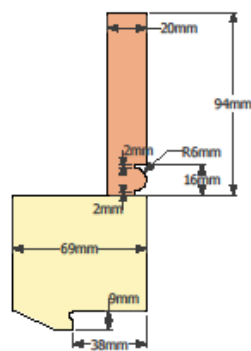
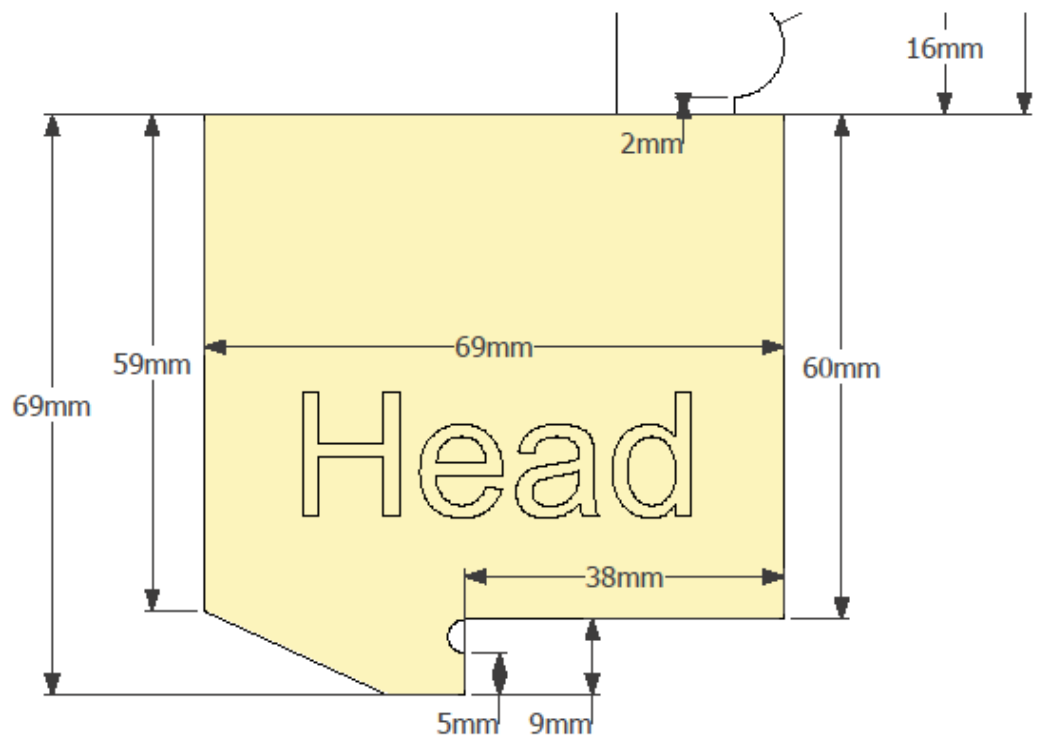
7. Proposed repairs/design and material proposals

i. Front windows

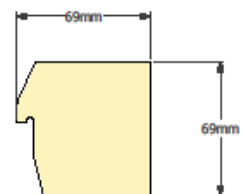
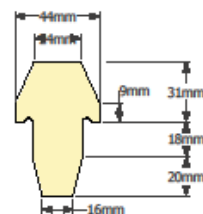
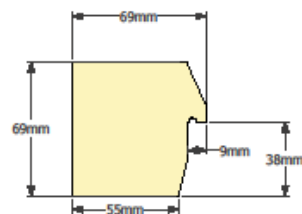
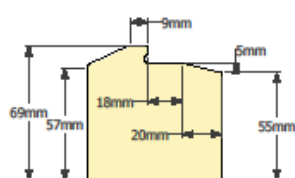
The front timber window sub frames are to be replaced in an identical timber profile to receive a paint finish to match original paintwork. The gothic cast iron inserts to be refurbished by stripping all existing paint, repairing any cracks or damage to the cast iron frame and repaint to match original colour. The glass will also be replaced to match existing thickness, and style, and all glass will be bedded with a matching coloured linseed putty. The refurbished cast iron windows will then be refitted into the new timber sub frames. A final coat of paint to the timber surround will be applied. The existing windows have been extensively repaired in the past and to the point where no further repairs will be effective.

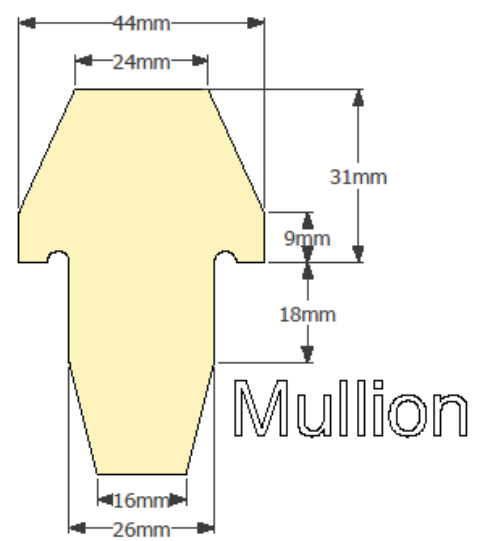
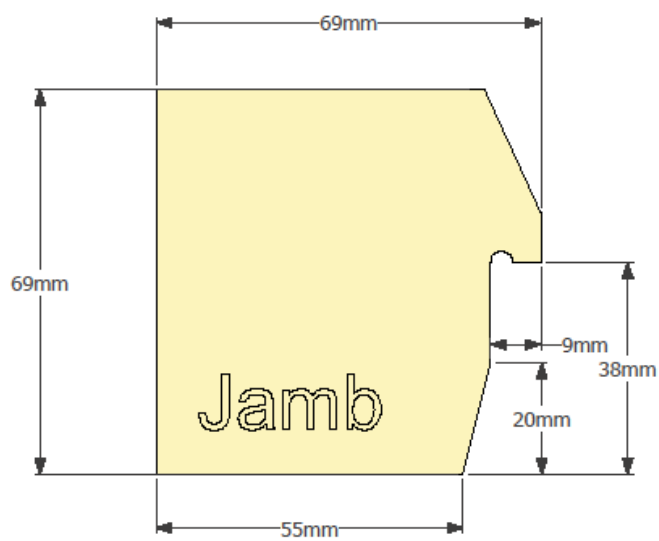
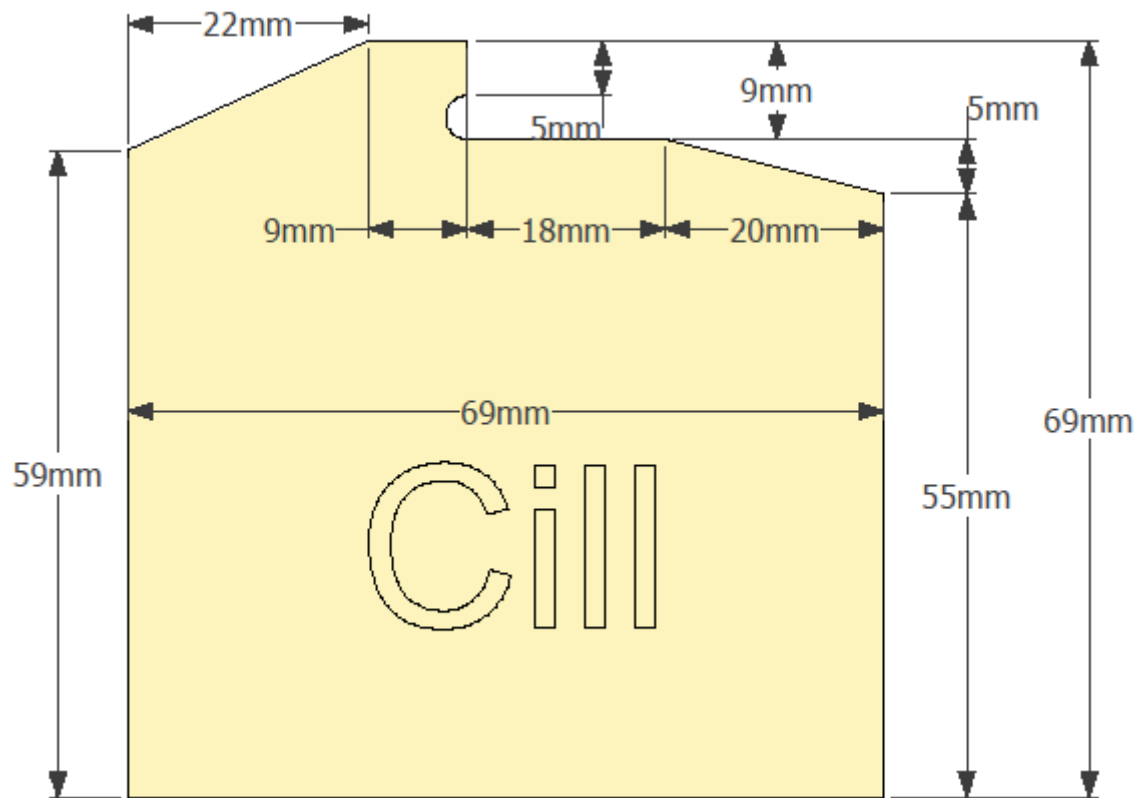


Front window cross section details



Window Section
Church Houses
Ruabon



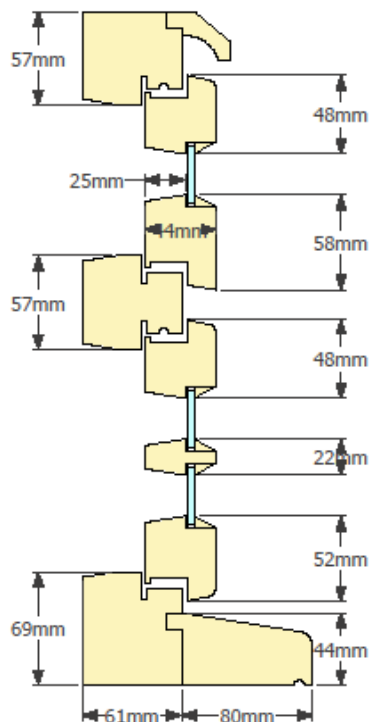
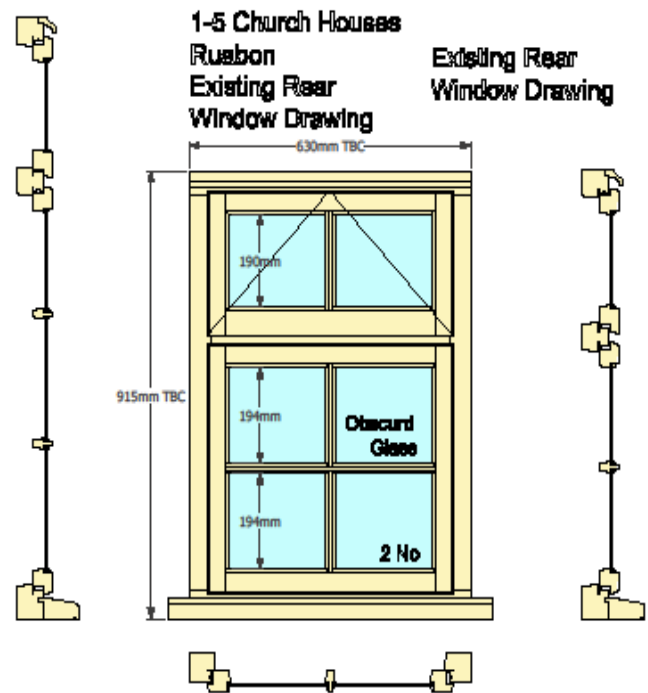
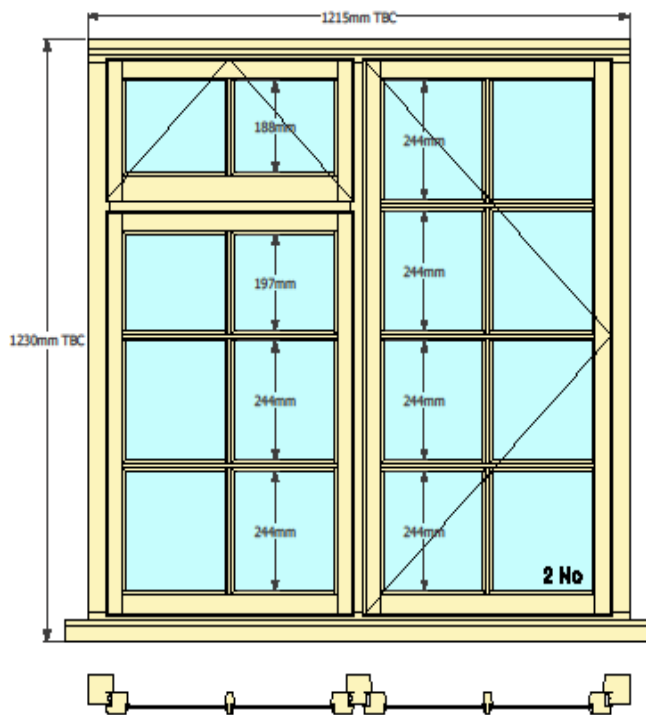


ii. Rear windows

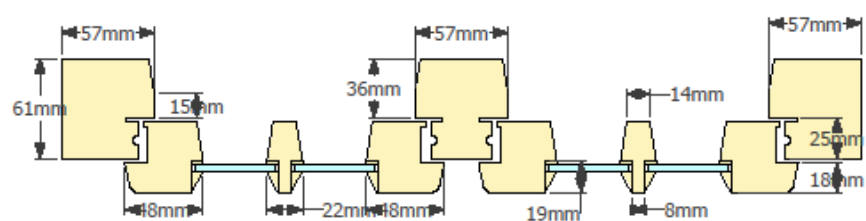
The existing windows to the rear of the properties are to be replaced with an identical design to existing style, these had been replaced during the 1970's refurbishment, the new windows will allow for a slim profile double glazed unit to increase the thermal aspect of the property



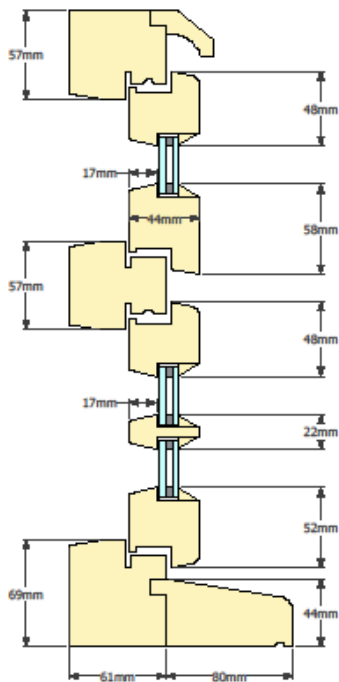
Rear window existing cross section details



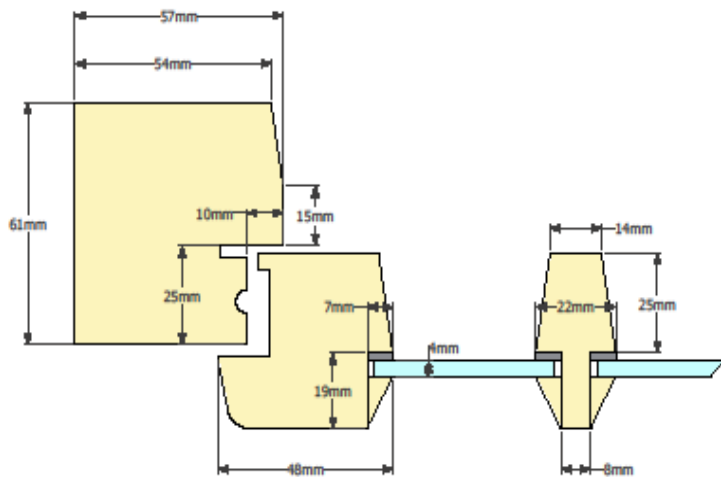
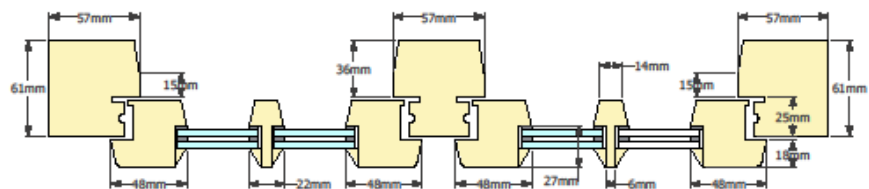
Existing Rear Window Sections Detail 4mm Glass



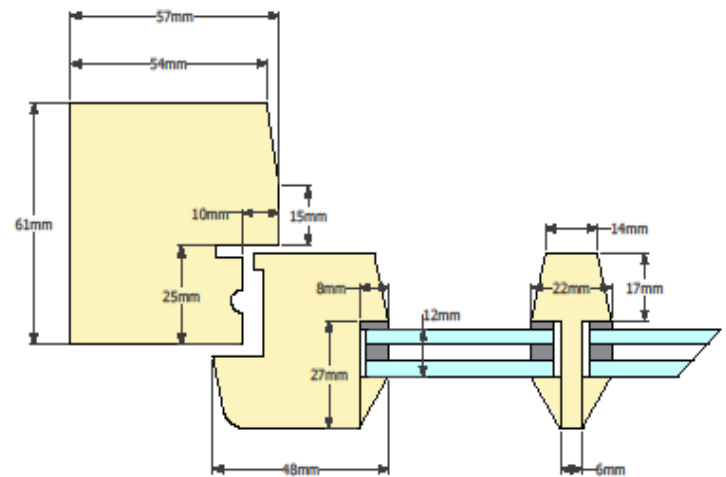
Rear window proposed cross section details



Proposed Rear Window Section 4/4/4 DG



Existing



Proposed

Lead window tray

The lead window tray is in a very poor condition and has been assessed by the Council's conservation specialists to be beyond reasonable repair – see attached photos. As a result it is proposed that the existing lead tray under the front windows is to be replaced and matched with the existing scalloped profile to the underside and dressed over the masonry. As part of the investigative works for this application it has been identified that the current situation allows water to access the sides within the masonry reveal and therefore it is recommended, in the interests of securing the historic future of the buildings, that a small upstand addition be added to the lead tray that would prevent future water ingress and thus stop render/ mortar damage in the future.





iii. Front timber doors

The existing timber front doors are to be replaced with a bespoke frame and filled tongue and grooved doors as per the original door profiles in photo above dates 1960's. The door frames are in perfect condition and are therefore to be retained. Using the historical photos as reference for the door design, all iron mongery is to be a black Kirkpatrick heritage range in compliance to conservation policy and the original 5 lever mortice lock to be reused. The doors will then be painted to match original colour.





iv. Paint work to front facade

It is evident that the existing paint finish to the exterior front facade wall is a modern cream plastic based paint that covers an older thicker red paint and is not suitable for a traditional build property. It is presumed the red paint could be a pigmented cement slurry, or maybe a thicker plastic based masonry paint, with mineral fillers mixed into it. Further analysis will be needed to determine the paint's origin, the paint when warmed up became quite malleable, suggesting it might soften with heat.

The paint is not breathable and with the age of this property it is proposed that the existing paint finish be removed to the front elevation. The paint removal methods proposed will be assessed on a small scale before carrying out any large-scale work; this can be approved beforehand with the Council conservation officer. It is recommended that an isolated sample area which we can use to determine whether an approach such as the DOFF or TORC systems is best to use and suited to this task. The reason we are proposing these systems is because these methods have been used on many high-profile projects due to their ability to clean stonework/brick without causing damage to the existing substrate and found to be previously acceptable or similar works to the Council's conservation officer and Cadw.

The DOFF system requires only a little clean water. Once connected to the system, the water is transferred through a pump which regulates the water pressure before entering a hot-box, where it is heated. The supply is then channelled through 30 metres of hose to reach the nozzle at 150 degree centigrade, and is then applied to the target area. It is this mix of high temperature and low pressure that makes the DOFF unique amongst other steam systems.

The TORC system will produce a natural clean finish. The TORC method has been developed from the JOS system. The TORC requires low air pressure, and a safe, inert granulate which is applied to the target surface using a swirling vortex motion.

Thermoplastic coatings, such as gloss, acrylic, bitumen, oil and plastic-based paints, are best removed with the DOFF. When there are many layers of paint, it may require an application of paint softener prior to the actual cleaning process; less pressure will be required from the DOFF as a result.

Cementitious coatings, such as lime and cement-based paints, carbon sulphation, and lime efflorescence, are best removed with the TORC.

Therefore based on the findings of the existing paint content it is proposed that the paint will be removed from the brick surface using the following to a trial patch will of 30cm² to be approved on condition of Listed Building Consent.

The following recommendations are suggested for the trial paint removal, this will help enormously with the specification and the tendering process. The trial should cover the following.....

1. Try removing the cream layer of paint by hand.
2. Try removing the cream and red paint using the thermatech or Doff system. (Superheated water pressure)
3. Try removing the red layer from the brick mechanically by hand, without damaging the bricks beneath.
4. Expose some of the patches that are visible beneath the paint to identify the repair materials used.
5. Try to establish an average condition of the bricks beneath.
6. Apply a coat of limewash to the brick surface to see how the limewash adheres.

Following the removal of the existing paint covering to the front facade the bricks will have to be covered again after the repairs are finished with either a paint or render. The following options should be considered,

1. The simplest option of all would be just to limewash the brickwork after the paint has been removed. This would be good for the building and easy to carry out. The downside to limewash is that it cannot go over plastic based paint or old cement patches. It also doesn't hide anything. So old patches will show up clearly on the wall.

2. Use a silicate mineral paint instead of limewash. This paint has a similar appearance to limewash, and is still breathable, but is more like conventional paint with all manner of primers that can help deal with salts or uneven surfaces.

3. Apply a lime sheltercoat and then limewash over the sheltercoat. A sheltercoat is basically a limewash with fine stone dust and aggregate in it. This application will smooth out the brick face, if it has deteriorated.

4. Apply a tight lime render coat using non hydraulic lime and then limewash it. This is considered the best option if the wall is full of patches and old repairs that are too costly to fix.

There is a risk that as the walls dry out, that salts might come out of solution and cause issues with any new paint or render. Advice would be to let the walls dry out before spending too much money straight away. A coat of limewash on the walls to would tidy them up before a final decision is made, it would be sensible to wait a season before finishing the walls.

Gable, external rear walls and chimneys

It is recommended to scrape them down and apply a mineral paint following the manufacturer's recommendations.

8. Assessing the impact of proposals

The proposed maintenance applications will have a positive impact on the properties and all changes will match the original finish and specification, by using similar materials and refurbishing original fixtures. The proposals support the replacement of unsightly later additions to the buildings, with bespoke to match original profiles; and reinstating the original aesthetic qualities of the properties. Missing details such as the window stays will be replaced with bespoke matching components using existing as a template for fabrication.

During the maintenance process there will be the need for a temporary window to be installed during works to each property in sequence to a least two windows at any one time, allowing for the gothic cast arches to be removed, repaired and repainted; these works can be time limited to any grant of LBC.

The existing painted masonry will also be carefully removed and the masonry brickwork stabilised and prepared for the compatible paint finish. Due to the time this it will take to complete this process, there will be a negative visual impact on the buildings frontage while the works are in progress, however this is temporary and will not affect the overall character of the LB.

Overall in line with the 1990 Act, PPW 11, TAN 24 and local planning policy and advice, the proposed works would preserve the listed buildings and their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest.

As mentioned above special regard also needs to be paid to the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or

appearance of the Ruabon CA. It follows that as the works would preserve the listed buildings then the CA as a whole would be preserved and enhanced.

9. Preferred options

In arriving at the above stance, a number of options were considered as follows -

Option 1 - Do nothing. This is a non-starter due to the detrimental impact on the LB's via continued deterioration and the significant impact on the living conditions of the existing and future residents of the properties due to existing problems via damp egress etc,

Option 2 - Minimal but necessary intervention as per that described above, or,

Option 3 - Works such as full replacement of windows and doors up to modern standards which whilst meeting the needs of existing residents would be significantly detrimental to the heritage status of the properties and therefore unacceptable.

An assessment was made of the current condition of the properties and consultants who specialise in each historic element of the identified work, were asked to attend a site meeting. The meeting established the preferred option i.e **option 2** above, to maintain the original historic fabric using materials & style to match the original features of this traditional building. The consultants have based their recommendations from similar conservation projects they have refurbished. Example of completed work on listed buildings - Chester Cathedral and Hanmer Church.

All recommendations considered in the Heritage impact assessment are to refurbish these properties with minimum intervention to reduce the impact on maintenance for the future of the properties.

<https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/conservation-principles/conservation-principles>

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/>

<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-24-historic-environment>

<https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/20170531Managing%20Conservation%20Areas%20in%20Wales%2028424%20EN.pdf>