

Blueprint Architectural Services Ltd

Redwither Business Tower, Redwither Business Park, Wrexham. LL13 9XT

Tel: 01978 356500

design@blueprintarchitectural.com

www.blueprintarchitectural.com

Heritage Impact Statement



Statement prepared for:

Mr Mark Jones
10 Daisy Road
Brynteg
Wrexham
LL13 8LU

Statement required for:

Proposed alterations and change of use of 1-3, College Street, Wrexham, LL13 8LU to form 7no residential apartments.

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Explaining Objectives

The objective of this proposal is to convert the existing structure to form 7 no. apartments within the town centre.

The application site is located within the Town of Wrexham, formally within the larger County of Clwyd. Our site is situated within Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, within this designated area there are several listed buildings present.

The existing structure appears to be in a good state of repair but does require some modernisation. Due to its presence on the street scene the building adds hugely to the characteristics of the area, the intention is to sympathetically convert this existing structure to bring large parts unit that are currently unoccupied back into use, bringing life back to the town centre.

This Heritage Impact Assessment is to accompany a full planning application for the conversion and is to be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement.

Understanding Significance

Wrexham town centre conservation area was initially designated back March 1974, the area has been extended over the course of many years and most recently in April 2007. The conservation area encompasses an historic market town with a character largely dominated by 18th and 19th century architecture of the Georgian and Victorian periods.

St Giles Church is the focal point in which the town has been developed, surrounding this medieval structure most buildings are 3 storeys' in height giving the area real scale.

In the 12th Century The Princes of Powys conquered the area, created stability and allowed the town to develop as a trading town, by 1391 the town traded further afield almost half of the population were immigrants attracted by the booming woollen and leather industries. It was the 18th and 19th century where Wrexham became central to the economy of North Wales with its markets and fairs.

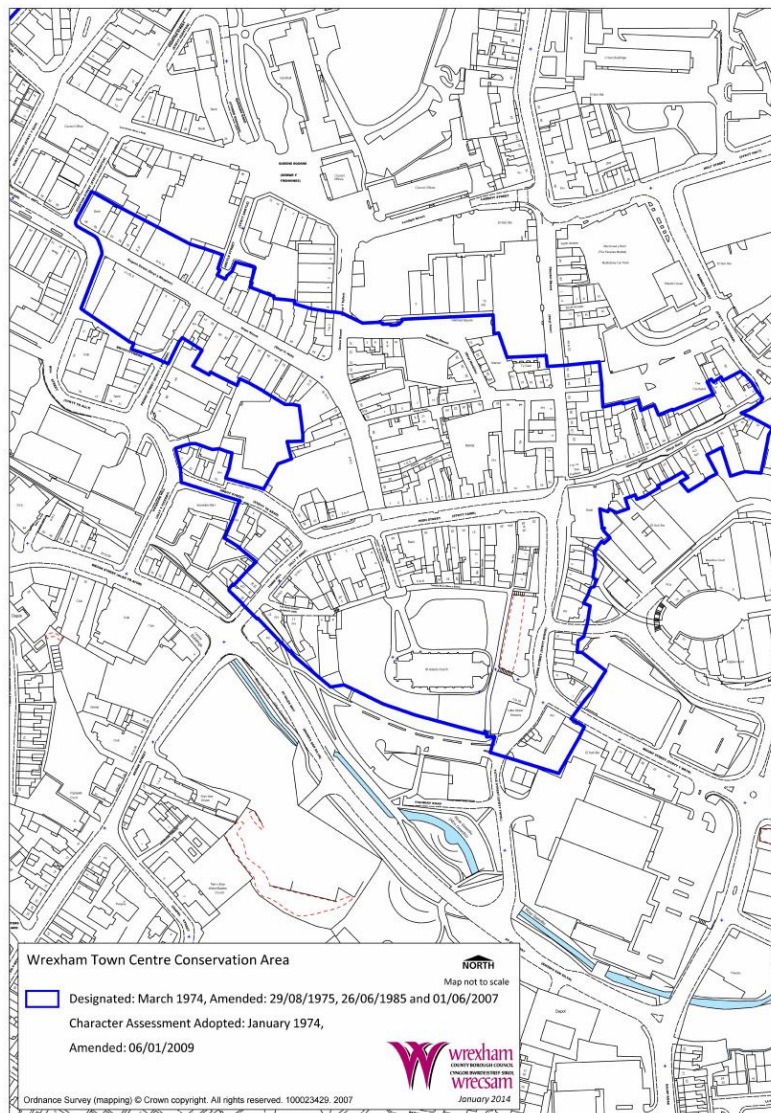
Purpose built market courts were built in the late 18th century attracting cloth dealers, hardware dealers and farmers to the town, Wrexham's traditional workshop industries began in the 18th century, brewing, skinning tanning and blacksmithing expanded rapidly during the 19th century.

The 19th century was dominated by the brewing industry in the town, by the 1860s there were 19 local breweries all using copious supplies of water from underground sources and the River Gwenfro on whose banks the breweries were situated.

Brewing remained one of Wrexham's main industries in the 20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s Wrexham was sent into an economic depression following the tearing up of branch lines connecting

the Town to Minera and lines that served the Brymbo Steelworks site, further difficulties lay ahead for the brewing sector in the Town, changing tastes and rationalisation the closure of the 2 largest breweries occurred in 1984 and 2000.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Local Authority and Welsh Development Agency partnered to intervene and improve Wrexham's situation. Funding was given to improve Shop frontages through improvement grants, factories were given grants through Environmental Improvement Grants, boosting the areas employment prospects. These grants were able to fund projects such as the A483 providing better links to the City of Chester and Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Manchester.



1.0 Map of Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area

The 21st century has proven to be a difficult period in the Town Centres history. Following the construction of Eagles Meadow which saw significant investment in a mixed use development a rapid decline in unoccupied shops within the town centre occurred. Although many UK towns have

seen a decline over the last 10 years, Wrexham's has been devastating, with the development of Eagles Meadow seen by many as taking the heart out of the town.

As with the 1970s and 1980s the Local Authority are working with the business community to once again revive and regenerate this prosperous Market Town, the occupation of the former British Homes Store is seen as a major step forward in the draw for businesses coming back to the town centre.

The area surrounding our application site is a significant part of the Conservation area of Wrexham Town Centre, several listed buildings are within the vicinity such as;

The Cambrian Vaults Public – Reason for Designation: *Group value with The Commercial Public House.* (Cadw, 2020).

The Commercial Public House – Reason for Designation: *A good example of a town public house of C1820. Group value with The Cambrian Public House.* (Cadw, 2020).

Located directly opposite 1-3 Collage Street the commercial public house has recently undergone conversion to form 5no apartments. Our initial task for this building was to maximize the potential of the first and second floors while retaining the ground floor as a public house. Unfortunately, due to a downturn in custom and the properties location in terms of the main night-time scene in the town the decision was made to convert the ground floor to 2:no apartments.

This conversion has not directly impacted on the structures façade or its prominence to the vicinity, careful consideration was taken when developing a design to ensure the aesthetics and character of the building was retained.

College Street has plenty of character. The Welsh name though has even more: Camfa'r Cwn meaning the Dog's Stile. Presumably this was a stile to keep the dogs out of the churchyard rather than let them in. The street has seen all sorts in its time: the first Wesleyan Methodist preacher to preach in the town did so in Hughes' Yard, just off this street; while for many years College Street housed a bordel and a pawn shop used by the needy to get them through the week till pay day. (Wrexham.Gov.Uk, 2020)

The Cambrian Vaults Public house has recently been refurbished and been renamed the Parish, taking its name from the nearby grade I listed building St Giles Parish Church. Again in cohesion with the Local Authority the refurbishments and renaming have been done sympathetically to this important structure in the vicinity, the key to refurbishment in a conservation area is to respect the conservation area the building resides, this has been done perfectly at the Parish.



2.0 Properties on or around College Street

College street provides direct access to St Giles Parish Church, via the temple row development which fronts the Church itself. Listed in May 1951 this medieval structure has a dominating prominence on the Town on an elevated parcel of land. The west tower now dominates the sky line following recent demolition of the former Police Station located on the northern tip of the centre.

Parish church, externally principally dating from the late C15, built in several phases culminating in the building of the tower, c1506-1520. Interior incorporates elements of a C14 church, including the arcades. The church was the subject of a series of restorations during the C19 and C20: the first of these was in 1867 to plans of Benjamin Ferrey; further restorations followed in 1894 and again in 1903-4, by HA Prothero. (Cadw, 2020)

Identifying proposed changes including assessing the impact and reasoning

The medieval street pattern and network of pathways and alleyways are key factors in the conservation area understanding the historic origins of the town. The conversion we are proposing won't alter this network and pattern with the built form unharmed as part of the conversion, in essence the development will reignite the area, rejuvenating large parts of this building bringing it back to life.

Much harm is caused to the quality of the streetscape by the positioning of signage, and the poor maintenance of street furniture as well as the frontage of buildings being poorly maintained. The intention to convert this building will ensure the unit is enhanced and maintained, any deteriorated sections of timbers or windows will be replaced on a like for like basis to retain the characteristics of the building.

As noted on the photograph below to ensure the building retains its heritage, the frontages are to be repaired and retained as part of the conversion, as can be seen surrounds are evident on the unit frontages these illustrate their once separate usages as small individual business/commercial lets.



3.0 Shop frontages to be retained.

As with all town centre developments, refuse storage areas are of big concern and impact developments and the character of an area. The simplicity of an allocated area for bin storage will eliminate this concern and ensure that the proposal enhances the vicinity.

Due to the topography of the site, the site naturally climbs the street with stepped floors between the units 1-3 College Street. The steps between units at ground floor will be removed due to reintroducing the units as separate properties as they once were historically.

At first floor the floor areas will be split conveniently to provide standalone residential units with steps within the 2 bedroomed first floor apartment which compensates for the topography of the ground across the ground floor level.

Structural changes to the building as part of the conversion is kept to a minimum, retaining existing staircases which currently serve the first and second floor. All internal partitioning is to be completed in stud work to retain the form of the superstructure. Avoiding the installation of suspended ceilings for fire it is our intention to install Envirograph underfloor fire barrier.

This is to be installed by lifting the existing floorboards to be lifted to allow for new fire/sound prevention materials as per sound proofing details. Envirograf under floor fire barrier UF60, approximately 5mm thick, to be layed on top of existing ceiling. Allow for 50mm up each side of existing joists. Fire Barrier to be fixed with fixing washers at 300mm centres and overlap by 50mm. 40mm thick Envirograf acoustic fire-resistant insulation sponge laid over fire barrier between joists. Floorboards to relayed after new sound prevention materials are installed, this method of prevention of sound transfer between floors will retain the characteristics of the building.

Policies

Policy PS2

Policy PS2 Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.

Policy EC7

Within, and in close proximity to, conservation areas, the priority will be to preserve and/ or enhance those buildings, structures, streets, trees, open spaces, archaeological remains, views, and other elements which contribute to the unique character of the area. New buildings and alterations or additions to existing buildings in conservation areas, whether listed as of special architectural or historic interest or not, must reflect the design and character of the area as a whole and the form, scale, detailing and materials of existing buildings.

Policy EC9

Policy EC9 Alterations or additions to, and development or redevelopment within the curtilage of, buildings or structures listed as of special architectural or historic interest must respect the setting and character of the listed buildings or structures.

Conclusion

The heritage assets have been properly identified and the significance of the assets and their setting. The proposed development has been developed to ensure there is a minimal impact on the assets.

Within Wrexham's policy framework, it should be noted paragraph 5:9;

The centres of historic settlements often possess visual charm, architectural unity, interesting social and economic histories, and a sense of place, which are of considerable importance to local inhabitants and visitors alike. The County Borough contains twenty two conservation areas, designated to preserve and enhance their special architectural or historic character. Within conservation areas, development should ensure design compatibility, and should respect the various elements which give them their unique character (e.g. the mix and grouping of buildings, variety of spaces, movement routes, materials, architectural detailing, patterns of land use, landscaping, etc.). It is essential that any development within conservation areas is designed to respect the character of the area as a whole, and inappropriate or unsympathetically designed development will be resisted.

The proposed works will enhance a largely unkept building, within the setting of a listed building being The Commercial Public House. Similar in character to The Commercial, the architectural features are to be retained, repaired, and made good as part of the proposal put forward.

It is a clear a decline in town centre footfall is evident and has been over the course of 10 or more years since the recession back in 2007. Due to the location of the existing units their retention is not seen as key to the longevity of the high street in its retail/commercial form.

Ensuring the building has a clear future within this important area will assist with its enhancement and maintenance improving of the streetscope of this conservation area.

The scale, aesthetics, positioning, and layout of the site has all been developed to ensure the development enhances the features of the conservation area. It is a vital aspect of the application to ensure we are improving the site and the conservation area.

Document prepared by:

Dafydd Edwards ACIOB
Senior Architectural Technician
On behalf of Blueprint Architectural Services Ltd

References

Cadw. (2020). *Listed Buildings* . Cadw.

Wrexham.Gov.Uk. (2020). *Wrexham Town Walk* . WCBC.