

The Oak Tree Inn, Wrexham, LL13 7PL

2224 / 150 - DESIGN, HERITAGE & ACCESS STATEMENT

**In support of a Planning Application for the redevelopment of the
Oak Tree Inn, Ruabon Road, Wrexham**



Development at The Oak Tree Inn, Wrexham, LL13 7PL

2224 / 150 - DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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Proposed Development at The Oak Tree Inn, Wrexham

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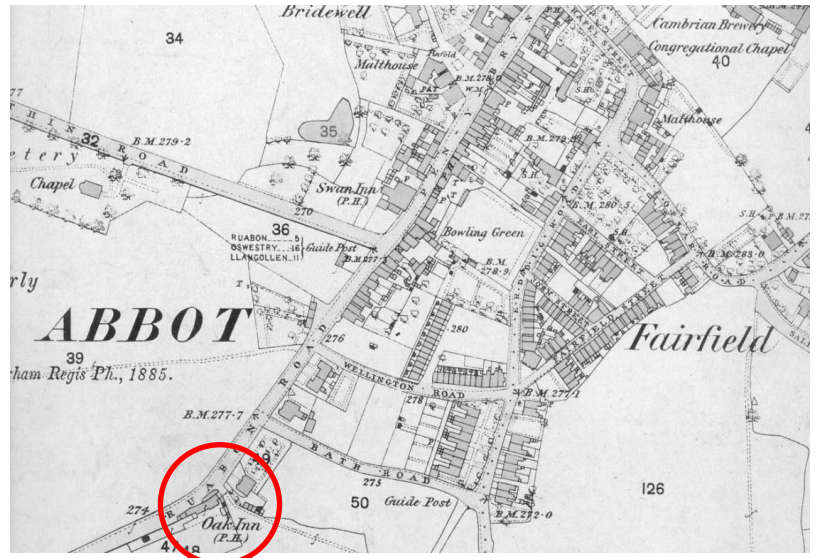
1.0 INTRODUCTION.

This planning application relates to the Change of Use of an existing public house to residential use to form 3 new homes and the construction of 3 No. new detached dwellings to the rear of the public house.

The site currently consists of a public house (which has proved to be a non-viable commercial venture). There is an adjoining terraced house adjacent to the pub (not under the ownership of the applicant), and at the southern end of the site curtilage is a barn / workshop building in a poor state of repair. The proposal is to redevelop the whole site into residential use.

Whilst none of the buildings are listed, the site sits within the Fairy Road Conservation Area.

Extract map from OS 1872

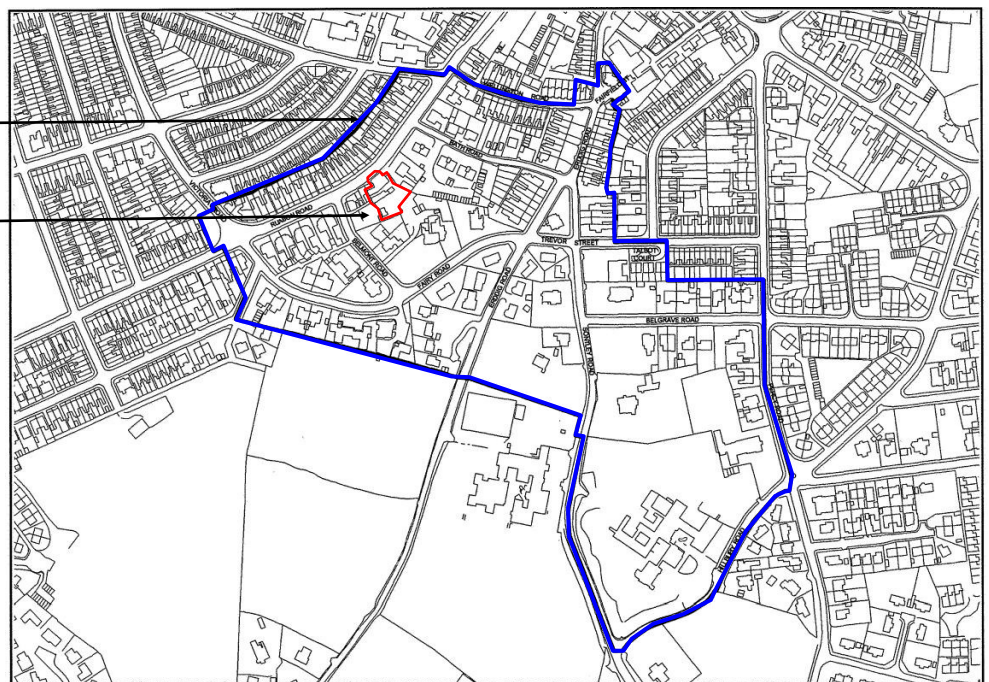


Extract map from 'Fairy

Fairy Road Conservation
Area in blue

The Site in Red

Road' Conservation Area
Assessment, 1999



1.0 INTRODUCTION (Cont).



Located within the Fairy Road Conservation Area, the scheme has been designed to ensure the site is brought back into use in a sympathetic manner that serves to enhance the private realm. To achieve this, the design follows the guiding principles as set out in the Fairy Road conservation Area Assessment for the enhancement of the Private Realm, as below:

- Reintroducing traditional building elements / materials in older properties;
- Upgrading modern and run down buildings; and
- Improving boundaries.

To achieve these principles, every care has been taken to sensitively treat the new and existing built environment by utilising key architectural details and materials, which characterise the conservation area.

Over several years, the existing public house known as The Oak Tree Inn has been unable to operate as a viable business, and despite continued sales marketing for its continued use, it is clear this use is no longer economically sustainable. The principle of residential conversion has been established as the most appropriate form of development.

In addition, the outbuilding towards the rear service yard is a dilapidated state of repair, and serves no purpose other than a store for the pub. Having appraised the integrity of this structure for residential conversion, it is deemed unviable for this purpose due to its limited footprint and requirement for extensive repair. For these reasons, the design proposals are for the demolition of this structure, which will free up valuable space for 3 new purpose built dwellings with adequate amenity space and car parking.

2.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The Fairy Road Conservation Area was designated on the 29th August 1975 and amended on 1st December, 1997. The Conservation Area Assessment analyses and defines the basic qualities of the buildings and features of interest which require preservation and enhancement.

This document has been prepared in reference to the Fairy Road Area Enhancement Plan to ensure the design principles reflect the aspirations of the Plan.

As set out in the conservation area assessment, the enhancement plan fulfil two basic objectives:

- They meet the Council's responsibility for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- As adopted Council documents, they act as a point of reference for officers within the Council, for developers and householders, thereby providing more clarity in the development process. Hopefully, this will lead to a higher quality built environment as a result of more informed decision making.

The Conservation Area Assessment clearly sets out that the purpose of the document is to promote and support developments which are in keeping with, or enhance the character of the area. The enhancement plan is not written to stifle change, more the aim is to strike 'the right balance so that the interests of the conservation are given the full weight against the need for change and development.'

2.1 Location

The Fairy Road Conservation Area lies approximately one mile to the south of Wrexham Town centre. Ruabon Road is the main link road from the town centre to the south of the Borough and, in particular, to the principle corridor, the A483 which runs north to south. The Conservation area covers an area approximately 13 hectares.

2.2 Characteristics

The Fairy Road area was laid out in the mid to late nineteenth century as a spacious and distinctive residential suburb. The 1872 map (below) shows Ruabon Road, Bath road, Erdidig Road and Wellington Road taking shape. By 1914, Fairy Road had been driven through and the large Arts and Crafts influenced houses, which are most characteristic of the Conservation Area had been built.



Site indicated in red

2.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT (cont.)

The Fairy Road Conservation Area was designated on the 29th August 1975 and amended on 1st December, 1997. The Conservation Area Assessment analyses and defines the basic qualities of the buildings and features of interest which require preservation and enhancement.

In summary, the distinctive characteristics of the Conservation Area are as follows:

1. Arts and Crafts style with its high level and variety of detailing.
2. The heart of the area is characterised by substantial detached and semi-detached Victorian Villas and bounded by fine walling in both brick and Cefn stone
3. Stretches of terraced development provide a fine contrast
4. Properties are largely 2 storeys
5. Prominent building material is the Ruabon red brick, which has a rich warm colour.
6. There is a range of bonded constructions: header, English garden wall and Flemish.
7. Brick detailing is often complemented with terracotta and stone detailing.
8. Roofs are of slate.
9. Traditional rainwater goods are of cast iron.
10. Vertical sliding sash windows in painted timber are the most common form of window design.
11. Panelled timber doors are also part of the distinctive character of the area.
12. Stained glass in both windows and doors is also a characteristic.



Typical architectural treatment of domestic dwellings within the fairy Road Conservation Area, including modern developments reflecting the materials / detailing of the Victorian properties.

2.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT (cont.)

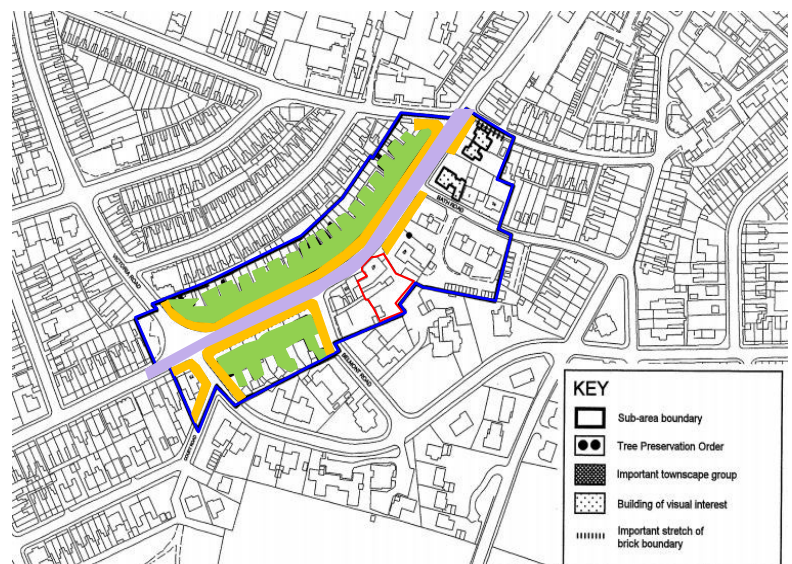
The Oak Tree Inn or neighbouring buildings are not listed.

The Conservation Area has been divided into five distinct areas of character. This assessment focuses on sub area 5.

Ruabon Road is distinguished by the use of red brick, projecting bay and casement windows. Some houses have lost their tiles and casement windows, and such changes detract from the character of the buildings. The Oak Tree Inn is referred to as below:

'At one end of this group is the Oak Tree Public House which is early Victorian in date. To the rear is a courtyard which is framed by a group of outbuildings. The make an interesting contribution to the character of the streetscene.'

- Sub Area 5 of the Fairy Road Conservation Area in blue.
- Section of Ruabon Road in purple
- Important Townscape Dwellings in green
- Important stretch of brick boundary in orange
- Site boundary in red



Extract map courtesy of the Fairy Road Conservation Area Assessment

3.0 PRE-APPLICATION PROPOSALS & ADVICE

3.1 Pre Application Advice

Written pre-application advice was received by the LPA on 14th March 2019. A summary of this report is provided below.

1. The proposed development is acceptable in principle.
2. Conservation Area Consent will be required for the demolition of the outbuildings; however the presumption is in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
3. A robust justification will be required for the demolition of the existing outbuildings. **An expert heritage consultant has been commissioned to provide a robust justification for demolishing existing outbuildings and replacing with high quality housing, making beneficial use of the site.**
4. Any new development should enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. **The design has been sensitively approached to ensure details of special architectural merit have been retained where possible, and new features respect the appearance of the Conservation Area.**
5. Based on the scheme design submitted for pre-app, the Officer states, 'in my opinion, the proposed house types; their design, use of materials and detailing fail to bear any relation to the quality and character expressed by the surrounding architecture, which derives much of its special interest from the variety of detailing and high quality materials. **The design proposals have sought to identify the key architectural features of the Conservation Area and adopted such features. These include:**
 - Extensive use of locally sourced Ruabon red brick to reflect the predominant local building material within the conservation area.
 - Proposed roof tiles to be slate
 - Clay ridge tiles to match those of neighbouring properties
 - Projecting bay windows to reflect the detailing and architectural rhythm along Ruabon Road
 - All new windows to be timber framed
 - Window proportions to reflect the Conservation Area.
 - Timber Panel doors with glazed panel above to reflect an important architectural detail of the conservation area.
 - Low level walls in brick and stone copings provide a physical boundary to each property and reflects an important feature of the existing conservation area.
 - Decorative stone banding and lintels to reflect similar architectural treatment within the conservation area.
6. The site has an established traffic generating use and the redevelopment of the site is unlikely to result in traffic increases which will be detrimental to the capacity of the adjoining highway or cause issues of highway safety.
7. Parking provision on a 2 space per dwelling basis is considered acceptable. **The design proposals include 2 No. spaces per dwelling (12 in total for 6 no. dwellings)**
8. New developments of more than 1 new dwelling is required to obtain approval from the SuDS Approving Body (SAB) prior to the commencement of those construction works. **SAB approval will be sought as necessary. Notwithstanding this, sustainable urban drainage surfaces have been proposed. In addition, extensive softlandscaping in the form of gardens will replace existing tarmac areas.**
9. Residential schemes of more than 4 dwellings may require a financial contribution to offset the demand upon local education infrastructure provision in the locality. **The applicant awaits formal confirmation of any contributions.**

3.0 PRE-APPLICATION PROPOSALS & ADVICE

3.2 Response to Pre-Application Advice

It is recognised that the scheme submitted for pre-application advice was at an early stage of development and required significant alterations in respect of detailing and material specification. The design proposals at pre-app submission stage were developed to establish the fundamental principles of development, including height, massing, general site layout, parking and other functional aspects such as vehicular access, refuse collection and cycle storage.

Furthermore, the pre-application advice stipulates a justification for demolishing the existing outbuildings. To this end, the applicant has commissioned an expert heritage advisor and submitted a report, which has been submitted as an accompanying document to this application.

In summary, the heritage expert concludes that the proposed change of use of the existing building and demolition of the outbuildings will result in a positive impact on the heritage assets and that there are strong public interests to support this application. The consultant believes the proposals strike a balance between the architectural and historic interest of the building, the area, its relationship and distinctiveness, and that the proposals as set out will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the designated heritage assets.

Following a detailed inspection of the outbuildings, they are considered to be of poor construction (unsuitable for redevelopment), widely altered and in a state of poor condition. Demolition would be a positive benefit to the conservation area's enhancement.

4.0 USE

The accounts for the Oak Tree Inn (Wrexham) have proven the non-viability of a public house in this location. Whilst this may be viewed as a loss of a community asset, clearly the pub has not been well attended and there are other similar 'community assets' in close proximity.

The former pub use has been non-viable for many years. The former owner's national pub chain, Marstons, tried many strategies over many years before deciding to sell it, these included management and lease but no viable operation could be identified. The last manager/ tenant was trading at a significant loss despite putting everything on the line to make it work. Many days the total turnover was less than £100 including Saturdays indicating just how little demand there was. The Owners tried to sell as a trading business using national specialist agents, Sidney Philips, but there was virtually no interest and certainly no offers indicating absolutely no demand from an operator. This is not surprising given the location and the well publicised changing social habits, the location is simply not suited to the pub use.

Local residents have commented it will be nice to see this building made good and it ceasing to be a blight on their own properties. In summary a well-respected national pub chain couldn't make it viable to operate as a pub, a committed Tennant couldn't and the national specialist estate agents had not a single offer as a pub, despite the efforts of all these parties it is clear there is no viable future for its current use as a pub and the proposal breathes new life into the property and the community benefitting all. Residents, tax payers and the council.

The proposal is to convert the existing public house and demolish the rear outbuilding to create 6Nº dwellings; making a total of 6Nº two storey two / three bedroom dwelling houses as the total development on site.

The existing shed at the rear of the site is in poor condition with single skin construction and has already had to be restrained from collapsing with structurally sound bars. Following an appraisal of this building by a heritage consultant, it is considered of poor architectural quality and does not contribute to the quality of the conservation area. The decision was made therefore to demolish rather than convert the shed.

Market research has suggested a market for two / three bedroom homes in this area and the values against build cost, whilst marginal, never-the-less make this scheme viable.

With just 6Nº new homes, the scheme falls below the Councils affordable housing contribution threshold.

5.0 LAYOUT

The pub is a fixed entity on the planning application site. To comply with appropriate guidance on distances between habitable rooms, and to enable vehicular access and onsite parking, it became clear that the 3N² new houses should be located hard-up against the northern boundary (after demolition of the barn).

Due to the high wall of the adjoining shed on the other side of the site boundary, the houses needed to be wide and shallow with southerly facing windows. This is an existing access driveway to the western side of the pub providing vehicular access to the yard at the rear of the pub.

A site layout was therefore developed, which created parking and amenity areas either side of a new access road. This enabled sufficient distance to be created between the rears of the existing properties to the frontages of the new house on the northern boundary. This separation distance allows for and promotes a high quality landscaping opportunity, which will enhance the visual amenity to the conservation area. Generous gardens to the front of the new properties will be formed using a traditional method of enclosure, which dominates the architectural vernacular of the Conservation Area.



Bird's Eye View of Proposed Layout

An important feature of the Fairy Raod Conservation Area is the boundary treatment to each property, as documented in the area assessment:

'Despite the physical separation caused by the busy road, they complement the buildings on the south side. All are two storey, set back slightly and of red brick. Red brick boundaries with terracotta or stone copings run the length of the street providing horizontal emphasis and a sense of continuity.'

Such treatment to the boundaries of each property has been designed to reflect this.

6.0 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

There is an existing access / egress in and out of the site onto Ruabon Road. It is likely that a pub or restaurant use on the site would potentially create much more traffic movements than that from 6N^o houses. The proposal also includes for the demolition of the existing bay windows extension onto the pavement along Ruabon Road. This will undoubtedly improve visibility splays on leaving the site. This would be particularly important for cars turning right out of the site (in a westerly direction) as their views of oncoming traffic from the east along Ruabon Road would be much more distant and safer.

Regarding parking ratios, most of the proposed properties are 2/3N^o bedroom houses. Whilst Wrexham have an equivalent maximum parking ration of 1N^o space per bedroom, this proposal proposes 2N^o spaces per house including the car park / garage space integrated into the rear 'Mews' houses.



7.0 APPEARANCE

The front elevation of the existing pub will have the wide bay window and entrance section removed from the front of the existing pub. This will enable a more domestic elevation to the houses created from the pub and provide a privacy buffer between the houses and people walking along Ruabon Road.

The upper levels of the pub elevations will be largely left intact and only the ground level elevation onto Ruabon Road will be remodeled as shown.

The elevations to the two storey 'Mews' houses at the rear (northern boundary) of the site will be traditional in appearance with materials reflection of the local area. Subsequent to advice received at pre-application stage, the appearance of these house have been amended further to reflect the architectural qualities defining the Fairy Road Conservation Area. The amendments are summarised below:

1. Replacement of UPVC windows with timber framed casement / sash windows . These windows will match the proportions of windows to neighbouring properties along Ruabon Road.
2. Extensive use of locally sources Ruabon red brick throughout.
3. Introduction of stone cills / lintels to match the neighbouring properties within the conservation area
4. Re-organisation of the plans to allow for a projecting bay, treated in a similar architectural style to the properties fronting Ruabon Road and throughout the conservation area. Timber cladding between and above the windows introduced to reflect similar existing treatment of these bay projections.
5. Timber panel doors introduced with glazed panels above.
6. Slate roofs specified.
7. Low level walls in brick and stone copings provide a physical boundary to each property and reflects an important feature of the existing conservation area.

Where possible, reclaimed brick from the demolished outbuilding will be utilised.



Image of proposed new dwellings

7.0 APPEARANCE



Left: Example of projecting bay frontage along Ruabon Road. The traditional construction detail of side windows has been reflected in the proposed design



Left: Modern interpretation reflecting some architectural details such as expressed stone lintels



Timber cladding above / in between windows to projecting bays. Expressed stone lintels and banding.

8.0 LANDSCAPING & AMENITY AREA

The 'Mews' houses on the northern boundary of the site would have small landscaped amenity / garden space between the house frontages and access road. A path would lead to the central front entrance door to each house.

These green (garden) areas could be surrounded by a dwarf brick wall and planting. This would more sharply define the private space and prevent cars and pedestrians trespassing over these private gardens, which also act as privacy buffer strips.

Garden / yards have also been created at the rear of the proposed converted public house. These rear garden / yards would be bounded by dwarf brick walls and appropriate planting to provide a visual shield to the cars parked immediately north to these gardens. This would also ensure privacy for the residents of the converted / refurbished existing buildings.



9.0 SUDS

From the 7th of January 2019 any new development of more than one dwelling or that involves construction work of more than 100m² is required to obtain approval from the SuDS Approving Body (SAB) prior to the commencement of those construction works. Furthermore the surface water drainage systems serving proposals of greater than one property will be subject to adoption by the SAB and must be constructed in such a manner as to be compliant with new national statutory standards.

SAB approval will be obtained prior to construction.

10.0 ACCESS

The new dwellings will comply with all the regulatory requirements for access as set out in Approved Document M of the building regulations. The conversion of the existing public house is also designed, where possible to be fully compliant, albeit some historic features such as level changes on the ground floor will require dispensation from the building control authority.

11.0 SUMMARY

Following valuable pre-application advice, this application is conceived and developed to assimilate within an important conservation area and enhance the visual amenity of the locale. Particular attention is paid to the treatment, proportions, materials and quality of the design to achieve a scheme which will bring a redundant building / service yard and outbuildings into beneficial use to the community.

The principle and scale of development is considered acceptable to Officer's at pre-application stage, albeit design alterations to the proposed dwellings and justification has been sought to demolish outbuildings.

An expert heritage consultant has appraised the development and concludes that the scheme 'will result in a positive impact on the heritage assets and that there are strong public interests to support this application.'

The design proposals strike a balance between the architectural and historic interest of the buildings and the conservation area, and its relationship and distinctiveness will ensure the site is brought back in to beneficial use. The proposed works will retain the important buildings and ensure their preservation and longevity, as well as enhancing the visual amenity of the service yard.