

This planning application is classed as a minor application and a pre-app has been previously been made and response received from Wrexham CBC. It is understood that a brief Design & Access statement is sufficient for the purposes of this application as set out below:

Introduction

Wrexham Magistrates Court is a strategically important court within the North Wales area.

Currently North Wales Police allow HMCTS the use of their cell complex to enable criminal cases to be dealt with at Wrexham Magistrates' Court, as there are no custody facilities within the courts itself. Access is via footbridge adjoining the two facilities.

The existing cell facility in the police station has been de-commissioned as the North Wales Police have relocated outside of Wrexham. Consequently a new custody suite is required on site to maintain Wrexham as a priority criminal justice site.

In addition to allowing continuation of criminal case business, it will improve flexibility of service of the estate for future improvements. The new cell complex will meet current MoJ standards and be capable to serve the existing magistrates courts.

Design

The existing 2-storey magistrates' court building was completed in the early 80's. The existing staff car park is located to the north and east side of the development with landscaped areas and is accessed from Chester Street.

The main pedestrian access to the existing Court building is from Chester Street and Holt Street, with the court main entrance on the south side of the building.

The existing link from the Court Building to the Police Station will be demolished. The new link connecting the Court Building to the new custody suite will be raised in height in relation to the previous link to provide the necessary head room for the custody vans.

The existing plant room underneath the bridge will be retained and incorporated into the new layout. The Contractor will liaise with the Police stakeholders to agree the demolition of the bridge section which affects the police building.

As set out above a custody suite is essential to the operation of the Wrexham Law Courts. The closure of the adjacent police site has necessitated a new custody suite to be built within the existing Court site. As a secure access to the Court building must be maintained in the current position, this fixes the location of the new custody suite which is as shown on the application drawings.

For security and the Health & Safety of persons using and managing the custody suite the design and layout of the building is determined to a considerable extent by Ministry of Justice guidance. This explains why natural lighting is restricted to providing only one window to the staff amenity area.

The building design is therefore largely a response to priorities of function and security. The ground floor comprises a secure area with sufficient headroom for van delivery of persons required to attend the Court. There is then stair and lift access to the custody accommodation provided on the first floor. This access is also shared by staff and visitors to the facility.

The first floor accommodation as shown on the application drawings fulfils the accommodation schedule and layout guidance of the Ministry of Justice.

The new building will be accessible and is designed to meet Part M requirements of the Building Regulations.

Externally the building will be clad in brickwork to closely match the existing Court building. The brickwork is modelled to provide interest to what is a straightforward functional building, as shown on the elevations. The pitched roof will house the plant required for heating and ventilation of the building. The roof finish will be sympathetic to the Court building with a single ply finish with applied detailing to have the appearance of a standing seam roof.

Site Layout

The location of a new building on the existing Court site and the provision for magistrate parking and access for 8m vans requires that some of the existing trees on the site will have to be removed. An arboricultural impact statement is attached and it is proposed as part of this application that replacement trees are planted in lieu of those removed to a specification and location to be agreed with the Authority.

Access and egress to and from the facility is facilitated by shared access rights via the existing War Memorial building and the existing rear access road. A small magistrates parking provision of 13 cars and two disabled car parking bay is proposed. The layout of the parking will be finalised in conjunction with agreed as to the location of the replacement trees. As a result of site constraints on gaining access it has been necessary for the existing staff parking to be lost (replaced by soft landscaping and compensatory tree planting) which has resulted in no on-site staff parking being offered as part of these proposals.

A draft ecology report is attached and it is recognized that the any removal / pruning of trees will be carried out to minimise any impact on bio diversity and to the approval of the Authority.

Foul drainage will be connected to the existing foul drainage system and surface water will be to a soakaway.

Whilst the Applicant will be willing to provide any additional information required to allow determination of the application it would be greatly appreciated if the application can be dealt with efficiently so as not interrupt the operation of the Courts.