

**HERITAGE WRITTEN
REPRESENTATIONS**

**20 HIGH STREET
WREXHAM**

PREPARED BY LANPRO SERVICES

**ON BEHALF OF
AtlasOne**

FEBRUARY 2017



Planning + Development | Design Studio | Archaeology + Heritage

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This written representation has been prepared by Dr Ramona Usher of Lanpro Services Ltd. on behalf of AtlasOne (the appellant). It is in support of an appeal against the refusal on 6th December 2016 by Wrexham County Borough Council to discharge Conditions 4 and 5 (P/2016/0574) of Planning Permission Code no. P/2010/0870 for the conversion of un-used upper floors of 20 High Street, Wrexham into five residential apartments.

1.2 Dr Ramona Usher is a Principal Heritage Consultant at Lanpro Services Ltd. Lanpro Services Ltd. is a Planning and Heritage consultancy, based in Norwich. Ramona has over thirteen years of experience in all aspects of building and area conservation, in both the private and public sectors.

Background & Scope of Evidence

1.3 Lanpro Services Ltd. were instructed to prepare Heritage Written Representations on behalf of AtlasOne in support of an appeal following the refusal of to discharge Conditions 4 and 5 (P/2016/0574) of Planning Permission Code no. P/2010/0870, by Wrexham County Borough Council on 6th December 2016.

1.4 This heritage written representation has been prepared in relation to an appeal seeking the discharge of Conditions 4 and 5. These conditions are as follows:

Condition 4. Prior to their installation on the building, drawings to scale 1:5 and 1:20 fully detailing all new or replacement windows and doors shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall fully describe the proposed materials, decorative/protective finishes, cross sections for glazing bars, sills, heads etc, method of opening and glazing type. The works shall only be carried out in strict accordance with such details as are approved.

Condition 5. Prior to first use of the development, all external joinery shall receive a painted finish in accordance with a colour which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The colour of the painted finish shall not thereafter be changed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

1.5 The application to discharge these conditions was refused on 6th December 2016 for the

following reason:

- 1) Due to their appearance and the materials used, the windows detract from the appearance of the building and in turn have a detrimental impact upon the character of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, thus conflicting with policies GDP1 and EC7 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan.

1.6 Whilst the Local Planning Authority in their reasons for refusal have not specified the windows in question, there being a range of multi-paned uPVC, applied glazing-bar uPVC and roof-lights, this written representation has been produced to assess the impact of the windows, as installed, upon the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area. Consequently, this written representation considers potential impact by the appeal windows on the significance of the conservation area.

2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 In preparing this heritage appeal statement, due regard is given to the following national and local planning policy and guidance documents:

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (P(LBCA)) Act 1990

- 2.2 The P(LBCA) Act provides for the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and is largely expressed in the planning process through policies in regional and local planning guidance.
- 2.3 The P(LBCA) Act is the primary legislative instrument addressing the treatment of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas through the planning process.
- 2.4 Section 72 of the 1990 Act states, with respect to Conservation Areas, ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.’

Welsh Planning Policy

- 2.5 *Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9 – November 2016 – Chapter 6)* outlines the Welsh Government’s objectives in relation to the historic environment:
- Paragraph 6.2: To preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, while at the same time helping them to remain vibrant and prosperous;
- Paragraph 6.3.6: The positive management of conservation areas is necessary if their character and appearance are to be preserved or enhanced, and their heritage value is to be fully realised.
- Paragraph 6.5.20: 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: There will be a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission for developments, including advertisements, which damage the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting to an unacceptable level. In exceptional cases, the presumption may be overridden in favour of development considered desirable on the grounds of some other public interest. 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. Mitigation

measures can also be considered which could result in an overall neutral or positive impact of a proposed development in a conservation area.

2.6 The *Welsh Office Circular 61/96: Planning and the Historic Environment* states:

Paragraph 30: Many conservation areas include the commercial centres of towns and villages and generally there will need to be an emphasis on controlled and positive management of change, to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous, and ensure that any new development accords with the area's special architectural and historic qualities.

Conservation Principles

2.7 *Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales* (2011) define 'conservation' as 'the careful management of change'. The 2011 document outlines six overarching principles:

Principle 1: Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values

Principle 2: Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital

Principle 3: The historic environment is a shared resource

Principle 4: Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment

Principle 5: Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent

Principle 6: Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

2.8 The application of these principles should ensure: 'Every reasonable effort be made to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts on historic assets. Ultimately, however, it may be necessary to balance the benefit of the proposed change against the harm to the asset. If so, the weight given to heritage values should be proportionate to the importance of the assets and the impact of the change upon them.'

Local Policy

2.9 *The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996 – 2011* currently provides the local development policy for the administrative area of the Wrexham County Borough Council (adopted 2005). The decision notice states the details submitted in respect of Conditions 4 and 5 conflict with the following policies:

Policy GDP1

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.

Policy EC7

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.

3. APPEAL SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The Appeal Site is located at on the north side and east end of High Street, Wrexham. The building is not listed, but is located in the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 3.2 20 High Street is three storeys high, with a converted attic storey over. The pitched roof is finished with slates. The ground floor is occupied by a betting office. The upper floors are accessed through a ground floor entrance located on Chester Street.
- 3.3 The southern/High Street elevation comprises a modern undistinguished shopfront on the ground floor, whilst the uppers floors are finished with timber frame with rendered panels. Between the first and second floor is an inscription: 'RSJ 1928'. The first and second floor windows are timber, multi-paned six-over-six, vertical sliding sashes.
- 3.4 The building occupies a long linear plot, running north to south. The rear of the building is finished with red brick. The current windows comprise uPVC multi-paned double glazed units on the east and north elevations, and uPVC double glazed units on the west elevation. Externally, the windows are dark grey in colour.
- 3.5 To the rear of the appeal site an alleyway runs west from Chester Street, turning north towards Henblas Street. This alleyway is not an adopted highway.
- 3.6 The appeal site is located within the 'Medieval Wrexham' Character Area. This includes St Giles' Church and Precinct, Temple Row, Church Street, College Street, Town Hill, Abbot Street and High Street. The *Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan* (adopted January 2009) notes 'The properties along Town Hill and High Street are built on long narrow burgess plots probably of medieval origin. Characterised by a dense and compact form where houses and shops were intermingled and often properties consisted of a shopfront with accommodation above for the shopkeeper, and a workshop and yard to the rear. Some of these yards survive to the rear of properties along High Street and Town Hill but most have been filled in and developed' (2009, p. 14).
- 3.7 The aforementioned inscription, 'RSJ 1928', suggests the south elevation of the property was refronted and/or completed in that year. The multi-paned six-over-six sash windows

are Georgian in form and appearance, illustrating an earlier phase of the building. The red brick range to the rear is industrial in character, likely to be 19th century in date. The original multi-paned metal windows also point to a 19th century date of construction and/or significant alteration.

- 3.8 Therefore, the external appearance of 20 High Street exhibits a range of architectural features dating from the Georgian period to the present, thus contributing to the character and appearance of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area. The significance of the Conservation Area is both architectural and socially evidential. Architecturally this is an area betraying a mix of styles, materials and building technologies dating back to the medieval period.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.2 In 2010 a planning application for the conversion of the upper floors of 20 High Street into five residential apartments was approved with conditions (LPA reference: P/2010/0870).
- 4.3 Condition 4 of P/2010/0870 states: 'Prior to their installation on the building, drawings to scale 1:5 and 1:20 fully detailing all new or replacement windows and doors shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall fully describe the proposed materials, decorative/protective finishes, cross sections for glazing bars, sills, heads etc, method of opening and glazing type. The works shall only be carried out in strict accordance with such details as are approved.'
- 4.4 Condition 5 states: 'Prior to first use of the development, all external joinery shall receive a painted finish in accordance with a colour which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The colour of the painted finish shall not thereafter be changed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.'
- 4.5 In view of the above the Applicant prepared a discharge of conditions application (LPA ref. P/2016/0574) to discharge conditions 4 and 5. The application was received on 21 June 2016. During the determination process the building suffered significant damage from wind and water and the Applicant was forced into taking preventative measures to avoid further issue, those measures were to install uPVC windows on the rear elevation of the building to protect the internal areas from rain and wind damage.
- 4.6 The application was refused, nearly six months later, on 6th December 2016 for the following reason: 'Due to their appearance and the materials used, the windows detract from the appearance of the building and in turn have a detrimental impact upon the character of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, thus conflicting with policies GDP1 and EC7 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan'

5. RESPONSES TO HERITAGE REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 5.1 The reason for refusal of the details submitted in respect of the discharge of conditions 4 and 5 (LPA reference P/2016/0574) was as follows:
- 1) Due to their appearance and the materials used, the windows detract from the appearance of the building and in turn have a detrimental impact upon the character of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area, thus conflicting with policies GDP1 and EC7 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan.
- 5.2 The elevation plans submitted with the original application (LPA reference P/2010/0870) indicated 'new window frames' for the north and east elevation (Drawing Number 10.005(2-)007 Revision B).
- 5.3 Drawing number 10.005(2-)006 Revision A indicates eight rooflights proposed on the north and south elevation of the building. Given Condition 4 of P/2010/0870 refers to 'windows' and not 'rooflights' or even 'new openings', it is assumed Condition 4 does not cover the rooflights.
- 5.4 Details of the proposed new 'windows' were conditioned. Therefore, the principle of replacing the original 19th century metal windows was agreed in principle. With reference to drawing number 10.005(2-)007 Revision B, as submitted, the local planning authority approved in principle replacement windows that differed in pattern from the original. Therefore, the reason for refusal of the details submitted in respect of the discharge of conditions 4 and 5 did not concern the replacement of historic fabric. The principle of their replacement was established with approved drawings and the consequent conditional replacement with new windows: the decision notice did not stipulate permission was granted notwithstanding the approved drawings. The pattern of the new windows was approved on the submitted drawings despite these differing in pattern from the original, and the details of these windows was conditioned, namely 'the proposed materials, decorative/protective finishes, cross sections for glazing bars, sills, heads etc, method of opening and glazing type'. Therefore, the core issue is how acceptable the new windows, as installed, are in the context of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 5.5 The Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan states windows 'must be

correctly proportioned, well related to each other and adjoining buildings and should respect the existing openings.’ The east and north elevation windows, as installed, comply with this requirement. The aforementioned document also states uPVC alternatives are not acceptable. However, the range and style of uPVC windows has vastly improved in recent years, with narrow integral glazing bars achievable, as demonstrated in this appeal case.

- 5.6 The actual windows, as installed, are more true to the original form than that on the approved drawing; they are small pane in arrangement and have an element of similarity with the originals which is absent from the approved pattern. The windows are sufficiently close to the originals to not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (see Plates 1-4).
- 5.7 It is also pertinent to note the requirements from the building regulations and environmental health. The former requires a minimum opening area for ventilation, and the latter good acoustics. The windows designed to realise the building control requirement have been located on the most discreet parts of the building: the rear inconspicuous west facing elevation which does very little to contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area owing to its secluded location. The windows are similar to those on the approved elevational plans having a large openable area.
- 5.8 The windows which are more publically accessible, i.e. those on the building’s east Chester Street elevation, and on the more prominent south elevation, are sufficiently close to the originals not to have a detrimental impact on the conservation area. The glazing bars of these windows are integral, not planted on. The glazing bars are narrow, and when viewed from the publically accessible parts of the conservation area are subdued in their appearance. The dark grey colour of their appearance is also conciliatory to the original appearance of the originals. The use of double glazing also complies with the local plan policy GDP1 c) by conserving energy.
- 5.9 Therefore, it can be argued that the windows, as installed on the north and east elevations of the rear wing, offer a greater degree of preservation of the character and appearance of the conservation area, than the approved design.
- 5.10 The Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan aims to

secure the use of upper floors within the area as otherwise their underuse results in 'a lack of maintenance and deterioration of the structural fabric, which degrades the overall appearance of the street-scene' (2009, p. 4).

- 5.11 In a similar vein, Welsh Planning Policy requires the positive management of conservation areas in order to secure their character and appearance and the 2011 *Conservation Principles* require the weight given to heritage values should be proportionate to the importance of the assets and the impact of the change upon them. Bearing this in mind, 20 High Street contributes to the significance of the Wrexham Town Centre Conservation Area through the survival of its 1920s southern frontage; the survival of the south facing timber vertical sliding sash windows, the legibility of its medieval plots through its long, linear plot, and its contribution to the Victorian industrial period with its 19th century rear extension and alterations. The conversion of the upper floors of this building to residential use has secured its optimum viable use. The necessary replacement of the windows reflects some minimum harm – accepted in principle by the local planning authority – to secure the building's reuse. Therefore, the installation of the sensitively designed windows can be deemed to outweigh any harm to the significance of the overall conservation area.



Plate 1: Appeal site as viewed looking north from High Street.



Plate 2: Appeal site, east elevation, as viewed looking west from Charles Street.



Plate 3: Appeal site as viewed from alleyway to the north of site, looking south-east.



Plate 4: Appeal site (centre of image) as viewed looking south-south-west from the top floor of the Peoples Market multi-storey car-park.