

Planning Supporting Statement

SL/P20020/PSS

**Royal Mail Wrexham Delivery Office,
94 Regent Street,
Wrexham,
LL11 1AA**

Demolition of standalone storage building, sorting office, car wash and refueling area, erection of extension to main building, reconfiguration of parking to improve safety and movement around the site, and consent to display 'Royal Mail' signage on the front elevation of the extension.

Revision			
N°	DESCRIPTION	DATE	AUTHOR / CHECK
P1	DRAFT ISSUE TO PLANNING CONSULTANT	24.08.20	KS/AR
P2	DRAFT ISSUE PRIOR TO PLANNING SUBMISSION	03.09.20	KS/AR
P3	UPDATED FOR PLANNING ISSUE	08.08.20	KS/AR

Contents

1.0	Summary of the Proposal	03
2.0	The Brief and Vision	03
3.0	Site and Context Analysis	03
3.1	Site Analysis	03
3.2	Opportunities and Constraints	06
3.3	Planning History	06
3.4	Relevant Planning Policy	07
4.0	Interpretation and Design Development	07
5.0	The Proposal	08
5.1	Overview	08
5.2	Character	09
5.3	Access	10
5.4	Movement	10
5.5	Environmental Sustainability	11
5.6	Community Safety	11
5.7	Response to Planning Policy	11

1.0 Summary of the Proposal

This full planning application is for the alterations to the Royal Mail Delivery Office site at 94 Regent Street, Wrexham. The proposals include:

- The demolition of a standalone workshop / storage building (approx. 108m²), a standalone sorting hall (approx. 434m²) and a standalone car wash and refuelling area (approx. 6m² of building and associated hardstanding area),
- The erection of a 475m² extension to the main building to simplify operations,
- Reconfiguration of the car parking to simplify movement around the site, improve safety and increase the number of parking spaces from 69 to 73 and a disabled parking space for customer use,
- Display 'Royal Mail' signage on the primary south west facing elevation of the new extension.

Wrexham is a large town and located approximately 6km west of the border with England and about 20km south west of Chester. The site is located approximately 1km north west of the town centre of Wrexham, on one of the arterial routes connecting Wrexham to the A483. Although the application does not require a design and access statement, as it is not classed as a major development and is not in a conservation area, we include this supporting statement to give an overview of the design development.

2.0 The Brief and Vision

The brief is to simplify operations by demolishing standalone buildings and building an extension to the main building to improve efficiencies. Not only do the separate buildings affect operations, they are in need of significant investment to improve their condition. The proposals will help to tidy the site up from a series of disparate buildings with haphazardly arranged parking, to a sensibly and ordered arrangement, which helps to improve safety by reducing the number of pedestrians moving between the buildings.

3.0 Site and Context Analysis

3.1 SITE ANALYSIS

The site is identified as being 'Commercial Offices – E7' in the Wrexham Town Centre map and Character Area 5 'Mixed Non-Residential' in the Town Character Map. The existing building is classed as B8 Storage or distribution. The site is bounded by Regent Street to the south west, Station Approach and the Station Car Park to the north west, Wrexham District Scouts to the north and residential properties to the east.

Vehicular and pedestrian access is off Regent Street and all boundaries are metal palisade security fencing. The site itself is approximately 3-3.5m lower than Regent Street. As you enter the site the access road slopes down adjacent to Regent Street, with the majority of the site then being level. The site is on the edge of Grosvenor Road Conservation Area, but not within the boundary of the conservation area.

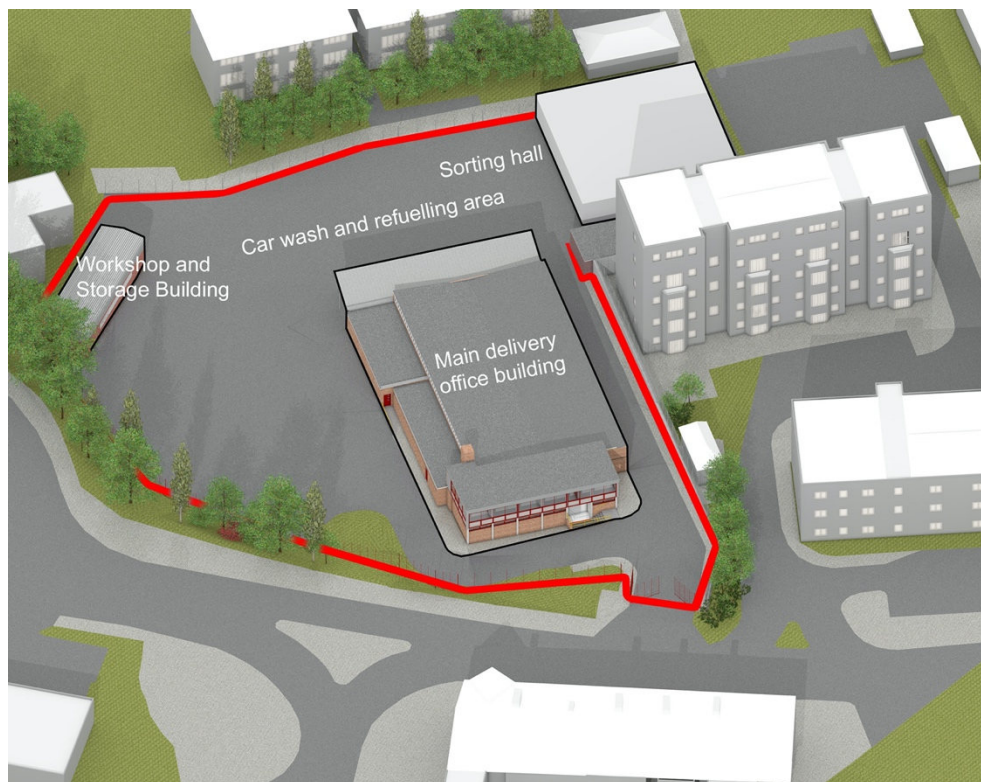


Map of the site in relation to Wrexham town centre, arterial routes and transport hubs



Zoning map of the site and the surrounding land uses with key pedestrian routes between transport hubs and the site identified.

The existing site is made up of three separate buildings, the main building contains the sorting office and is located in the centre of the site. The secondary building, which contains the sorting hall and is the 'outward building', is positioned in the eastern corner of the site adjacent to the residential properties abutting the site. The third building was a workshop and is used for storage and is positioned on the boundary with Wrexham District Scouts. There is also a small building and storage area for fuel, with an area for vehicle washing on the north eastern boundary adjacent to the footpath.



Bird's eye view of the existing layout.

The current car parking layout around the building is a haphazard arrangement, providing 69 car parking spaces. The car parking provision is operational parking, providing space to safely and securely park the fleet of Royal Mail vans when they are not in use.

3.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Following a review of the site analysis the site presents us with several opportunities and constraints to inform the design development.

Opportunities

- The site is currently a disparate collection of unordered buildings and haphazardly organised parking. Reconfiguring and streamlining the existing uses into one building will help to improve working efficiencies and safety across the site, as pedestrians and delivery vans will no longer need to cross one another.
- Reconfiguring the parking and buildings will help to make parking and manoeuvring vehicles, small and large delivery vans, much easier and therefore make the car parking area safer to use for both drivers and pedestrians.
- Tidy up the site and make the buildings more presentable to the wider public and street scene.
- The site is bounded by residential properties to the East and there are currently buildings built close up to the boundary with these properties. There will be no impact upon loss of privacy or overlooking for the surrounding residential properties, in fact this could present an opportunity to move built form away from the residential units.

Constraints

- The site is quite tight and will be in use throughout the works therefore requires a phased approach to working. This will guide how the site will be developed to ensure that operations can continue uninterrupted.
- The site level is approximately 3-3.5m lower than the road level. The existing access and exit ramps will need to be maintained.
- Existing trees on the boundary with Regent Street soften the streetscape, contribute to biodiversity and partially screen views into the site. They are a valuable asset to the site and should be retained.
- The site is on the boundary of the Grosvenor Road Conservation Area, but not inside the conservation area boundary. Proposals will need to ensure that they give consideration to the setting of the Conservation Area and do not have any adverse impact upon it.

3.3 PLANNING HISTORY

Planning Reference	Description
--------------------	-------------

P/2007/0717	Partial demolition of existing fuel island and installation of new above ground oil storage tank – Deemed Disposed.
-------------	---

3.4 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Planning Policy Wales:

- PPW Chapter 2 – People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking
 - Maximising Well-Being and Sustainable Places through Placemaking
- PPW Chapter 3 – Strategic and Spatial Choices
 - Good Design Making Better Places
 - Accessibility

Technical Advice Notes:

- Technical Advice Note 12 – Design

Local Development Plan:

- Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996 – 2011
- Wrexham Town Centre Masterplan
- Local Planning Guidance Note No. 6 – Access to and use of buildings
- Local Planning Guidance Note No. 16 – Parking Standards
- Local Planning Guidance Note No. 17 – Trees and Development
- Local Planning Guidance Note No. 19 – Wrexham Town's Character Areas
- Local Planning Guidance Note No. 24 – Designing out Crime

4.0 INTERPRETATION AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Although several options were investigated, only one solution made sense for the simplification of operations on site, which was to extend the main building. The parking and vehicular requirements also guided where the extension would be sited, which is to the north west of the existing building. This would give the space required for parking delivery vans and safe manoeuvring space for larger vehicles.

The existing arrangement on the site and need for it to remain operational throughout the works and maintain a simple route for vehicles to enter the site, pick up goods and leave the site has driven the siting of the extension and the phasing of the works.

Phase 1: Removal of the vehicle car wash, fuel pump station and storage building allow for car parking to be relocated, with some temporary arrangements to accommodate the number of delivery vans. Existing building containing the sorting hall can remain in operation.

Phase 2: Erect extension to the main building in the area of car parking now freed up by the temporary reorganisation of the car parking. Existing building containing the sorting hall can remain in operation whilst the extension is constructed.

Phase 3: Following completion of the extension, the existing building containing the sorting hall can be demolished. Final parking layout to be implemented, which makes use of the new level areas created from the demolition of the standalone buildings.

5.0 THE PROPOSAL

5.1 OVERVIEW

The proposals include:

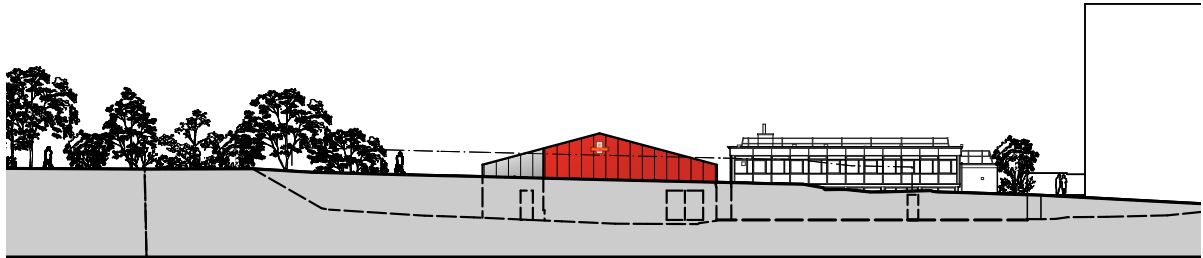
- The erection of a 475m² extension to the main building to simplify operations and improve the quality of the buildings and access for the public and employees,
- Simplification of the site by bringing the built form into the centre of the site, away from residential buildings around the perimeter of the site,
- Reconfiguration of the car parking to simplify movement around the site, improve safety and increase the number of parking spaces from 69 to 73. A disabled car parking space will also be provided as close to the Customer Service Point as practical,
- Display 'Royal Mail' signage on the primary south west facing elevation of the new extension,
- Improvement to the street scape and the wider context of the conservation area through the removal of poor quality buildings and reconfiguration of the site.



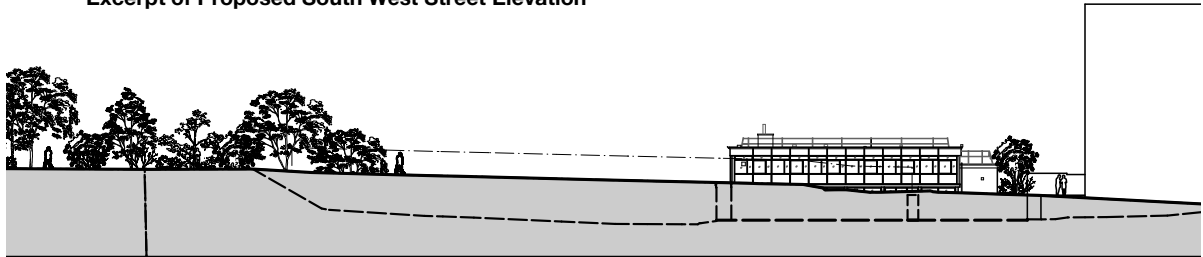
Bird's eye view of the proposed layout with existing standalone buildings demolished.

5.2 CHARACTER

The proposed extension is in keeping with the existing building, in that it's form and design is a functional solution to the type of activities being undertaken. The eaves and ridge height have been reduced from Royal Mail's standard design guidelines to be more in keeping with the height of the existing building. A combination of this and the difference in the site and street level mean that the extension has a very low impact on the street scene and the adjacent Conservation Area as demonstrated in an excerpt of the long site section (drawing SL_P20020_DWG_0_PR21) below.



Excerpt of Proposed South West Street Elevation



Excerpt of Existing South West Street Elevation

The extension reinforces Royal Mail's branding in the use of colour on the primary elevation, this is also where the new Customer Service Point will be located. The new extension is approximately 70m² less than the combined floor area that is being demolished. By simplifying the operations less overall floor area is required to complete the same tasks as they can be done more efficiently.



View of the new extension with planting adjacent to the customer access path.

Royal Mail have developed a series of design guidelines, which highlight the requirements for new buildings and extensions to existing building stock. This calls for a simple, functional, open plan building form that gives them maximum flexibility into the future. It is also crucial that security be maintained on site, which guides how the elevations are articulated i.e. windows easily accessible at ground level are not recommended.

5.3 ACCESS

The existing Customer Service Point is accessed via a long and narrow footpath to the rear of the main building. Access for the general public will be improved by bringing the Customer Service Point closer to the site entrance and widening the footpath, thereby making it easier for people to pass one another and queue if required, without spilling out onto the main parking area. Planting borders will be used to help define pedestrian walkway from roadway to improve the safety for customers.

Access will also be improved for employees by combining all operations in one building, on one level. This means that employees will no longer have to move between buildings, crossing the car park and loading bays.

As a general rule customer parking is not allowed on site. A disabled parking bay will be provided adjacent to the Customer Service Point, for customer use. The parking bay is located as close to the Customer Service Point as practically possible.

5.4 MOVEMENT

The site is located close the centre of Wrexham and therefore already benefits from very good public transport connections. Employee bicycle parking is already available on site and will be relocated to the west of the site to work with the new parking layout. Customer cycle parking will also be provided adjacent to the Customer Service Point entrance, there is currently no customer cycle parking on the site.

There will be no increase in traffic movements on the local highway associated with the proposed extension. There is no net increase in area, the main aim of the proposals is to improve efficiencies in house by combining functions from separate buildings into one building.

The site is already set up to take large heavy goods vehicles, however the existing car park layout and building positions mean that it is not possible for an 18t HGV to access the loading bay to the rear of the main building. With the alterations to the car park and demolition of the sorting office building it is now possible for an 18t HGV to safely enter and leave the site. Tracking has been completed and we can confirm that this is possible with the new car park and site layout.

5.5 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The existing buildings to be demolished are of poor quality and therefore not thermally efficient. They are poorly insulated, if insulated at all, draughty, and therefore make for an uncomfortable working environment. The proposed extension will be insulated in line with current building regulations and passively ventilated. The new extension will be more comfortable to work in and energy will be conserved through the improved thermal efficiency of the new envelope in comparison to the buildings that are being demolished. An ecology stage 1 bat survey has been undertaken and it confirms that there are no bats or other species using the buildings which are to be demolished.

5.6 COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community safety is improved on the site by pulling the built form into the centre of the site and organising the car parking in a sensible and ordered manner around the perimeter of the site. This improves visibility around the site by omitting blind spots and awkward corners to improve passive surveillance of the site and the car parking. The public footpath to the rear of the site will also benefit from increased daylight as there is no longer built form pushed up against the boundary fencing. This will help to make pedestrians feel safer when using the footpath as views from and to the footpath will be improved.

5.7 RESPONSE TO PLANNING POLICY

In Response to Planning Policy Wales

The design meets the five key aspects of good design described in PPW 3 and TAN 12:

- **Access and Inclusivity** is addressed through the simplification of the site by combining all functions into one building, thereby making it easier for staff to access different areas of operations without having to move between buildings and across the car park. Improvements to the pedestrian access to the customer service point will help to make accessing the building safer and simpler for customers. A disabled customer parking space will be provided close to the Customer Service Point.
- **Environmental Sustainability** is addressed through the simplification of the site. The two buildings to be demolished are of poor quality pre-fab and solid brick/block construction with single glazed windows. The new extension to the existing building will be constructed in line with Building Regulations and therefore represent savings on energy losses through the building fabric. It will also simplify servicing to the separate buildings, again representing an energy and cost saving through efficiency of a simplified single building.
- **Character** of the site is improved through the demolition of a collection of disparate poorly constructed buildings and the erection of an extension that is in keeping with the typology and character of the main building. The surrounding area is a mixture of commercial and residential properties, and the buildings are designed to accommodate the uses within. The proposals will not adversely affect the adjacent Conservation Area as they offer an improvement to the street scape and surrounding buildings.

- **Community Safety** is improved through the simplification of the buildings across the site. There are currently numerous hidden passageways and corners around the various buildings. Bringing the built form to the centre of the site omits these awkward spaces. There is also a footpath along the north eastern boundary of the site, visibility and openness will be improved by demolishing built form adjacent to this.
- **Movement** is not greatly affected by the proposals. The business already exists in this location, is well served by public transport thanks to its central location. Secure cycle parking is also available on site and will be improved with the provision of secure customer cycle parking. There will be no increase in traffic movements arising from the extension as there is no net increase in floor area, the purpose of the extension is to improve efficiencies.



View of the new extension adjacent to the existing building as viewed from Regent Street with residential buildings to the east of the site.

In Response to the Local Development Plan:

- Whilst the building is classed as B8 Storage and Distribution it is located in an area of the Wrexham Town centre plan which is identified as E7 Commercial Offices. The building is an established use and provides jobs to the local community. The proposals seek to ensure that the Royal Mail operations can continue to be viable in its existing location, keeping the existing jobs in the community, whilst preparing the building for future trends in the business.
- The proposals do not detrimentally affect the town character or the context of the adjacent Grosvenor Road Conversation Area. The site is currently a collection of disparate buildings of poor quality and the proposals seek to tidy up the site and simplify the built form. This will provide a positive contribution to the surrounding area.
- The design and scale of the extension is in keeping with the building typology and similar to the retail / commercial properties opposite the site. The effect of any development on the site is lessened by virtue of the site being approximately 3-3.5m lower than street level and the existing trees around the perimeter of the site, which are to be retained.
- Safety and security are improved across the site through the simplification of the buildings and concentration of built form in the centre of the site thereby improving visibility and

openness across the site. This has a positive effect on the neighbouring properties and the public footpath adjacent to the site.

- The reconfigured parking is to provide operational parking for the fleet of Royal Mail vans and therefore integral to the running of the business. A disabled car parking space has also been provided for customer use as close to the Customer Service Point as practical. 20 covered cycle parking spaces (10 racks) will be provided to the west of the site for employee use, along with 6 customer cycle parking spaces (3 racks) adjacent to the Customer Service Point.
- The alterations to the parking arrangements seek to safeguard the existing trees on the site as they contribute to the street scene and the biodiversity in line with guidance note no. 17 and 19. Low level plants and shrubs and grass borders will be introduced across the new parking layout to improve the aesthetics of the car park and biodiversity on the site. Planting borders will also be used to help keep pedestrian separate from road users, particularly along the access to the Customer Service Point.