

Planning Application Reference P/2020/0672. 4-6 Regent Street, Wrexham LL11 1SA

Comments on behalf of Wrexham Area Civic Society

Wrexham Area Civic Society has a range of reservations concerning this application.

The façade of the upper floors is a welcome survivor but the decision to allow the ground floor extension was a poor one. The Conservation Area was extended to include this property after the ground floor extension was approved, and now any proposal should be judged against a higher standard. There is an opportunity now to create good townscape by taking the whole frontage back to the original building line.

The design and access statement fails to mention sustainability, and the large area of proposed flat roofing over the residential use could not be considered sustainable. Visually, the flat roof fails to tie in successfully with the adjacent Argyle Street archway feature, and undermines the proposed façade design.

The Civic Society recognises the need to provide affordable accommodation, but a balance needs to be struck and ambition shown to bring larger apartments to the town centre to introduce a mixed and vibrant community.

Restoration of the original line would set a good precedent for any future developments in the vicinity and secure the renovation of a very attractive Victorian façade. The muddled design statement, though, shows a lack of clarity by the applicant on what the components of the proposed façade should be.

It is stated in 3.3 that “The concrete and sandstone lintels, sills, columns and bands of the front elevation at first and second floor levels are particularly friable and in extremely poor condition and beyond the point of economical repair” . The structural survey does not say this.

3.4 states that “At the same time, the removal of internal chimney breasting and the construction of lateral internal walls will reduce the loading on the existing structural steelwork and provide the opportunity to tie the existing façade in to the main body of the building and retain it as an internal detail”. There is no information as to how this is to be done or how it will appear.

3.4 states the intention to “ introduce similar but simpler detailing to the front elevation in order to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the building”. This intention is repeated inconsistently in further statements:

4.8 “The proposed development ... will include the provision of a new façade which will be detailed to match the existing, defective elements of the existing front elevation”

5.6 “As outlined above, the principal external elevation of the building which has a direct impact upon the street scene will be replaced with a modern construction which will include traditional detailing in order to replicate the existing design detailing. As such the outward appearance of the building will be enhanced”

The proposed façade, though has a taint of pastiche and fails noticeably to include a number of those strong features of the existing design which give it such a distinctive character and appearance. Particular omissions are: dentils below the cornice and upper windows; hoodmoulds over top floor windows; mouldings on lintels and architraves; balustrades & aprons below lower windows (thus altering proportions of these windows).

If negotiations to improve the submission, and design statement, fail then the council should refuse the application as not preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.