

Caulmert Limited

Engineering, Environmental & Planning
Consultancy Services

THE ELMS, RHOSDDU ROAD, WREXHAM, LL11 1EB

BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION AND INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS

PLANNING APPEAL STATEMENT OF CASE

LPA REFERENCE: P/2016/1111

APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/H6955/A/17/3176350

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Document Reference: 3162-CAU-XX-XX-RP-T-0300.A0-C1

June 2017

APPROVAL RECORD

Site: The Elms, Rhosddu Road, Wrexham, LL11 1EB

Client: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Project Title: Proposed ground floor extension and internal and external alterations

Document Title: Planning Appeal Statement of Case

Document Ref: 3162-CAU-XX-XX-RP-T-0300.A0-C1

Report Status: FINAL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Caulmert Ltd is appointed by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to appeal against the refusal of full planning permission by Wrexham County Borough Council, on 6th February 2017, for the proposed ground floor extension and internal and external alterations at The Elms, Rhosddu Road (LPA Application Ref: P/2016/1111).

1.1.2 This document constitutes the Statement of Case on behalf of the appellant.

1.2 Description of the Appeal Site

1.2.1 The appeal site measures approximately 0.09ha, and is located within the north western part of Wrexham Town Centre on the Junction of the A5152 and Rhosddu Road.

1.2.2 The appeal site comprises the existing Elms building in the northern part of the site which fronts onto Rhosddu Road, with the southern part of the site providing car parking for the Elms building.

1.2.3 The appeal site is bounded to the north by the A5152, to the west by Rhosddu Road, and to the south and east by the Coleg Cambria Campus buildings including the former Wrexham and East Denbighshire War Memorial Hospital building which lies immediately to the south of the appeal site.

1.2.4 A 1.2m high red brick boundary wall encloses the site on its northern and western boundaries. A wire mesh fence runs along the site's boundary to the east and south, connecting to a red brick wall for a small part in the south-eastern corner of the site.

1.2.5 Vehicular and pedestrian access to the appeal site is gained from Rhosddu Road through a 5m opening in the boundary wall. This access is of sufficient width to accommodate the passage of two vehicles.

1.2.6 Landscaping to the north and east of the Elms comprises soft vegetation and a number of young trees. The area to the south of the Elms is dominated by a large Beech tree which is now encroaching on the fabric of the building.

1.2.7 The appeal site lies within the Grosvenor Road Conservation Area, the boundary of which was first designated in September 1990, and amended in July 2007.

1.2.8 The Elms is a substantial three storey mid-late 19th century building, built in a red brick with decorative blue brickwork and sandstone features, and is representative of many other buildings within the surrounding area. The building is not statutorily listed, however it is identified as a 'building of visual interest or important townscape group' within the Council's adopted Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan (April 2009). Whilst the

building is generally in line with the original design, it is acknowledged that there have been minor unsympathetic alterations that are detrimental to the character of the building, and it appears to be in a poor state of repair.

1.2.9 Internally the Elms comprises of a basement, ground, first and second floor. The building currently has limited staff facilities, and there is no lift for compliance with current building regulations. The main entrance to the Elms is on the buildings western elevation via a ramped approach. Whilst there is a separate staff entrance on the buildings southern elevation via a ramped approach, this is rarely used as it leads directly into the kitchen.

1.2.10 The Elms is currently occupied by the Community Drug and Alcohol Team who provide a Health Substance Misuse Service (SMS) funded by the NHS and the North Wales Substance Misuse Areas Planning Board (via the Welsh Government Substance Misuse Action Fund). In addition it should be noted that a complementary Criminal Justice SMS is provided by Kaleidoscope (third sector) at Hafod located on Grosvenor Road approximately 150m from the appeal site.

1.3 Recent Planning History of the Appeal Site

1.3.1 A planning application for minor building façade modifications and enhancement works to facilitate the colocation of Kaleidoscope and the Health SMS into the Elms building was submitted to Wrexham County Council on 15th May 2017 (LPA Ref P/2017/0396). At the time of writing, this application is still pending. Whilst it may be possible to reconfigure the building through this revised scheme, it would lead to a far less satisfactory operational solution than the scheme which is the subject of the current appeal.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1.1 The proposed development comprises a ground floor extension and internal and external alterations to the Elms on Rhosddu Road, in order to allow the colocation of the Criminal Justice SMS and the Health SMS at the Elms.
- 2.1.2 The proposed extension will accommodate the existing staff and service user numbers that currently use the Elms and Hafod buildings. However it will not result in an increase in the numbers currently being supported between the two sites.
- 2.1.3 The proposed integrated SMS will have a total of 32 staff operating from the Elms building (not at any one time), and will manage a combined caseload of approximately 500 to 600 service users, the majority of whom live in the Wrexham area.
- 2.1.4 The normal core operating hours for the proposed integrated SMS service would be Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, although some weekend and evening services may be provided.
- 2.1.5 The proposed single storey extension to the east of the existing building will have an internal floor area of 100 sq. m, and will measure 21.7m in length. The shape of the proposed extension is asymmetric, measuring 4.4m in width on the northern section, and 5.9m in width on the southern section. The height of the proposed extension will be 3.9m on the northern section, and 4.1m on the southern section.
- 2.1.6 The northern section of the proposed extension will be constructed in a linear blue brick, similar in colour to the ones used in the contrasting decorative bands on the existing building. The southern section of the proposed extension will be clad in zinc sheeting.
- 2.1.7 The proposed reconfiguration of the building would result in:
- The provision of two additional second floor dormer windows in the west and north facing elevations;
 - The blocking up of a ground floor, a first floor and second floor window and installation of a new second floor window, all on the southern elevation; and
 - The installation of two ground floor and two first floor windows in the north-facing elevation.
- 2.1.8 As part of the proposed development all existing windows will be replaced with new painted double glazed windows to match the existing, and the existing roof will be replaced with a new slate roof.
- 2.1.9 There are also a number of internal alterations proposed to the building, however these works, by themselves, do not require planning permission.
- 2.1.10 The existing car park to the south of the Elms, which currently provides 15 car parking spaces, will be retained and resurfaced.

- 2.1.11 A new pedestrian access will be created to the appeal site from Rhosddu Road through the existing boundary wall, providing service users arriving by foot direct access to the main entrance. In addition a new pedestrian exit will be created from the appeal site onto the A5152 through the existing boundary wall.
- 2.1.12 The proposed scheme provides new landscaping (incorporating three existing trees) along the entire northern boundary and part of the western boundary of the appeal site. This will ensure that the proposed extension is screened in views from the north and west i.e. from Rhosddu Road and the A5152. The retention of the large Beech tree that lies within the car park will ensure that the proposed extension is screened in views from the south and south-west i.e. from Rhosddu Road and Grosvenor Road.

3.0 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

3.1.1 A number of revised plans are submitted as part of the planning appeal.

3.1.2 The following table sets out the revised plans, their status and the reason for the new submission.

Plan Reference and Title	Status	Reason for new submission	Plan which this supersedes
LOC-01 Location Plan	Current	Road names and north arrow added, as these were not included on the previous version submitted. Reference changed to avoid duplication of references.	GA-01 Location Plan
EX-04 Rev A Existing Elevations	Current	Elevation titles amended, as these were stated incorrectly on the previous version submitted.	EX-04 Existing Elevations
GA-01 Rev A Proposed Ground Floor	Current	Dimensions and floor area added for proposed extension, as these were not included on the previous version submitted.	GA-01 Proposed Ground Floor
GA-04 Rev C Proposed Elevations	Current	Height dimensions added to proposed extension, as these were not included on the previous version submitted.	GA-04 Rev B Proposed Elevations
GA-05 Rev B Proposed Site Plan	Current	It was decided that existing trees T6, T7 and G9 on the sites northern boundary could be retained. The revised plan shows these trees as remaining.	GA-05 Rev A Proposed Site Plan

4.0 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Substance Misuse Service and Need for the Proposed Development

- 4.1.1 The Elms currently provides a Substance Misuse Service (SMS), which is run by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), and funded by the NHS and the North Wales Substance Misuse Areas Planning Board (via the Welsh Government Substance Misuse Action Fund). The Community Drug and Alcohol Team based at the Elms provide a treatment service for alcohol and drug dependency persons, including the following specific services; detoxification programmes, long term rehabilitation services, anxiety management, harm reduction service, blood borne virus testing and treatment, the prescription of substitute medication, GP prescribing clinics and doctors clinics. There is no medication stored at the Elms.
- 4.1.2 The SMS has been in place for approximately 30 years, based at the Elms and at an alternative location within Wrexham prior to that. The lawful use of the appeal site is D1, and the principle of providing a SMS within the Elms has been established for a long time.
- 4.1.3 At present the BCUHB operates their SMS from two close but ultimately separate sites; the Elms on Rhosddu Road (the appeal site), which provides health related SMS, and Hafod on Grosvenor Road, which provides criminal justice related SMS. These buildings are 150m apart. The result of the two SMS being provided on two separate sites is a fragmented service which fails to deliver the best outcomes for service users.
- 4.1.4 There is a need to combine the services onto one site to enable partners to deliver services in the most effective and efficient manner, in order to maximise positive outcomes for service users, the community and wider society. However there is also a need to retain the service within its existing location, due to the need to provide a highly accessible location to service users.
- 4.1.5 The proposed extension and refurbishment of the Elms will enable the combination of these two services into the Elms building to create an integrated service from one site.
- 4.1.6 The layout of the existing building is inadequate, and raises issues of safety for both service users and staff. For example, the reception area is too small and does not provide enough space for service users to wait on arrival at the Elms causing congestion within the reception area and risks unauthorised access into the building; there is currently no disabled access between the different floor levels, and with the service spread across the ground and first floor, service users with a disability are currently unable to access all parts of the building; and the lack of suitable accommodation on the ground floor means that the SMS is spread across the ground and first floors, with no controlled access to staff areas, which is important from a confidentiality point of view.
- 4.1.7 The proposed development will improve the flow of service users and staff through the building by introducing the following key improvements:

- Introducing a clearly defined separate pedestrian entrance to the building from Rhosddu Road for service users, and a staff only entrance from the car park;
- Introducing a new service user exit onto the A5152 which prevents service users having to double back and leave the building through the main entrance;
- Limiting public access to the ground floor level only, with the first and second floors having controlled access for staff only; and
- Installing a vertical lift from ground floor to second floor.

4.1.8 The appeal site is located adjacent to the Coleg Cambria Campus, and prior to the submission of the application, the Health Board engaged in discussion with the Chief Executive of Coleg Cambria. The College had no objection to the proposal. Furthermore, Kaleidoscope, one of the partner organisations who will be delivering the combined SMS, have a good working relationship with the college, delivering awareness sessions, and providing opportunities for students to gain experience in the substance misuse and criminal justice sectors.

4.2 Welsh Government Health and Social Care Priorities

4.2.1 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force in April 2016 and modernises social services law in Wales. The Act imposes a duty on Local Authorities and Health Boards to work together to assess care and support needs of the population in their area (including people with substance misuse issues). As a result Local Authorities and Health Boards should identify what services are needed, ensure their resources are used effectively and prioritise the integration of services.

4.2.2 The Welsh Assembly Government Substance Misuse Strategy for Wales 2008-2018 'Working Together to Reduce Harm' highlights the need for services and their workforce to be better integrated with one another. The strategy is underpinned by four key aims, one of which is to (inter alia) *"make better use of resources, improve treatment outcomes, and join up agencies and services more effectively."*

4.2.3 Welsh Government funding criteria prioritises projects that are able to demonstrate that they would improve the capacity, access and/or quality of treatment facilities through the creation of multi-agency bases, and collaborative ventures between partnerships on a regional (or multi-regional bases).

4.2.4 The proposed development is clearly in line with health and social care priorities set at the national level, and will play an important role in helping Wrexham County Borough Council and its partners to deliver the health and social care services that the local population needs.

5.0 AMPLIFICATION OF THE GROUNDS OF APPEAL

5.1 Reason for Refusal

- 5.1.1 The Local Planning Authority's reason for the refusal of planning permission for the proposed development states that:

"The proposed development by virtue of its design and use of materials will have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the existing building and wider conservation area". To allow the development would be contrary to Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Policy EC7 which seeks to ensure new development preserves and/or enhances the unique character of the area."

5.2 The Development Plan

- 5.2.1 The statutory Development Plan for the area within which the appeal site is located comprises the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996 – 2011 ("the UDP"), which was adopted in February 2005. The policies that are considered relevant to the proposed development and which are in discussed in more detail in the sections below are; Policy EC7 (conservation areas), Policy GDP1 (general development objectives), Policy T8 (parking) and Policy EC4 (hedgerows, trees and woodland).

- 5.2.2 Wrexham Council are currently preparing their Local Development Plan (LDP) which will set out the Council's proposed strategic approach for the development of Wrexham up to 2028. Consultation on the Council's LDP Preferred Strategy took place between February and April 2016. The LDP is at an early stage of production. However, emerging Policy SP6 addresses the issue of health and well-being. There is no similar policy in the adopted UDP. Emerging Policy SP6 states:

"The Council and its partners will create and safeguard opportunities for safe, healthy, fulfilling and active lifestyles by;

- Working in partnership with health and social care providers to improve health and wellbeing across Wrexham County Borough and reduce inequalities"*

- 5.2.3 Emerging LDP policy SP6 underlines the need to work in partnership with providers, to provide for much needed health and social care facilities. The fact that there is an emerging policy indicates that the provision of health and social care has been identified as a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

5.3 Consideration of the Main Issues

Heritage Considerations

Relevant Planning Legislation

- 5.3.1 The statutory provisions governing Conservation Areas are found in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72 (1) of the Act requires decision makers

to pay particular attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character of the area. In this case the relevant area is the Grosvenor Conservation Area.

- 5.3.2 The interpretation of 'preserve or enhance' has been clarified by case law (Chandler v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2007] and South Lakeland District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment [1992]). These cases demonstrate that this can be achieved either by development which makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance, or by development which leaves the character and appearance unharmed.
- 5.3.3 The statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area does not preclude incremental change in a conservation area.

National Planning Policy

- 5.3.4 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9) ("PPW") was updated most recently in November 2016 and sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government.
- 5.3.5 One of the Welsh Governments objectives in relation to the historic environment is *"to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, while at the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous"*.
- 5.3.6 Paragraph 6.5.20 of PPW states *"there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting."* Paragraph 6.5.21 goes on to state that *"preservation or enhancement of a conservation area can be achieved by a development which either makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance or leaves them unharmed."*
- 5.3.7 Welsh Government Technical Advice Note 24 was published in May 2017 and provides specific guidance on the historic environment. Paragraph 6.7 relates to conservation areas and states *"generally, there will be an emphasis on controlled and positive management of change that encourages economic vibrancy and social and cultural vitality, and accords with the area's special architectural and historic qualities."*
- 5.3.8 Welsh Government Technical Advice Note 12 was published in March 2016 and provides guidance on design. Paragraph 4.9 highlights opportunities for innovative design stating that *"a contextual approach should not necessarily prohibit contemporary design."*

Local Planning Policy

- 5.3.9 Policy EC7 of the UDP relates to conservation areas and states:

"Within, and in close proximity to, conservation areas, the priority will be to preserve and/or enhance those buildings, structures, streets, trees, open spaces, archaeological remains, views, and other elements which contribute to the unique character of the area. 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.”

- 5.3.10 Emerging LPD Policy SP10 relates to conserving, protecting and enhancing the historic environment and states:

“Proposals which conserve, protect and enhance the following County Borough’s unique and significant cultural and heritage assets and, where appropriate their settings will be supported:

- *Listed Buildings and in particular those on the Buildings at Risk Register;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *The Outstanding Universal Value of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site;*
- *Registered historic parks, gardens and landscapes; and*
- *Scheduled Ancient Monuments & archaeological remains.”*

- 5.3.11 Emerging Policy SP10 is inconsistent with PPW in that it requires proposals to conserve, protect **and** enhance heritage assets and their settings. Emerging LDP Policy SP10 should therefore be given limited weight.

Discussion

- 5.3.12 Consultation with Wrexham’s Conservation Officer took place prior to submission of the planning application to understand the extent to which the Elms could be altered. Whilst the Elms is not statutorily listed, it was considered important to retain the character of the building in terms of its appearance and scale, particularly from Rhosddu Road and Grosvenor Road.

- 5.3.13 The proposed ground floor extension is to the rear of the Elms on the buildings southern elevation, and therefore only a very small proportion of the proposed extension would be visible from Rhosddu Road. Whilst the extension extends beyond the length of the existing building line on both sides, the proposed single storey extension is small in scale and remains subservient to the main building. It does not detract from the existing building, and makes only a very minor impact on the overall character and appearance of the building when viewed from the main vantage points of Rhosddu Road and Grosvenor Road. The Conservation Officer commented that (inter alia) *“the option proposed, and as submitted, is considered to have the least impact upon the area whilst enabling the building to be retained in its current use”*.

- 5.3.14 The proposed development introduces additional landscaping along the site’s northern and western boundaries to mitigate visual impact from Rhosddu Road and the A5152. The retention of the large Beech tree within the car park will provide visual screening from vantage points looking in from Rhosddu Road and Grosvenor Road.

- 5.3.15 The design of the proposed extension evolved following comments from the Conservation Officer, with revisions to the proposed design submitted to the Council on 12th January 2017 (see email correspondence submitted dated 12th January 2017). The proposed revisions fully address the Conservation Officers concerns.

- 5.3.16 The proposed extension is of a contemporary design in contrast to the traditional appearance of the existing building. The northern section of the proposed extension will be constructed

in a linear blue brick, similar in colour to the ones used in the contrasting decorative bands on the existing building. The proposed brick will complement the existing building in terms of colour and texture. The southern section of the proposed extension will be clad in zinc sheeting which adds interest to the southern elevation of the extension, assists in breaking up the mass of brickwork, and helps to lessen the overall impact on the character and appearance of the building. A similar zinc cladding material is used on the standing seam section of the Coleg Cambria building which lies adjacent to the appeal site. It should be noted that all materials were discussed and agreed with the Council's Conservation Officer.

- 5.3.17 The window on the northern elevation and the glass door on the southern elevation help to provide visual separation between the existing building and the proposed extension.
- 5.3.18 Elements of the existing building such as the window shape and size have been carried through to the extension to provide some continuity.
- 5.3.19 The Council's conservation officer raised no objection to the proposed scheme, and as stated at page 119 of the Committee Report *"the fact that the site lies within a conservation area does not prevent a more contemporary approach to design being taken in appropriate circumstances, provided the resulting building preserves or enhances the conservation area. In this instance the contrast is appropriate, ensuring the extension can be interpreted as a modern addition to the building. The extension is of a well thought out design that will not detract from the appearance of the existing building and will preserve the character of the wider conservation area."*
- 5.3.20 The Council's adopted Grosvenor Road Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan divides the Conservation Area into four character areas. The appeal site falls within the Yale College Campus character area, and the Management Plan highlights that the character area is made up of a mixture of buildings types including modern brick and glass structures. It is apparent therefore that the use of modern materials is already a feature of the Yale College Campus character area, and that the proposed extension will reflect the design and character of the area as a whole.
- 5.3.21 The Elms is a substantial building in a prominent location, and is identified as a 'building of visual interest or important townscape group' within the Council's Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan. The Elms has suffered from a lack of investment in recent years, and as a result remedial work is required to make good the fabric of the building to prevent it from deteriorating further. The proposed development will deliver a number of improvements to the fabric of the Elms including the following: cleaning and general repairs to brick and stonework; repairs to the timber structure of the building; replacement of the existing roof with a combination of the existing slates and reclaimed natural states to match; and replacement of all windows with new timber painted double glazed windows to match the existing. These improvements will significantly improve the character and appearance of the existing building and in turn will maintain the historic and architectural integrity of the Grosvenor Conservation Area.
- 5.3.22 Taking the above into account, it is considered that the proposed extension preserves the character and appearance of the Elms, whilst the proposed improvements to the fabric of the existing building will significantly enhance the overall building. The overall effect of the proposed development on the Grosvenor Conservation Area is positive, and the character and appearance of the conservation area would be enhanced. It is therefore considered that the proposed development fully accords with UDP Policy EC7.

Other Considerations

5.3.23 Policy GDP1 of the UDP sets development objectives for all new development and states:

“All new development should:-

- a) Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*
- b) Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public / private spaces.*
- c) Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources.*
- d) Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality.*
- e) Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible.*
- f) Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.*
- g) Secure public services (e.g. gas, water, electricity) to development at minimum public cost.*
- h) Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest.*
- i) Ensure that development does not result in, or is subject to, flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination, either on or off the site.*
- j) Have regard to the need to safeguard those areas that possess a strong Welsh cultural and/or linguistic identity from development that could harm this identity.*
- k) Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.”*

5.3.24 The relevant criteria of Policy GDP1 in this case are criteria *a*, *b*, *d* and *e* and the proposed development accords with these as discussed below.

5.3.25 As explained in paragraphs 3.2.3 to 3.2.9 above, the proposed development by way of its scale, design, layout and use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality, and as such is in accordance with criteria *a* of Policy GDP1.

5.3.26 As explained in paragraph 3.1.4 above, the layout of the existing building is inadequate and raises issues of safety for both service users and staff. The proposed development will deliver key improvements to the design and layout of the building to ensure that service users and staff are safe and secure. As such the proposed development is considered in accordance with criteria *b* of Policy GDP1.

5.3.27 The proposed development will improve pedestrian access to the site, in particular for service users, through the provision of a new pedestrian entrance from Rhosddu Road. The proposed development will utilise the existing vehicular access to the site from Rhosddu Road, which is considered to be adequate. As page 121 of the Committee Report states *“with regards to the site access, I have not been provided with any evidence that it currently gives rise to significant safety issues”*. The scheme provides safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to

and from the proposed development, both on site and in the nearby locality, and as such is in accordance with criteria *d* of Policy GDP1.

- 5.3.28 The appeal site is a sustainable site. It is located in the town centre and is well located for public transport links, situated approximately 150m from the main bus station and approximately 500m from Wrexham Central Rail Station. The proposed development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes, and as such is in accordance with criteria *e* of Policy GDP1.

Access and Car Parking

- 5.3.29 Whilst the Council's highways officer raises concerns regarding visibility splays, it should be noted that the proposed development will not result in an increase in vehicle movements to/from the site. Any additional car parking demand will be accommodated either on the nearby Health Board owned Romano Site or in public car parks in the local area.
- 5.3.30 In addition, the proposed development will improve the existing access to the site by introducing a new pedestrian entrance and exit for service users, providing a clear separation between pedestrians and vehicles. The Committee Report states at page 121 that *"with regards to the site access, I have not been provided with any evidence that it currently gives rise to significant safety issues."*
- 5.3.31 Policy T8 of the UDP relates to parking and states:

"Development granted planning permission will be required to provide vehicle parking spaces either on site or nearby, in accordance with the Council's current parking standards. Special regard will be paid to the following factors, as appropriate:-

- a) the availability of public transport nearby,*
- b) proximity to public car parking,*
- c) proximity to local services and facilities,*
- d) road safety hazards and amenity considerations arising from on-street parking in the vicinity of the site.*

Where implementation difficulties arise in making parking provision on-site or nearby, the Council will require a developer to make financial contributions for measures to assist public transport, or walking and cycling as appropriate."

- 5.3.32 The Council's maximum parking standards are set out in Local Planning Guidance Note 16 (LPGN 16) which was adopted by Wrexham in November 2011. If the LPGN 16 maximum parking standards are applied, 24 parking spaces would be required for the existing building, and 28 once the extension is built.
- 5.3.33 The proposed development will result in a need for 24 staff parking spaces, and 2 visitor spaces. There is space on the appeal site to accommodate 15 parking spaces within the existing car park to the south of the building, with provision for up to 9 parking spaces for staff at the Health Boards Romano site, which is located a short distance (0.2 miles) from the appeal site on Grove Road.
- 5.3.34 Whilst it is recognised that the proposed level of car parking falls short of the Council's maximum parking standards, these are not minimum requirements and do not need to be

met in all cases. We are reminded of this at paragraph 4.13 of Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 18: Transport, which clearly states that *“maximum parking standards should not be applied so rigidly that they become minimum standards. Maximum standards should allow developers the discretion to reduce parking levels”*.

- 5.3.35 The supporting text for Policy T8 states that *“full compliance with these standards may neither be practicable nor appropriate (e.g. where there may be insurmountable access, amenity, space or layout constraints) particularly where key urban regeneration or building conservation objectives are denied. Such circumstances are likely to apply in Wrexham town centre and the larger district shopping centres. If there is no space available on the site, suitable parking provision will need to be made elsewhere in the area.”*
- 5.3.36 The circumstances set out within the supporting text clearly apply to the appeal site, which is a small sustainably located site located within the town centre, with suitable car parking provision available elsewhere nearby.
- 5.3.37 Furthermore, regard should also be had to the relevant criteria set out in Policy T8. In terms of criteria *a*, the appeal site lies within Wrexham Town Centre and is extremely well located for public transport links, situated approximately 500m from the main bus station and approximately 0.5 mile from Wrexham Central Rail Station. In terms of criteria *b*, there are a number of public car parks relatively close by including the ‘Library’ (which provides 84 spaces) and ‘Waterworld’ (which provides 417 spaces) car parks on Chester Road approximately 400m from the appeal site. The route from these public car parks to the appeal site is convenient and suitable for those with a disability. In terms of criteria *d*, the proposed development is unlikely to give rise to road safety issues or amenity considerations arising from on street parking in the vicinity of the site. Rhosddu Road has double yellow lines on both sides of the road in front of the appeal site and further to the south parking is prohibited between 8am and 6pm. Furthermore, page 120 of the Committee Report states that *“I have not been provided with any evidence demonstrating that the existing level of demand for parking at the site has caused any significant on-street parking or highway safety issues in the vicinity of the site”*.
- 5.3.38 Therefore in summary it is considered that as the site is sustainably located, the proposed car parking arrangements are acceptable and accord with UDP Policy T8. We would emphasise that car parking has not been identified as a reason for refusal.

Trees

- 5.3.39 Policy EC4 of the UDP relates to Hedgerows, trees and woodland and states:

“Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted”.

- 5.3.40 The proposed development will result in the loss of six individual trees (category B and C) along the site’s northern and western boundaries, along with part of a small group of trees (category B) in the site’s north-eastern corner. Paragraph 7.5 of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) submitted as part of the planning application confirms that *“the trees for*

removal are not particularly significant in terms of their public amenity value, being either of low quality or relatively young and/or of small stature."

- 5.3.41 The proposed replacement of the existing access ramp from the car park to the staff entrance will affect a small portion of the Root Protection Area (RPA) of the Category A Beech tree which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order and is located in the car park. However the AIA confirms that this will affect less than 5% of the total RPA and will be situated in an area that is already highly compacted, and therefore will not be detrimental to the health of the tree.
- 5.3.42 Whilst the loss of trees on the appeal site will have some level of impact to the amenity of the area, this will be short term, and will be mitigated through new landscaping (incorporating three existing trees) along the site's northern and western boundaries. The new landscaping will make a significant positive contribution to the local townscape character and will provide visual screening for the proposed development. As such, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policy EC4.

Residential Amenity

- 5.3.43 The nearest residential properties lie approximately 45m to the north of the appeal site, and are therefore far enough away that the proposed development would not result in a loss of residential amenity by way of loss of light, privacy or by being over bearing.
- 5.3.44 The normal core operating hours for the proposed integrated SMS service would be Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Although some weekend and evening services are proposed, the residential properties lie far enough away from the proposed development that the likelihood of residential disamenity is slight.

Social/Community Implications

- 5.3.45 As set out in section 3, the proposed scheme will enable the integration of the two SMS's onto one site, significantly improving the quality of service provided, as well as minimising duplication of appointments and reducing overall service user footfall in the area. The proposed scheme will deliver significant benefits for service users, and for the wider community as a whole.
- 5.3.46 There is a clear need for the proposed development, and its benefits should be given significant weight in the planning balance.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1.1 The proposed development is for a ground floor extension and internal and external alterations to the Elms, to enable the integration of two complementary SMS into the Elms building. The SMS provide an invaluable community service, collectively supporting 500-600 service users, the majority of whom live in the Wrexham area.

6.1.2 The lawful use of the appeal site is D1, and the principle of providing a SMS within the Elms is already established.

6.1.3 The planning application was refused by the Council for the sole reason that

“The proposed development by virtue of its design and use of materials will have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the existing building and wider conservation area”. To allow the development would be contrary to Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Policy EC7 which seeks to ensure new development preserves and/or enhances the unique character of the area.”

6.1.4 This statement of case demonstrates that the proposed development is fully in accordance with the adopted development plan for the area, in particular UDP Policies EC7, GDP1, T8 and EC4.

6.1.5 The proposed extension preserves the character and appearance of the Elms, whilst the proposed improvements to the fabric of the existing building will significantly enhance the overall building. The overall effect of the proposed development on the Grosvenor Conservation Area is positive, and the character and appearance of the conservation area would be enhanced. It is therefore considered that the proposed development fully accords with UDP Policy EC7. In addition the proposed development accords with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, PPW, TAN 12, TAN 24, and the Council’s Grosvenor Road Conservation Area Assessment and Management.

6.1.6 The current situation with the two SMS provided at separate sites is inefficient and unsatisfactory in terms of the level of service it provides to service users, and results in more trips to the town centre for service users than if the two SMS were provided under one roof.

6.1.7 There is a clear operational need to combine the two SMS onto one site in order to provide a full integrated service for the benefit of persons using the SMS. This drive to join up SMS services more effectively is reflected in the Welsh Government health and social care priorities. There is also a clear need to retain the service within its existing location, due to the need to provide a highly accessible location to service users. The Council has failed to give sufficient weight to the social, community and health benefits of the proposed development. Furthermore, the Council has failed in their duty, as imposed by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (April 2016), to work with the Health Board to assess and support the needs of those in the area within substance misuse issues.

- 6.1.8 For the reasons outlined above, the Inspector is requested to allow this appeal and to grant planning permission for a ground floor extension and internal and external alterations to the Elms.



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