

Design & Access Statement for;

**The change of use of the vacant 2nd and 3rd floors of
No. 2 Regent Street, Wrexham, LL11 1SA to residential
use; comprising 2no. Studio apartments and 4no. One
Bedroom apartments + associated works**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Paul Hughes Architects, on behalf of AH2 Developments Ltd. are pleased to present this Design & Access Statement.

This document forms part of the supporting information submitted for a Full Planning Application for the change of use of the 2nd and 3rd floors of 2 Regent Street, Wrexham, LL11 1SA. This report should be read alongside the other submitted drawings and information.

The existing 4 storey building, which is located within Wrexham town centre, is partially occupied by a retail outlet, which occupies the ground and first floors. The 2nd and 3rd floors are currently vacant.

The application seeks approval for the conversion of the two vacant upper floors to residential use and the construction of 6no. apartments, including 2 no. studio apartments and 4 no. 1 bedroom apartments. In addition to the conversion of the top top floors minor amendments are proposed to the ground and first floor areas to facilitate the proposed mixed residential and retail uses.

In accordance with planning requirements this document has been provided as the proposal includes the creation of 1 (or more) dwelling units within a conservation area. This statement has been compiled to provide an analysis of the existing site and its context and define the principles which have guided the design proposals.



2.0 SITE LOCATION

The building is located on Regent Street in the town centre of Wrexham, within the defined town centre boundary and retail core. The building’s archway, shared with No. 35 Hope Street, is a prominent local landmark and forms a pedestrian connection to Argyle Street and Queens Square beyond.

The building is well located to access local services and transport links.

The building is also located within the Town Centre Conservation Area and is noted as being of “Visual Interest” within Conservation Area Character Assessment & Management Plan. The Horse and Jockey Public House, sat opposite the building on Regent Street, is a Grade II listed building.



Regent Street elevation from Priory Street



Archway looking towards Argyle Street



Rear elevation, as seen from Argyle Street, with 35 Hope Street on the left hand side of archway and 2 Regent Street on the right hand side

3.0 THE EXISTING BUILDING

3.1 Building History

Original completed in 1875 the building was commissioned by William Low a prominent engineer who lived locally and is credited with developing the first feasible design for a channel tunnel (as commemorated on a mural affixed to No.35 Hope Street).

Shortly after its completion the building served as a temporary museum and entrance pavilion to the “Art Treasures & Industrial Exhibition of North Wales” held in 1876. The building has also been known as the “Argyle Archway” and also the “Westminster Buildings.”

Originally completed in a High Victorian Gothic style architecture the 1875 building features a particularly decorative facade onto Regent Street featuring polychromatic brickwork and decorative metalwork and stonework. The rear facade of the original building is plainer in nature.

Since its original construction the building has been extended with a single storey flat roofed rear extension, believed to have been added in the 1970 - 1980’s. The extension is utilitarian in design and, at best, has a neutral impact on the original building and wider conservation area.

3.2 Current Use & Layout

The ground and first floors of the building currently serve as a retail unit for Sense, a charity, who first occupied the space in 2020. Almost the entire ground floor serves as the main retail shop area. The first floor is used for storage and staff support facilities, including a teapoint and WC’s.

The two upper floors of the building are vacant. Their last use and date of occupation is unknown. Many of the spaces have been stripped back to the original brickwork shell, and many ceilings have been removed.

Overall the building contains 531 sqm of usable accommodation, this is broken down as follows;

- Ground Floor = 166.4 sqm
- First Floor = 94.2 sqm
- Second Floor = 135.2 sqm
- Third Floor = 135.2 sqm

The building also contains an unconverted basement under the original 1875 building footprint, which covers approximately 90 sqm. This space is only accessible via ladder and is currently unused. The basement is unaffected by these proposals.

3.3 Building Access

All upper floors are served via a single staircase which rises up to the first floor adjacent to the archway, before continuing in the northwest corner of the plan to the upper floors.

The main retail entrance to the ground floor space is located on Regent Street.

The building has 2 rear entrances. One entrance is located close to the archway within the modern extension. It serves as a fire escape to the shop and as an access point to the shared staircase to the upper floors.

The second entrance, currently unused, connects from the rear of the ground floor retail space to a secure service yard / alleyway at the rear of the building, which is owned by the owner of No.s 4 - 6 Regent Street.

3.4 External Areas

The building does not have any external curtilage. With the permission of it’s owner the retail unit’s bins are stored in the service yard off Argyle Street at the rear of the site.



Existing staircase to be reused and restored as part of the works



Vacant top floor - stripped back to brickwork



The vacant 2nd floor



View from the top floor over Hope & Priory Street



The existing retail unit at ground floor

4.0 PLANNING CONTEXT & HISTORY

4.1 Heritage Context

As noted above the building sits within the Town Centre Conservation Areas, and specifically within the retail core character area. The building is noted as being of “visual interest” and “architectural merit” in the Conservation Area Character Assessment & Management Plan.

Although it is not designated, for the quality of its architecture, its contribution to the townscape and its association with historically important persons and events the building is a heritage asset to the town.

4.2 Relevant Polices

There are a number of both National and Local Polices / Guidance that are applicable to the application including;

- The Wrexham UDP
- The Wrexham Town Centre Masterplan
- Local Planning Guidance Notes, including;
 - LPG 04: Conservation Areas
 - LPG 06: Access to & Use of Buildings
 - LPG 15 & 16: Cycling & Parking Standards
 - LPG 19: Wrexham Town’s Character Areas
 - LPG 24: Designing Out Crime
 - LPG 30: Design
- Welsh National Planning Policies & Guidance
- Welsh National Policy Technical Advice Notes, including
 - TAN 12: Design
 - TAN 24: The Historic Environment
- Part M of the building Regulations.

4.3 Planning History

Several applications have been previously lodged relating to the building. These include;

- Planning Application P/2011/0318 - Approved in 2011
 - Consent for a replacement fascia & illuminated sign (to the retail unit)
- Planning Application P/2020/0271 - Refused in 2020
 - Which sought consent for a replacement shopfront
- Planning Application P/2021/0448 - Lodged 06/05/2021 & currently pending
 - Re-application for a replacement shopfront

The works related to the shopfront, which are currently pending, are unaffected by and do not affect, the potential conversion of the upper floors sought as part of this application.

In addition to the building’s planning history there have also been several recent applications for adjacent buildings that have been granted permission for a similar conversion of their upper floors to residential use. These include;

- No. 35 Hope Street
 - Application No. P/2017/0485 - Approved in 2017
 - Change of use of upper floors to create 5 no. Apartments (2no. 1 bed & 3 no. 2 bed)
- No. 4-6 Regent Street
 - Application No. P/2020/0672 - Approved 2021
 - Refurbishment of ground floor and creation of 9no. studios apartments & 3 1 bedroom apartments to upper floors
- No. 14 - 16 Regent Street
 - Application No’s. P/2020/0315 - Approved 2020, & P/2018/0480 - Approved in 2018
 - Conversion of upper floors to form 6 no. apartments (4 no. 1 beds & 2 no. Studios)

4.4 Pre Application Consultations

No direct pre-application consultations have been held with Wrexham County Borough Council ahead of submitting this application.

Several positive discussions have been held with the immediate neighbours at 35 Hope Street and 4-6 Regent Street. As noted above both neighbours are currently converting their upper floors to residential use following successful planning applications.



- Extent of Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area
- Listed Building (Horse & Jockey Public House, Grade II)
- Building of Visual Interest / Important Townscape group
- Key view (as defined in Conservation Area Management Plan)

5.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

5.1 Design Strategies & Principles

The following strategies / principles have guided the submitted design proposals;

- To bring the long-term vacant upper floors back into use.
- To contribute to the ongoing rejuvenation of Wrexham Town Centre.
- To create high quality residential accommodation on the upper floors, without prejudicing the viability of the lower floors for continued retail use.
- To limit the impact on the external elevations of the 1875 building and the wider conservation area setting.
- To reuse the existing window locations - maximising the potential for natural light and ventilation to the new accommodation.
- To develop layouts that work with the layout of existing structural walls - limiting the interventions that are required to the original internal fabric of the building wherever possible.
- To work with the existing staircases and entrances - creating suitable safe layouts that work with the mixed use building and shared staircase approach.

5.2 Proposed Scope of Works

The following items form the proposed scope of works of the project, broken down on a floor by floor basis.

5.2.1 Ground Floor

- Replace existing external fire escape door with a new residential entrance door & canopy.
- Form new fire lobby within the existing retail unit to separate it from the stairs in line with Building Regulations.
- Renew existing staircase internally (install new handrails and general decoration).

5.2.2 First Floor

- Renew existing shared staircase from Ground floor (install new handrails and decoration).
- Relocate retail unit tea point into the corner of the store room.
- Open-up the existing staircase leading to the upper floors (by removing the partitions forming the existing teapoint) & redecorate.
- Form new fire lobbies to the Retail Storage and Retail WC areas.

5.2.3 Second Floor

- Upgrade the external envelope with a new insulated plasterboard lining to existing masonry walls.
- Upgrade the existing single glazed windows / replace where necessary with visually like for like equivalents.
- Form three no. apartments within the vacant areas as per the proposed layouts.
- Form 2 no. tenant stores off a new shared lobby area.
- Remove existing fire rated partitions around the staircase and open up and redecorate.

5.2.4. Third floor

- Upgrade external envelope with new insulated plasterboard lining to walls, including mansard walls to front and rear elevations and the dormers.
- Install a new ceiling with insulation above.
- Upgrade the existing single glazed windows / replace where necessary with visually like for like equivalents.
- Form three no. apartments within the vacant areas as per the proposed layouts.
- Form 2 no. tenant stores off a new shared lobby area.
- Redecorate the existing stairs.

5.3 Proposed Areas

Detailed area schedules, including a breakdown of the individual apartment areas are provided at the end of this report.

The key elements to note are the proposals will create a total of 200.9 sqm of net useable residential accommodation, across both the 2nd and 3rd floors.

A total of 285sqm of the current 531sqm building will be allocated to residential use including storage, dedicated circulation and residential party walls.

5.4 Impact on External Appearance

The proposals will have a minimal impact on the external appearance of the building. The works will not impact on the front facade facing Regent Street, or the original rear facade of the 1875 building. The original elevation facing into the archway will also be unaffected.

The only external manifestation of the proposals will be the replacement door and new entrance canopy off Argyle Street. These elements are located within the later single storey addition. Although modest the new entrance area will help to improve the appearance of the rear extension and provide a slightly more animated frontage than the current solid door.

Should the existing upper floor windows need upgrading / repairing a strategy of upgrading the existing frames, where feasible, will be adopted. Where this is not possible the windows will be replaced on a like for like basis with modern equivalents ie. timber framed windows with a white painted frames and opening types to match existing. New double glazing to both new and refurbished windows will be slim units with an appropriate colour of spacer bar.

5.5 Sustainability

The proposals will adopt a fabric-first approach to developing a sustainable scheme. To minimise any visual impact on the external appearance of the building this will include providing a new insulated lining to the inside face of the external walls and roof. In keeping with best practice for solid masonry walls a cavity void will be provided between the existing brickwork and the new internal insulation.

The existing single glazed sash windows will be upgraded to double glazing (or replaced with visually like for like modern alternatives where upgrading is not feasible) to improve their performance and help minimise excessive heat losses & gains. As above these will be slim units with an appropriate colour of spacer bar.

Natural lighting and ventilation, using the existing windows openings, will be promoted throughout.

Low-energy lighting and A+ Rating appliances will be used throughout the apartments, together with low flow sanitary fittings helping to minimise energy and water consumption.

While renewable energy sources have been considered the presence of solar panels on the roof of the original 1875 building is considered unsuitable due to their detrimental visual impact. The single storey flat roof which lies to the north of the main 4 storey building is significantly overshadowed for large periods of the day and is therefore unsuitable for solar panels.

Other potential renewable energy sources including biomass or a ground source heat pump are not viable in the context of the site.



The existing fire exit on Argyle Street will be used as the proposed entrance to the new apartments, and includes a new door and entrance canopy as illustrated above.

6.0 ACCESS

6.1 Access to Public Transport

The site is very well located to access key public transport services. These include;

- Wrexham Central (railway) Station, which is a 5 min / 400m walk from the building,
- Wrexham General (railway) Station, which is an 8 min / 650m walk from the building,
- The central bus station, which is a 3 min / 250m walk from the site.
- Taxi Ranks which are on available on Argyle Street.

6.2 Car Parking

There is no car parking, including accessible parking, proposed for the scheme. Short term on-street car parking is available close to the site on Egerton Street. Longer term car parking is available in the various car parks that surround the town centre.

The provision of 0 no. car parking spaces is in keeping with the recently approved applications for similar schemes at 35 Hope street and at 4-6 Regent Street.

6.3 Bike Parking

Given the constraints of the existing building, specifically the limited space available for residential use at both ground and first floor, bike parking spaces for residents are not proposed as part of the application.

While 4 secure tenant store will be available on the 2nd and 3rd floors as part of the proposals it is felt that carrying a bike up a minimum two floors is impractical. To this end, these storage spaces have not been allocated for cycle parking, although they could be used for that purpose at future residents’ discretion.

The provision of 0 no. cycle parking spaces is in keeping with the recently approved applications for similar schemes at 4-6 and 14-16 Regent Street.

6.4 Access into the building for future residents

Due to the nature of the historic building, lift access to the flats is not possible without significant amendments to the historic fabric of the building.

Access to the upper floors will therefore be via the retained existing internal stairs. This includes a stepped threshold at the external entrance to the building, off Argyle Street.

The apartment layouts have been designed to meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. This includes corridor and doorway widths and the design of sanitary facilities.

6.5 Waste Storage & Collection

The proposed bins for the residential units are to be located in the service yard behind the building. The yard already serves as the bin storage location for the retail unit at ground floor and the adjacent mixed use buildings at 4 - 6 Regent Street.

The yard is directly accessible from Argyle Street and well placed for collection by local refuse collectors.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed conversion of the upper floors will bring the currently vacant parts of the building back into use. This will help to maximise the potential of the building and provide a sustainable long term future for the non-designated heritage asset.

The proposed use of the upper floors as residential accommodation is a suitable use for the building and will help to contribute to improvements to the town centre, and contribute to local housing supply in line with the aims of the Town Centre Masterplan, and other local policies.

The design proposals have been developed to minimise the impact on the existing building, in particular its external elevations and the building’s contribution to the wider conservation area.

The building is in a highly sustainable location that will help to promote the use of walking and public transport and less dependancy on car travel.

The scheme is also in keeping with a number a similar approved applications for adjacent buildings.



Recently restored by AH2 Developments Burton House in Bangor provides 8 No. Studio Apartments across two upper floors of the local landmark building. A similar level of high quality internal finish is proposed for the Regent Street building.

EXISTING GENERAL AREA SCHEDULE

SQM	Total GIA	Retail				Vacant	Circulation			Party Walls
		Shop	Stores	Teapoint	WC's		Retail	Vacant	Shared	
Ground Floor	166.4	154.6	2.5	-	-	-	-	-	6.7	2.6
First Floor	94.2	-	46.7	8.0	8.0	-	-	2.8	21.3	7.4
Second Floor	135.2	-	-	-	-	105.9	-	15.5	-	13.8
Third Floor	135.2	-	-	-	-	106.0	-	17.8	-	11.4
GRAND TOTAL	531	154.6	49.2	8	8	211.9	0	36.1	28	35.2
SQFT	Total GIA	Retail				Vacant	Circulation			Party Walls
		Shop	Stores	Teapoint	WC's		Retail	Vacant	Shared	
Ground Floor	1,791	1,664	27	-	-	-	-	-	72	28
First Floor	1,014	-	503	86	86	-	-	30	229	80
Second Floor	1,455	-	-	-	-	1,140	-	167	-	149
Third Floor	1,455	-	-	-	-	1,141	-	192	-	123
GRAND TOTAL	5,716	1,664	530	86	86	2,281	0	389	301	379

Notes
7.7sqm of GIA less than 1500mm
7.7sqm of Total GIA less than 1500mm
Notes
83sqft of GIA less than 1500mm
83sqft of total GIA less than 1500mm

PROPOSED GENERAL AREA SCHEDULE

SQM	Total GIA	Retail				Residential		Circulation			Party Walls
		Shop	Stores	Teapoint	WC's	Apartments	Storage	Retail	Resi	Shared	
Ground Floor	166.4	152.3	2.5	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	6.7	2.6
First Floor	94.2	-	44.3	4.3	8.0	-	-	6.2	14.6	9.7	7.1
Second Floor	135.2	-	-	-	-	100.6	3.0	-	17.4	-	14.2
Third Floor	135.2	-	-	-	-	100.3	3.0	-	17.4	-	14.5
GRAND TOTAL	531	152.3	46.8	4.3	8	200.9	6	8.5	49.4	16.4	38.4
SQFT	Total GIA	Retail				Residential		Circulation			Party Walls
		Shop	Stores	Teapoint	WC's	Apartments	Storage	Retail	Resi	Shared	
Ground Floor	1,791	1,639	27	-	-	-	-	25	-	72	28
First Floor	1,014	-	477	46	86	-	-	67	157	104	76
Second Floor	1,455	-	-	-	-	1,083	32	-	187	-	153
Third Floor	1,455	-	-	-	-	1,080	32	-	187	-	156
GRAND TOTAL	5,716	1,639	504	46	86	2,162	65	91	532	177	413

Notes
7.7sqm of GIA less than 1500mm
7.7sqm of Total GIA less than 1500mm
Notes
83sqft of GIA less than 1500mm
83sqft of total GIA less than 1500mm

PROPOSED APARTMENT AREA SCHEDULE

SQM	Total GIA	Living / Kitchen	Bedroom	Shower room	Hallway	Storage	Other
Apartment 2A (1B / 1P)	40.5	18.8	12.3	3.4	3.9	0.9	1.2
Apartment 2B (1B / 1P)	37.4	14.5	11.3	3.3	5.9	1.3	1.1
Apartment 2C (Studio)	22.7	15.7	-	3.3	2.2	0.9	0.6
SUBTOTAL 2nd FLOOR	100.6						
Apartment 3A (1B / 1P)	40.5	18.8	12.3	3.4	3.9	0.9	1.2
Apartment 3B (1B / 1P)	37.1	14.2	11.3	3.3	5.9	1.3	1.1
Apartment 3C (Studio)	22.7	15.7	-	3.3	2.2	0.9	0.6
SUBTOTAL 3rd FLOOR	100.3						
GRAND TOTAL	200.9						
SQFT	Total GIA	Living / Kitchen	Bedroom	Shower room	Hallway	Storage	Other
Apartment 2A	436	202	132	37	42	10	13
Apartment 2B	403	156	122	36	64	14	12
Apartment 2C	244	169	-	36	24	10	6
SUBTOTAL 2nd FLOOR	1,083						
Apartment 3A	436	202	132	37	42	10	13
Apartment 3B	399	153	122	36	64	14	12
Apartment 3C	244	169	-	36	24	10	6
SUBTOTAL 3rd FLOOR	1,080						
GRAND TOTAL	2,162						

Notes
3.8sqm of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
1.2sqm of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
2.7sqm of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
7.7sqm of Subtotal GIA less than 1500mm
7.7sqm of Total GIA less than 1500mm
Notes
41sqft of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
13sqft of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
29qsft of GIA at less than 1500mm floor to ceiling height
83sqft of Subtotal GIA less than 1500mm
83sqft of total GIA less than 1500mm