

Bishops House - Porch

Diocese of Wrexham



Design & Access Statement inc. Heritage Impact



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INTRODUCTION

Bishops House and its associated office accommodation block currently act as both the current dwelling for the Bishop of the Diocese of Wrexham, the office/ working environment and archive of the Diocesan curial staff.

Site Location:

Bishops House
17 Sontley Road,
Wrexham
LL13 7EW

Lawray Architects were appointed to develop an architectural scheme which sought to improve the historic presence of the site and increase the efficiency of space for use by the curial staff on site for Diocese office duties. The application was approved, please refer to application P/2018/0950 for details. Retaining the historical and cultural significance of the existing Grade II listed Bishop's house is of much importance. As part of the ongoing improvement works, the side porch which is a 1990's addition to a later extension onto the original house, is proposed to be removed and replaced with a more appropriate design.

It is hoped that this application will gain the approval for the following items:

- **Removal of existing small porch to driveway elevation**
- **Proposed installation of new porch in place of previous**

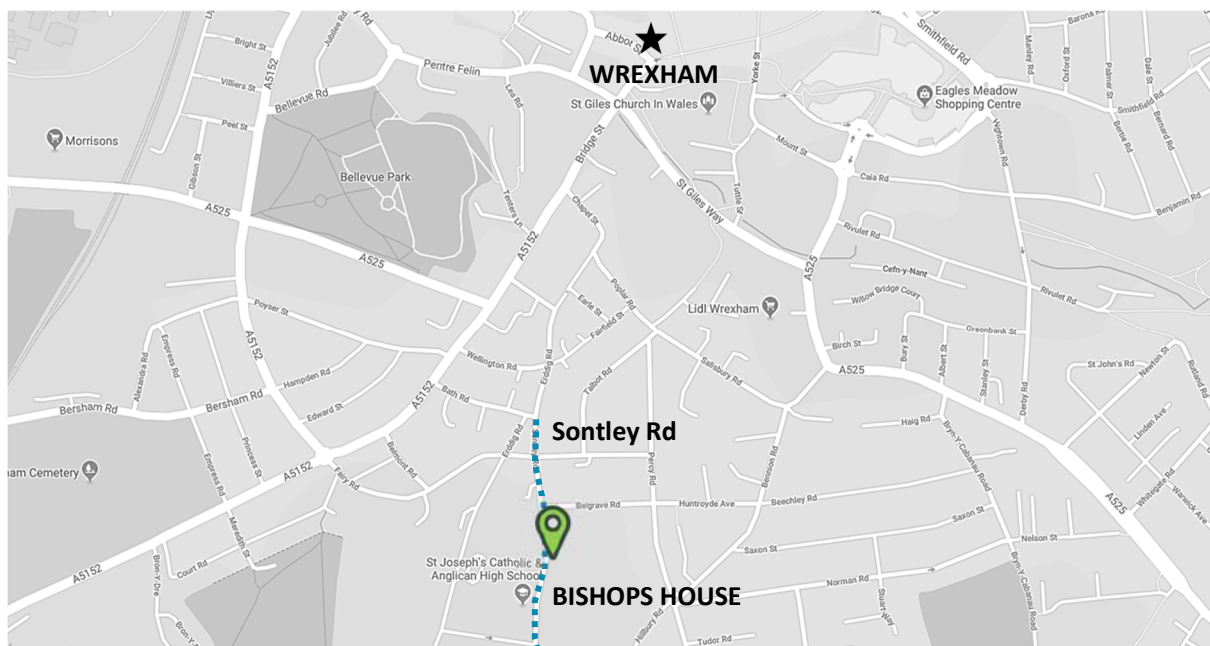
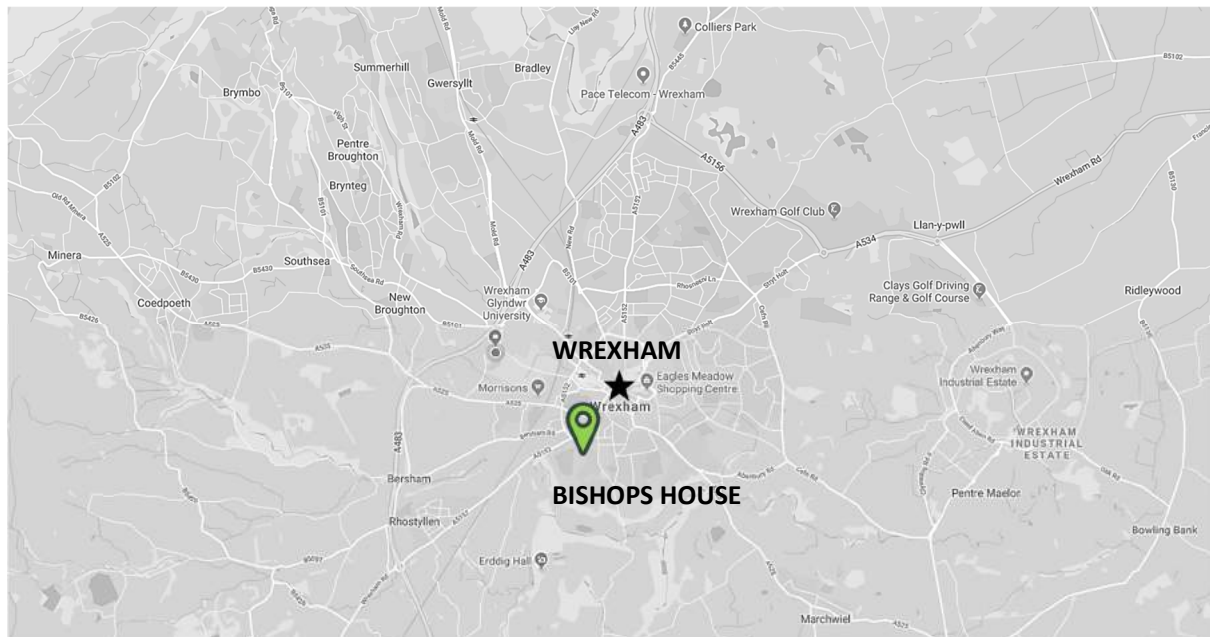
This document has been prepared to accompany a full planning application and listed building consent for the above-proposed works to Bishops House. It is a comprehensive document that aims to provide a written and illustrated commentary when reading in conjunction with the associated design drawings.

EXISTING

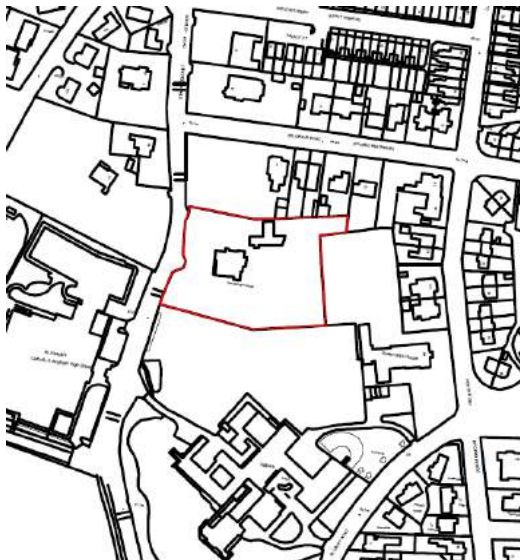
Location

The existing site and buildings are located to the south of Wrexham town centre, directly off Sontley Road, a minor route that heads to and from the town centre.

There are good and direct road links to Chester to the North, Oswestry to the South and Whitchurch to the East. The area is also serviced by a 2no. train stations operating Transport for Wales, the main station Wrexham general and the town centre station, Wrexham Central. These lines connect Wrexham to Chester and Liverpool in the North, as well as the other border town and villages, and also Shrewsbury, to the south.



Existing Site

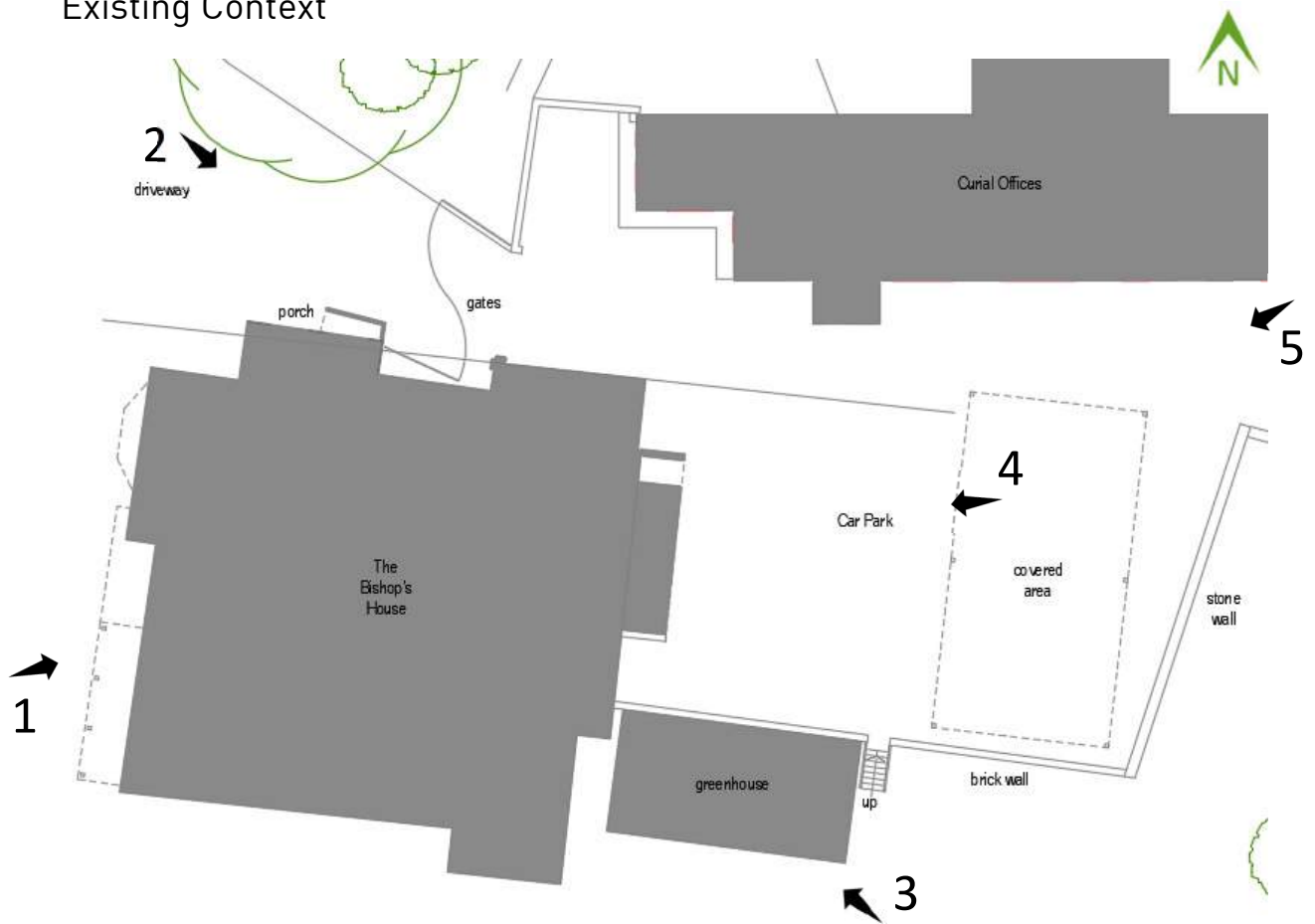


The Diocese of Wrexham currently has ownership of all the areas of the site outlined.

Site Boundary



Existing Context



2



3



4



5



History

The house known by many as Bishop's House or Ty'r Esgob in Sontley Road, Wrexham was purchased in 1926, by the then Roman Catholic Diocese of Menevia, as a home for its new bishop, Francis John Vaughan. Succeeding bishops of Menevia and Wrexham have occupied it ever since. Currently, it is the home of Bishop Peter Brignall and the hub of the diocesan curial staff.

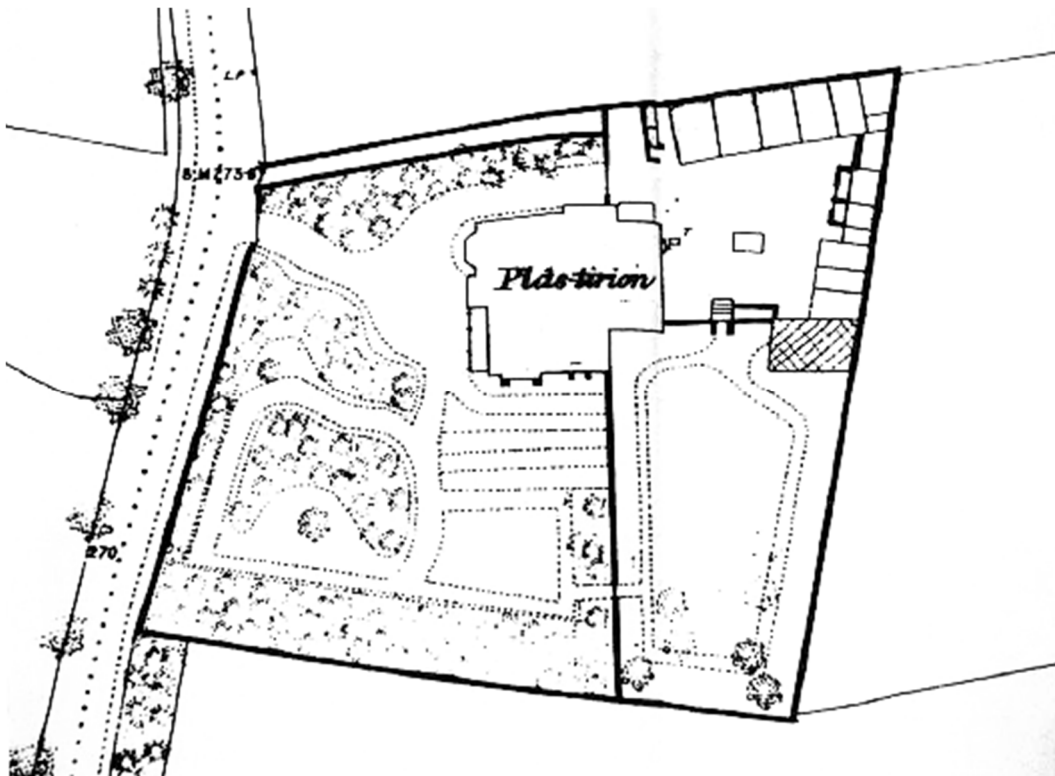


Known originally as Plas Tirion [Gentle Mansion], the house is a Grade II listed building, built as a single dwelling house in the Anglo-Italian style of brick with stone dressings and a slate roof. It is square in plan. Over the years, as well as being home to eight bishops, others who have lived in the house have included an army major, a book publisher and a wine merchant.

The house was built in 1865 on about four acres of land. Until then, it comprised two fields, given over to hay and to pasture.

The house was designed by James Reynolds Gummow. He came from a family of architects, responsible for many buildings in the town. The son of Michael Gummow, Wrexham's first borough surveyor, and Sarah, his wife, he was born on 24th January 1826. James designed several villas on Grosvenor Road as well as on Sontley Road at about the same time as Plas Tirion.

At this time, Wrexham was developing and expanding in a variety of ways. Entrepreneurs, especially from over the border in England, were attracted to Wrexham to work the rich mineral deposits found in the outlying areas of the town. The coming of the railway reached markets beyond Chester to the north and beyond Shrewsbury to the south. This gave rise to numerous job opportunities, increasing the prosperity of the town and district.



The house and grounds have seen various changes & conversions over the years, including the conversion of a historic coach house outbuilding into the current office block. As new owners have come in and changed the grounds as they see fit, the rear ancillary accommodation has changed.

There are numerous deeds and site plans outlining and identifying the house and its subservient outbuildings, usually listed as a dwelling house with 'the yards, gardens, stables, outbuildings, conservatory and appurtenance.

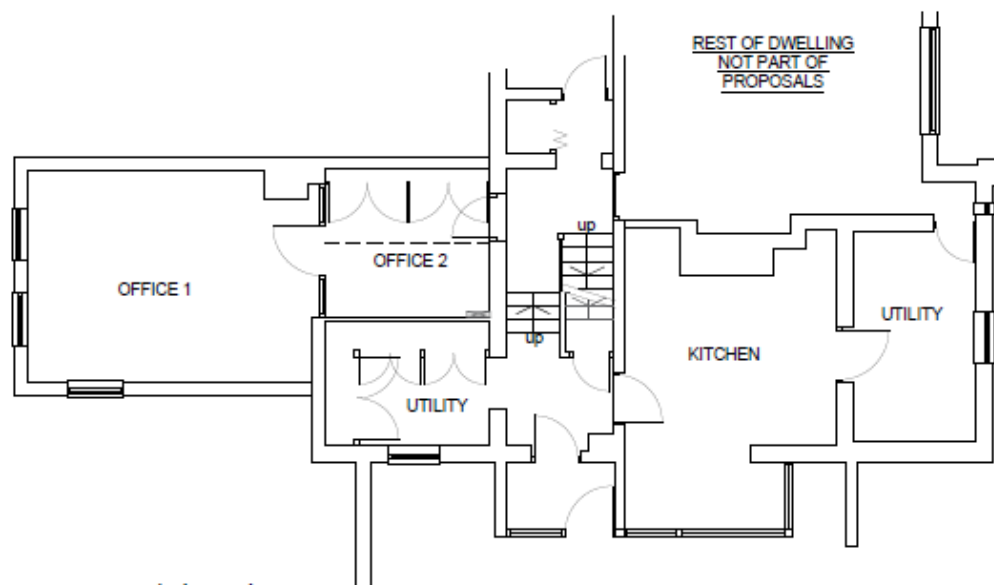
~~BEET~~ ALL THAT messuage or dwellinghouse with the yards gardens stables outbuildings conservatory and appurtenances thereunto belonging called "Plastirion" situate in Sontley Road in the Borough of Wrexham in the Coy. of Denbigh

2nd 11th 20th the consideration aforesaid the mortgagee as Beneficial Owner hereby conveys unto the mortgagee All that messuage or dwellinghouse with the yards garden stables outbuildings conservatory and appurtenances thereunto belonging called Plastirion situate in Sontley Road in the Borough of Wrexham in the County of Denbigh late in the occupation of the said Charles Malet to hold unto and to the use of

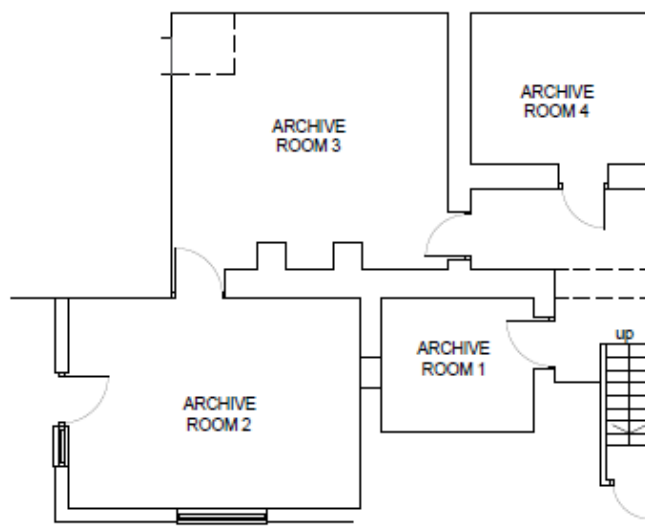
Existing Plans & Elevations

The existing grade 2 listed building is designed in the Anglo-Italian style, it is a two-storey brick-built building, with stone dressings and a slate roof. It has a three-window range and a short service wing to the rear.

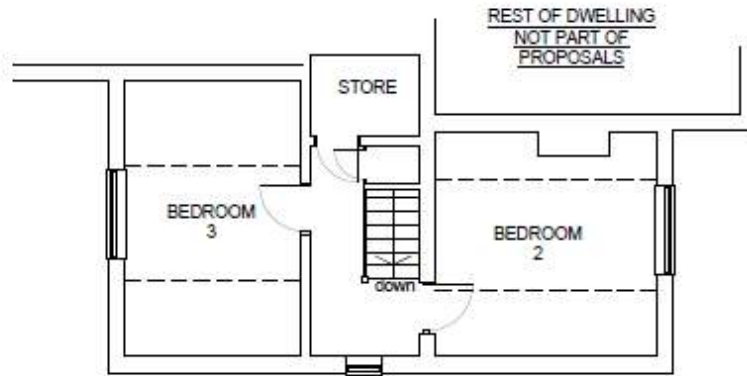
The interior of the house retains much of its original plan, with a central top-lit stair hall, separated from the entrance hall by a panelled archway. There is also an eighteenth-century style stair, with moulded tread ends and a swept rail. Some of the original joinery including the fireplace surrounds and plasterwork also survive.



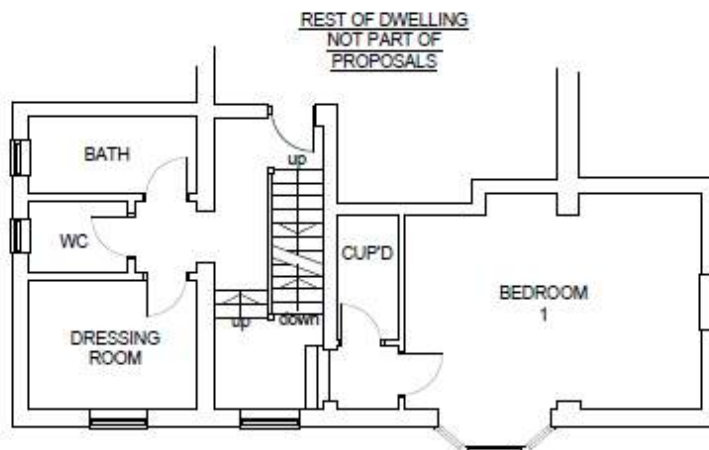
Ground Floor Plan



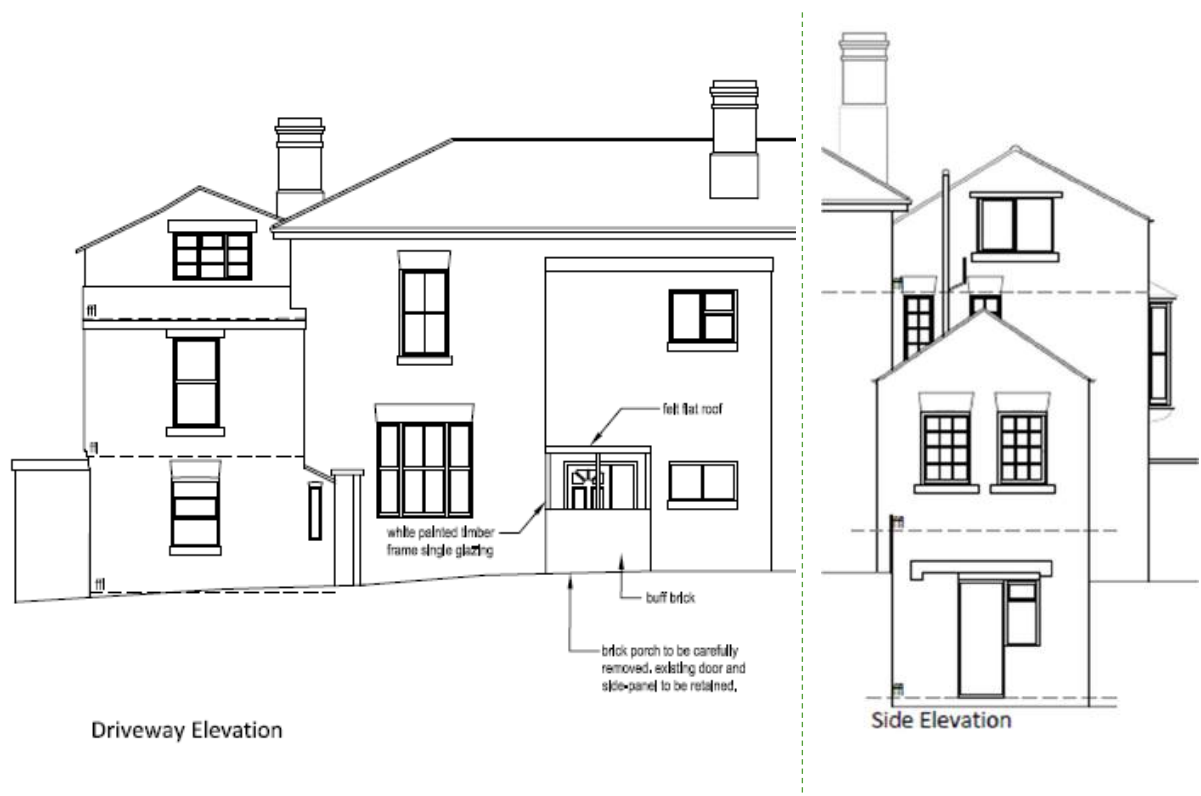
Basement Plan



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



DESIGN INTENT

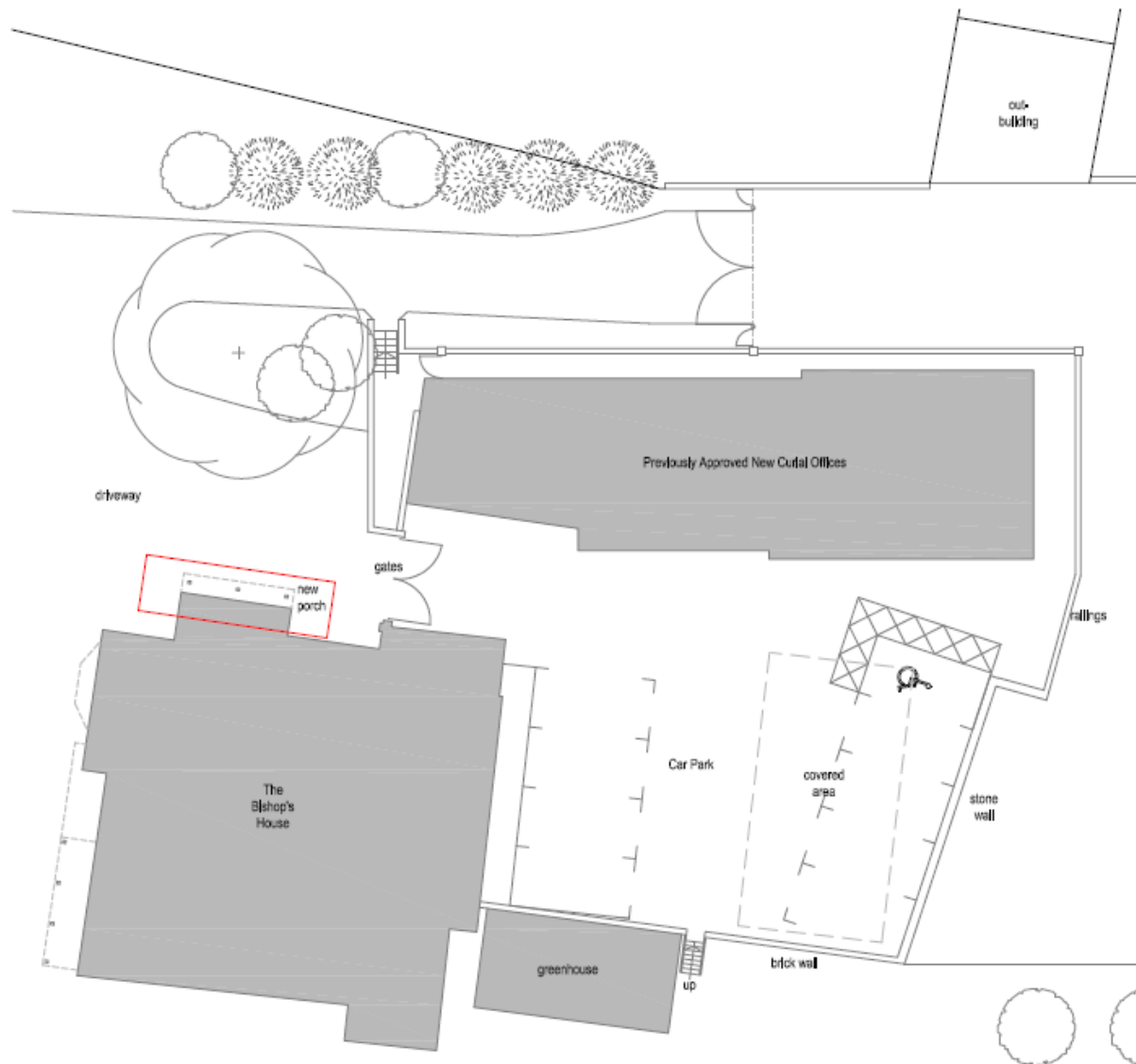
A design brief, created through continuous and comprehensive discussions between the Diocese of Wrexham and Lawray Architects, has guided and led the development of the proposals resulting in the final designs being submitted with this application and the previously approved scheme. Anna Irwin from the Wrexham Council Conservation Dept had also been consulted at various points along the design cycle, in order to ensure that the proposed scheme achieved not only the ambitions of the client but also the informed suggestions and policies of the local council.

This application seeks to gain approval for the porch's removal and replacement, in order to:

- 1. To improve the appearance of the driveway elevation.**
- 2. To allow the driveway elevation, which is the house's first elevation seen on the approach and therefore provides a first impression, to reflect the original architect's design more coherently**

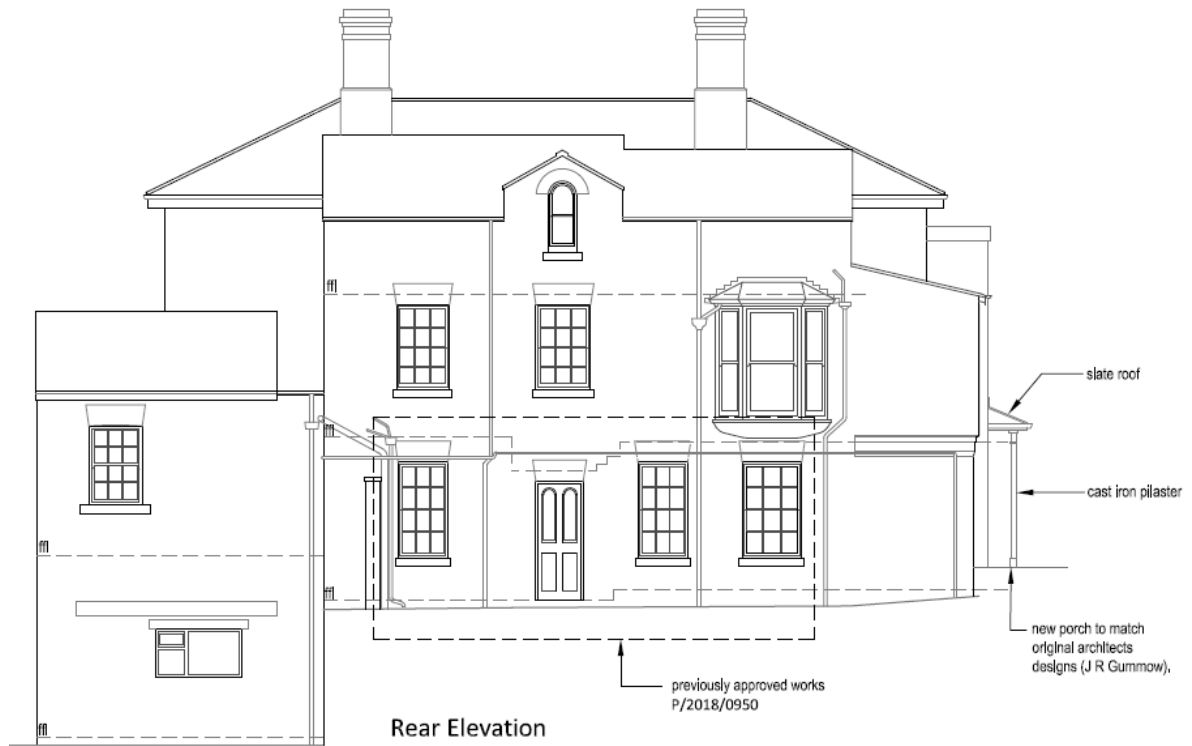
PROPOSALS

Proposed Plans



Proposed Site Plan
Scale 1:200

Proposed elevations



Materials

Materials have been chosen to reflect the original designs by J R Gummow, to fit with the traditional style and to appear more suitable in context with the Bishop's House.

Timber Roof Cheeks



Slate Roof Tiles



Cast Iron Pilasters



Porch at 2 Grosvenor Road, Wrexham, by J R Gummow

Access

Both vehicular and pedestrian entry onto the site is currently from two existing points off Sontley Road. They serve to provide separate access and egress points for cars and other vehicles. Both lead to and from the rear car park which is accessed through a set of gates, where a carport and limited parking is currently provided.



Two points of access onto the site and parking courtyard to rear, adjacent to existing office block. .

HERITAGE IMPACT

The existing Bishop's House dwelling is currently a Grade II listed historic structure, with the site also within a conservation area.

The blue areas below represent the Wrexham CBC Fairy Road conservation area, which includes an additional 4.no listed properties, although none of these are within an area of influence to the application site. As such, any changes made to Bishop's House would not directly affect the character or nature of these other listed structures, but an assessment would have to be made as to the impact on the character of the conservation area.



Bishops House

Bishops House, designed by J. R. Gummow for Thomas Williams, built in 1865 and formerly known as Plas Tirion, was designated in January of 1994. It was accepted on the grounds that it presented itself as a good example of work by the local architect. The listing below describes in detail some of the main features of the dwelling.

Exterior

Brick with stone dressings and slate roof. 2 storeys, square in plan, with 3-window entrance range, and a short service wing to rear. Anglo-Italian style. Central entrance, and advanced gable to the left. Stone porch with outer rusticated pilasters, coupled with panelled pilasters with foliate capitals. Modillion cornice to entablature which carries cast iron balcony rail. Round-arched entrance door within. Adjoining the porch, a canopy carried on ornate cast iron columns continues across the lower window of the right-hand bay. Stone canted bay window in gable to left of the entrance, with segmentally arched central light, and blind panels above transom of side lights. Upper windows renewed in round-arched openings set beneath steeply arched hood-moulds. Cornice forms open pediment in the left-hand gable, and in smaller dormer gable to right.

Garden front: 2 window range, with a tripartite canted bay window with renewed French doors to left, and French doors also renewed in the original opening to right. Stone swags and capitals to central pilasters of the bay window, which has rusticated outer pilasters. Heavy stone brackets carry entablature which forms balconette with cast iron rail above the right-hand window. Upper windows both round-arched, set beneath steep hood-moulds. Double cornice as sill band to these upper windows, and deep bracketed cornice to projecting eaves. Central stack with moulded stone cap, the chimney on the right-hand gable wall truncated.



It is interesting to note that some of the later extensions to the dwelling, such as the rear service quarters (above, RHS gabled) and the existing office outbuilding, are either barely mentioned or not described within the listing at all.

Assessment of Heritage Impact

As has been detailed previously within this document, the proposed removal of existing porch and proposal to replace with a more suitable design seek only to strengthen the historic character of the building, as well as allowing for a better aspect of the building on arrival to the offices. It is felt that due to the more contemporary aesthetic of the extension, it will not have a detrimental impact to the listed building, the site or of the wider conservation area.

The porch is onto an extension which was added at a later date to Bishop's house. The porch itself was added even later. It could, therefore, be stated that as it was not part of the original dwelling; a later addition, then it is in some ways a detrimental feature to the original listed building. Indeed, it does not even appear that it is mentioned on the actual listing description.

We have designed the porch to extend the full length of the extension, rather than mimic the footprint of the original. This visually disguises the modern window adjacent to the doorway, whilst using classical proportions and traditional architectural style and symmetry. This will ensure that any visual impact to the grade II listed house is mitigated, in so far as a near like for like structure to what would have originally been proposed, has been provided. To further strengthen the design commitment towards avoiding any consequential impact that a new porch might have, we have liaised with an LA conservation officer, Anna Irwin, who has helped our development process to ensure that a design is created that will ensure that not only are the client's aspirations achieved but the conservation impact is kept to an absolute minimum.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this document, alongside the developed design drawings and other supporting documentation, has provided a comprehensive and robust package of information, which outlines and explains the overall project brief, development strategies and the final design that is being submitted for approval.

It is felt that the proposals are complimentary of both the existing building and the local area, having been carefully designed with consideration given to the existing massing, scale, material and aesthetic of Bishops House. The proposals should have no adverse impact to the character of the existing listed building or the conservation area and will only help to preserve and strengthen the heritage of one of the best examples of historic architecture in the mid-19th Century by James Gummow, a local architect of Wrexham.