

Oak Tree Inn
Ruabon Road
Wrexham

Heritage Statement & Impact
Assessment

April 2019





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April 2019

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Heritage Statement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Townscape has been commissioned by the owners of The Oak Tree Inn to produce this Heritage Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment, to support a planning application for works to convert the public house and for new build residential development. Townscape are Chartered Town Planning and Heritage Consultants who serve public, private and community sector clients. We specialise in all aspects of our historic environment, heritage, planning and wider urban design.



Fig 1 Oak Tree, Ruabon Road, Wrexham

2. Historic Description and Context.

- 2.1 The Oak Tree Inn is a public house dating from around the mid 19th century. The building is not listed but is considered a to have local importance and is contained within the Fairy Road conservation area. The building was constructed on Ruabon Road at a time of great change and expansion for Wrexham as a result of its growth with mineral extraction, manufacturing and also as a business centre for north east Wales. Located on Ruabon Road a main road running from Wrexham Town centre to Ruabon and beyond, the Oak tree was an early road side development on the arterial road as the town expanded from the 1800s onwards
- 2.3 The building on plan is square with a later dog leg extension to the rear at a slightly higher pitch. The property is two storey constructed in brick (predominantly stretcher bond with cement pointing) with a heavy cement render to front and side elevations under a low pitch roof with slate and chimneys. The building has been altered considerably internally forming a more open plan form and the external frontage has benefited from an extended later single storey porch in brick and timber with flat roof.

2.4 The original cellular plan form of the building is still discernable in some areas to the ground floor, the first floor is manager's accommodation. The original external frontage has a central double height bay window masked in part by the front extension and again remnants exist internally but are heavily altered. Windows to the property are upvc to the rear and some replacement timber windows to the front elevation.

2.5 Externally, the building is set to the back of pavement to Ruabon Road and would have enjoyed a generous frontage in the absence of the single extension. A side entrance to the car park and rear access is tarmac and a number of later buildings are evident.

- Firstly, a 2 storey rear extension, constructed in brick directly to the rear as an extended dining room and forms a dog leg to the original pub. The building dates from the early 20th century and doesn't feature on the OS map of 1898.
- Secondly, a small single storey whitewashed building in brick under a slate roof dating from late 19th century. Utilitarian in appearance the building is a store room now smoking shelter and appears incongruous to the layout of the site.
- Finally, to the rear of the car park built up against the rear boundary is a short row of brick garages at 2 storeys under a slate roof. Dating from late 19th century, their original use is unclear but likely to be stables/garaging, with loft above.

(internally not inspected) and have been heavily altered and in places rebuilt.



Fig 2 OS Map extract 1872



Fig 3 OS map extract 1898



Fig 4 OS Map 25inch extract 1909

- 2.7 Map regression identifies the Oak Tree in existence before 1872 and the age of the public house is estimated to be between 1850-60. The map of 1898 shows the rear outbuilding structures to be later in date of construction and is confirmed on the OS 25 inch map extract of 1909 which clearly shows the arrangement. The larger attached 2 storey rear extension is clearly later than the former stables and store building and is early 20th century and doesn't feature on the OS map 1909.

The annotated location map extract at fig 4 highlights the phase development of the site and buildings. Green is mid 19th century and forms the main public house structure, blue being late 19th century, consisting of single storey store and rear garage/stable block and finally shaded red is the later early 20th century rear dining room extension

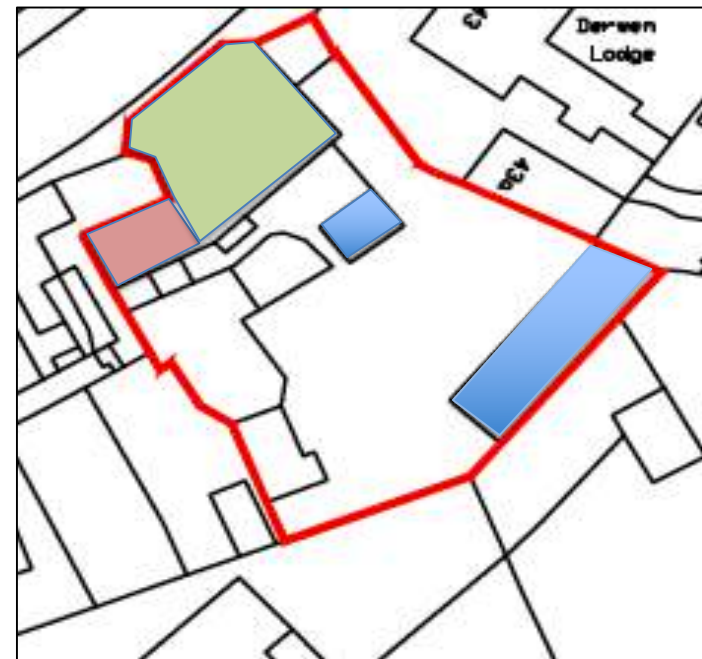


Fig 4 Phased plan of site and buildings.

3. Statement of Significance

3.1 Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current government policy Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment, Wales, first published 2011. A key objective of the Conservation principles is to assess the significance of any heritage asset and to assist in decision making. The key attributable principles are, Evidential Value, Historic value, Aesthetic value and Communal value.

- Evidential value – The building was constructed in the mid 19th century but has been heavily altered and extended. The building formed a public house on radial route from Wrexham town centre to expanding outlying areas and new 19th century developments. The adaptive changes to the building illustrate its changing narrative of use and how additional structures were required at a later date to help accommodate the growth in the use of the public house.
- Historic Value – the historic value of the building is its association with its community and its contribution to the growth and development of the now Fairy Road conservation area and indeed wider expansion of Wrexham.

- Aesthetic value – The building is not listed but within a conservation area and is deemed to be of local interest. The rear stable/garage buildings are referred to in the Fairy Road conservation area, however no further explanation is provided as to their actual value given their condition and appearance. The public house has a clear Victorian aesthetic and whilst much changed, holds limited significance in its appearance and original fabric.
- Communal value – The communal value of the building relates to the public role played by the building, a public gathering point and its ongoing sense of history is part of its communal value.

3.2 Summary of significance.

The public house itself retains a strong sense of significance and its early development and discernable plan form and general aesthetic provides strong evidence to its significance and although altered at many stages of its evolution, warrants its significance as a building of local interest and as a component feature within the conservation area.

3.3 The later extensions and out buildings, whilst constructed to facilitate the use of the pub as the primary business, they are generally utilitarian in appearance, generally of poor construction, widely altered and in poor condition.

- 3.4 The outbuildings are understood from their functional use and purpose rather than any historical or architectural interest and have very little value other than association rather than providing any historical understanding to the site. The outbuildings and extension hold no elements or features internally or externally to warrant them as having significance. The outbuildings form negative buildings within the conservation area and are of low significance.
- 3.5 The Fairy Road Conservation Area - The special character of the Conservation Area, which reflects local building traditions, derives from its distinct Arts & Crafts style (with its high level and variety of detailing); the overall high quality of house design and the relationship between building and landscaping. The heart of the area is characterised by substantial detached and semi-detached Victorian villas set in spacious grounds and bounded by fine walling in both brick and Cefn stone, built at the same time as the buildings and with some interesting detail. Stretches of terraced development provide a fine contrast and their regular spatial pattern adds a strong sense of townscape and rhythm. Properties are largely two storey. The Oak Tree has a distinct architectural character and is well related to its neighbouring terraces built at a similar age and all featuring a heavy render.

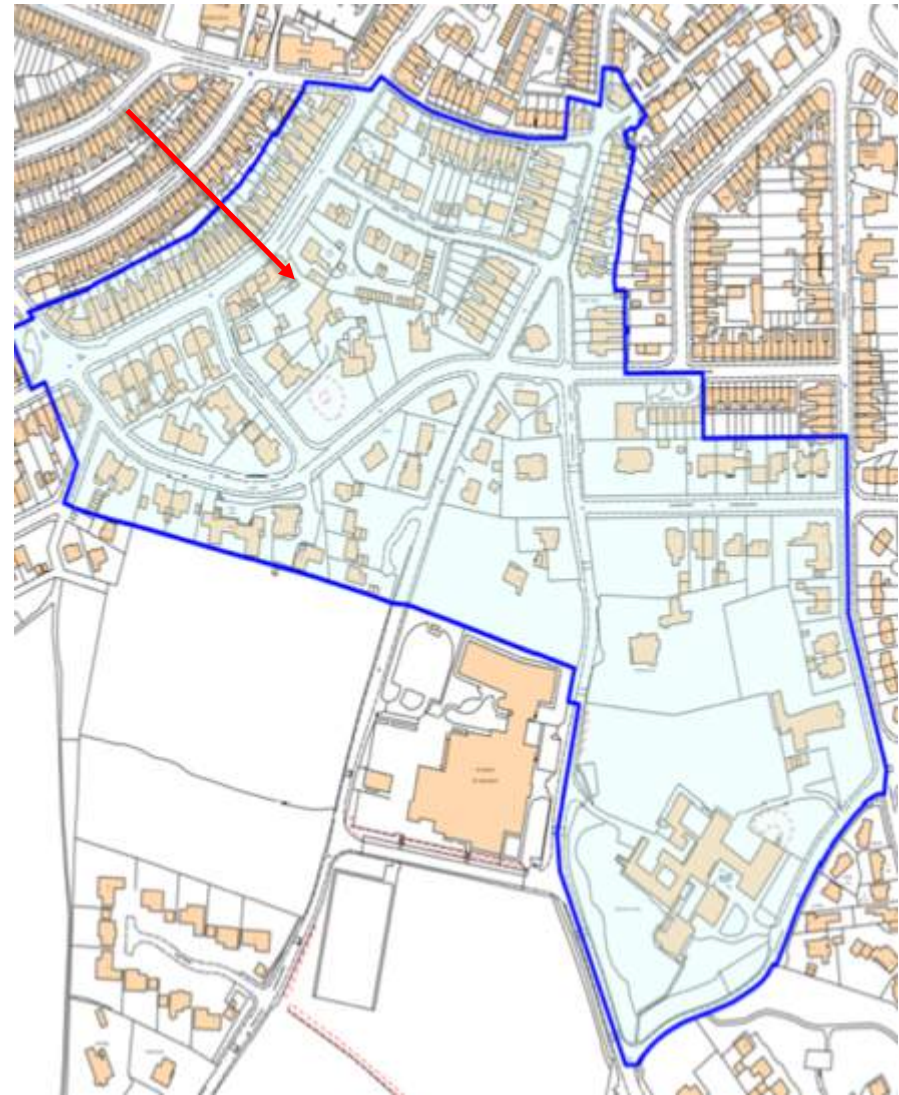


Fig 5 Fairy Road Conservation Area map extract



Fig 6 above, principal elevation, Fig 7 below, side access



Fig 8 above, garage unit, Fig 9 side elevation





Fig 10 above & Fig 11 below, single storey unit & 2 storey extension



Heritage Impact Assessment

1. Heritage Impact Assessment, Scope and method of assessment.

- 1.1 This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the structure identified as The Oak Inn. A brief understanding of the heritage asset and its significance has been discussed in the heritage statement.
- 1.2 This impact assessment is a judgment on the change of use of the pub to residential and demolition of external outbuildings replaced with residential units. The works proposed entail internal alterations and conversion of the public house to 2x 3 bed units which will involve the demolition of the single storey store structure and the later 2 storey rear dining room extension, the demolition of the garage/stables structure and to replace with 2 x 3bed house. In addition, a further 1 x 3bed house will be constructed on the site together with bin stores and cycle parking.
- 1.3 This impact assessment will discuss the impact of the minor changes upon the character of the building and wider conservation area. In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents to include TAN 24 and Heritage Impact Assessment, CADW 2017.

1.4 I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy and Wrexham Council Planning Policies.

1.6 This report provides an appropriate level of significance and is written in accordance with para 1.15 of TAN 24 Heritage impact assessments which states that a heritage impact assessment should be proportionate both to the significance of the historic asset and to the degree of change proposed, and should include sufficient information to enable both the significance of the asset and the impact of change to be understood. The results of the heritage impact assessment should be summarised in a heritage impact statement.

2. Description of Proposed Development, assessment of proposed works and their impact on the heritage assets.

2.1 The proposal is for conversion and change of use of the Oak Tree Inn into 2 x 3bed residential units. Demolition of later structures (single storey outbuilding, former garages and 2 storey 20th century building) to the rear of the Oak Tree and replacement with 3 x 3bed houses, car parking spaces and amenity spaces.

2.2 The change of use of the Oak Tree Inn will involve the reuse of the host building which for the most part will remain unchanged albeit with internal changes. The immediate rear of the Oak Tree will become garden spaces and car parking and the materials from the proposed demolished buildings will be reused to form boundary walls.

2.3 The new build to the rear of the site (replacement the brick garage unit) will be semi detached properties and built in the prevailing character of the area and conforming to the design criteria of height, scale and material use.

3.0 Assessment of proposed development against Heritage Planning Policy Criteria; Nationally and Locally

3.1 In accordance with the Conservation Principles publication CADW page16 and Historic England (English Heritage) Conservation Principles the significance of the identified heritage assets have been adequately assessed in the heritage statement of this report. This impact assessment is a summary of the proposal against the identified significance.

3.2 There are no key views identified either by professional judgement or within the fairy road conservation area appraisal and the development site is self contained. Views

of the public house are from Ruabon Road and this view will remain unchanged. To the rear the view of the building is secondary and weak and is not publicly accessible nor is there any experience of the building that merits the retention of the view.

3.3 I have not identified any detrimental impact of the proposal against the evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal value of the heritage asset and wider conservation area. The application will involve replacement of some structures, but I have assessed the structures and found them to be of low significance and their replacement will not result in a level of harm that will negatively impact upon the character and wider significance of the Public house and conservation area.

3.4 In mitigation to the replacement of the buildings, there are benefits offered by the proposed scheme are as follows:

- Reuse of a vacant building.
- Provision of a new use to a building which will be consistent with existing uses of other buildings in the immediate vicinity.
- Local employment opportunities through refurbishment works and new end use.
- Retaining key features of significance thus preserving and enhancing the character and overall significance of the building.

4. Local Planning Policy

4.1 Wrexham Council, UDP (1996-2011) contains policies in relation to the Historic Environment Policy EC7 which set out the key policy considerations in relation to conservation areas: “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”. In addition Policy EC8 provides guidance to proposals to demolish buildings within the Conservation area, “the demolition of any building in a conservation area will not be permitted unless, in exceptional circumstances: -

1. a) the building or structure is beyond reasonable repair; or
2. b) demolition would be a positive benefit to the conservation area's enhancement; and
3. c) planning permission has been granted and a legal agreement entered into for the erection of an appropriate replacement building reflecting the design and character of the conservation area.
4. d) the material generated from the demolition of the building will, where appropriate, be used for the construction of the replacement building or structure.

4.2 The emerging new local plan at deposit stage contains policies (SP16) for the protection of the historic environment which mirror the policies contained within the UDP and are in conformity with national planning policy.

4.3 In response to Wrexham planning policies, there is a general presumption for the retention of existing building that make a positive contribution to the significance of the area, and these buildings should ideally be accurately identified, evidenced and characterised within up to date conservation area appraisals.

4.4 In the heritage statement part of this report, I have summarised the significance of the site and the buildings and whilst I consider the Oak Tree to hold historic merit and significance to warrant its retention, I believe that the proposed change of use and conversion to residential will not result in any detrimental harm to the appearance of the building and its ongoing contribution to the character of the conservation area.

4.5 In reference to the out buildings at rear of the public house, I have again provided an analysis of the age, construction, appearance and contribution to the conservation area and they are not considered to be positive buildings and have

low significance and this significance is their relationship to the public house.

4.6 The proposed development to which this report relates will result in a number of new build properties which will conform to the evident character of the conservation area in relation to their design, height, scale, material use and appearance. Indeed, the new proposed buildings will better frame the Public House and provide an enhancement to this part of the conservation area. In addition, the proposed new buildings will improve the setting of the conservation area by replacing unsightly buildings, impacting upon adjacent heritage assets.

4.7 This heritage appraisal is written to fully understand the heritage assets that are in question and to provide an independent opinion on the proposal for a change of use and some minor internal works to the buildings.

5. Conclusions

5.1 This report has considered the heritage implications of the change of use and works to the buildings within The Oak Tree Inn. The works proposed are informed, with an understanding and regard for the heritage assets, their context and significance. The significance of the buildings

has been assessed and the resulting impact commented upon.

5.3 Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based upon a clear understanding of the significance of any heritage asset and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.

5.4 The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the Tan 24 and Heritage Impact Assessment Wales, CADW 2017 and local planning policy and is intended to aid the assessment of the submitted planning applications. I have briefly outlined the historical development of the buildings, their character, setting and significance. I have outlined the scope of the proposed works and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage assets and any mitigating factors.

5.5 The crucial test is whether the harm to a heritage asset is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal. There are now strong positive social and economic reasons to support such a proposal.

- 5.6 My conclusions have found that the proposed change of use of the building will result in a positive impact on the heritage assets and that there are strong public interests to support this application. I believe 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. The proposed works will retain the buildings in a low impact usage, which will ensure the preservation and longevity of their significance.

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April 2019