

DONALD INSALL ASSOCIATES

Chartered Architects, Historic Building & Planning
Consultants



PLAS KYNASTON, CEFN MAWR, WREXHAM

Design and Access Statement February 2015

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DONALD INSALL ASSOCIATES

Chartered Architects, Historic Building & Planning Consultants

Y Becws, Pool Lane, Conwy, LL32 8PZ
Tel: 01492 592378
Email: conwy@insall-architects.co.uk
Web: www.insall-architects.co.uk

JOHN PIDGEON PARTNERSHIP

Chartered Quantity Surveyors / Construction Cost Consultants

Suite 5 Noram House, Victoria Rd,
Shifnal, Shropshire, TF11 8AG
Tel : 01952 461881
Email : wilf@johnpidgeon.co.uk
Web : www.johnpidgeon.co.uk

ENGINEERING & MORE LTD

Chartered Quantity Surveyors / Construction Cost Consultants

The Coach House, Plemstall Lane,
Mickle Trafford, Chester, CH2 4EN.
Tel : (0)1244 300472
Email : ted@engineeringandmore.co.uk
Web : www.engineeringandmore.co.uk

ALISON JOHNSTON

Ecological Consultant

9 High Street, Rachub,
Gwynedd, LL57 3EL.
Tel : (0)1248 602471
Email : aljohnston.bats@yahoo.co.uk

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Report

1.1.1 Plas Kynaston is currently vacant and in the ownership of Plas Kynaston Hall Trust, controlled by Wrexham County Borough Council. It is on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register as a Category 3 'at risk' building. Safeguarding the historic fabric and protecting the significance of the building within the context of the proposals has thus been an underlying thread to considering appropriate re-use options.

1.1.2 The Welsh Georgian Trust is a Building Preservation Trust which operates in Wales. The purpose of the Trust is to preserve Georgian and Pre-Georgian buildings in Wales.

1.1.3 Following an options appraisal to investigate feasibility of undertaking the repair, conversion and upgrading of the building, the Trust are proposing the conversion of Plas Kynaston Hall, near Wrexham into six, one bedroom flats – designated use class Sui Generis – Houses in Multiple Occupation. The feasibility was funded by an Architectural Heritage Fund Options Appraisal Grant.

1.1.4 The first part of the study concluded there was an established shortage of housing for young single men in the area, and this could potentially prove an attractive proposal.

1.1.5 The property has many issues related to ownership, access and permissible uses. A number of stakeholders and funders have already provided outline comment to agree to the proposed re-use included within the proposals.

1.1.6 Donald Insall Associates were asked to provide independent, professional and experienced architectural practice for the services of lead professional for the options appraisal and provided a report in October 2012 investigating ideas as to the eventual use for the building, considering the preservation of the historic character and fabric of the building within the available constraints (funding, and other).

1.1.7 The Trust's studies were divided into two main components;

- The *first* part of the work, which the Trust undertook themselves with the help of Richard Keen, related to assessing various feasibility of use-options for a viable long term use for the building, together with identifying their principal sources of funding and future revenue.

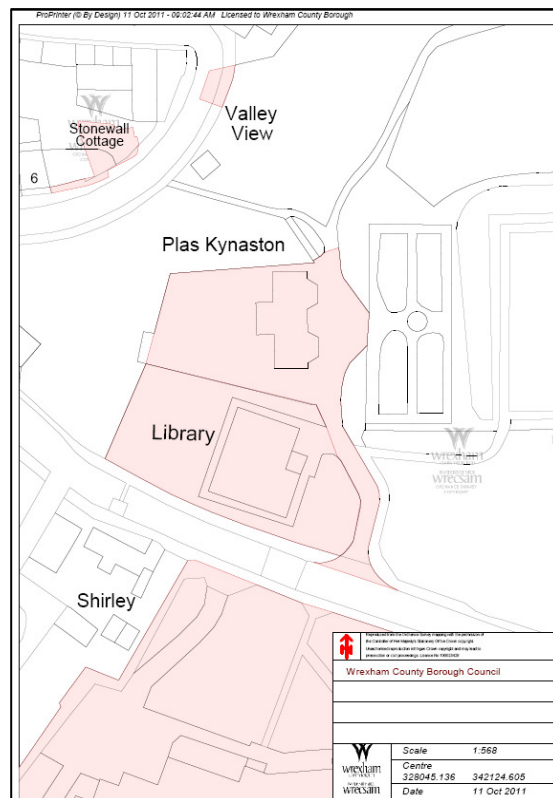


- The *second* part, which the Welsh Georgian Trust commissioned Donald Insall Associates to conduct, related to providing advice on the repair and remedial work required, and a summary of the principal alterations necessary to adapt the building for future proposed use(s) as identified during the first part of the work, together with an assessment of the likely cost.
- 1.1.8 The first part of the work included negotiation with suitable stakeholders, and concluded that there was no potential for redevelopment as a single house or unit.
- 1.1.9 Preparation of numerous outline proposals were put forward for the Trust to review. Wrexham County Borough Council's officers have been involved with reviewing use-options during the first part of the works with Donald Insall Associates, and have been supportive in principle of the proposed uses put forward.
- 1.1.10 The Buildings at Risk Strategy, adopted in 2004, prioritises action for Local Authority managed Buildings at Risk in order to set a good example to other owners and give credibility to the scheme. Plas Kynaston presents the Council with the opportunity of creating an exemplary project which, will not only create publicity for the strategy but also demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackling their own problems.
- 1.1.11 Originally a private house – designated use class C3a Dwelling, Plas Kynaston housed the library – designated use class D1, for a time. Feasibility studies have been carried out by the Council in the recent past to investigate library use again, but costs proved prohibitive and the scheme was abandoned. The buildings most recent use was by the Cefn and District Children Youth and Families Project for office – designated use class D1, and recreation use.
- 1.1.12 The Planning Department supports the Building's restoration and there are no initial objections to the proposed use of the building, or to the principle of an extension. This report forms the basis to help enable an agreement to be reached with the local planning authority and CADW.
- 1.1.13 All matters relating to Building Regulation / fire escapes would require a detailed design process.
- 1.1.14 This report, its content and the concepts outlined within for use of the site remain the Copyright of Donald Insall Associates Ltd.

2.0 HISTORY & CONTEXT OF SITE

2.1.1 Plas Kynaston sits within the boundary of the Cefn Conservation Area which was designated in December 2005.

2.1.2 The Conservation Area has since secured Townscape Heritage Initiative Funding (THI) of £1 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and Physical Regeneration Funding from the Welsh Assembly Government of £1.5 million but Plas Kynaston was not included for funding under the Townscape Heritage Initiative as the Council was advised by HLF in the early stages of the application process that it was too large a project to be included within the THI.



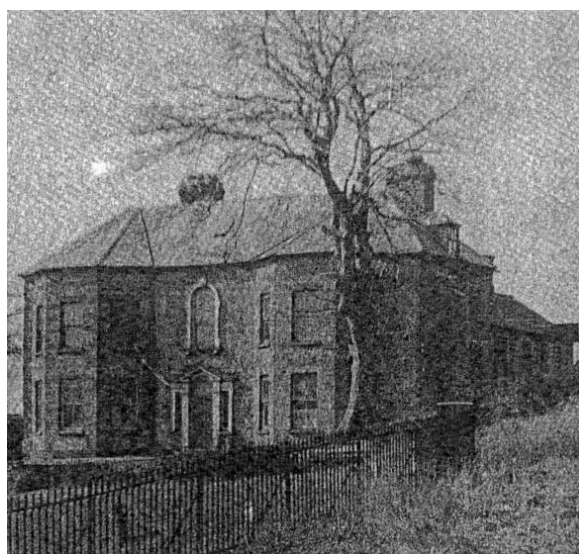
2.1.3 Plas Kynaston was the home of the Kynaston family whose industrial activities led to the development of the Plas Kynaston foundry which cast the ironwork for the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. The Plas' associations with the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct give the building added significance – and the Aqueduct and Canal are now a World Heritage Site.

2.1.4 The building sits overlooking the park in the angle between Hill Street and Plas Kynaston Lane. The original gardens are no longer present and this largely precludes re-use of the building as a single unit occupancy house.



2.1.5 The building's position is on an incredibly well traversed route and sits between the new library and school and the centre of town. The site is by no means 'out of town' and forgotten, in fact it forms a pleasant focus in the area overlooking a small park and bowling green.

- 2.1.6 The most significant elevation is the frontage addressing the small park and bowling green to the east of the site, however the back west view of the site offers possibilities for upgrading and is in a prominent and highly visible position. There is precedent for a perpendicular wing here historically which the Council's Planning department have already confirmed support in principle although the proposals do not include for extending.
- 2.1.7 The public library adjacent to Plas Kynaston slightly masks the building from view looking from the South. The library is a modern building, which has limited design merit, however the Council have recently spent on its upgrade and maintenance and it is well used within the community.
- 2.1.8 The area to the west of the building is currently used for parking in support of the adjacent library use. The Planning Department have previously recommended that consideration be given to ensuring a minimum of 10 formal parking spaces and 2 formal disabled spaces be incorporated into any proposed scheme.
- 2.1.9 The Grade II listed house is thought to date back to the early C18 but was substantially remodelled in the early C19: the present elevation details appear to be from the latter period. The mass of roof, together with the moulded stone eaves cornice, and the brick stacks suggest that the general form of the building is however C18.
- 2.1.10 The house exterior includes render over stone, with brick rear wall stacks and some later brick repair work in the rear wall. The roof covering is natural slate.
- 2.1.11 Externally the house presents itself as 2 storeys, and a 3-window range, including 2 full-height canted bay windows which each comprise 3 windows, flanking the entrance. A central entrance with an open pediment, radial fan and side lights opens onto a refined original cantilevered staircase.
- 2.1.12 The house has two main floors, above a lower basement vaulted area and there is room for accommodation within the high roof's attic space.
- 2.1.13 Attic space use is currently restricted by a new roof structure which omits the pitched roofs to the bays but this can be altered and is included within Donald Insall Associates' proposals.



3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1.1 Significance has a number of definitions and in defining the significance of a building not only are its physical attributes considered but also its less tangible symbolic qualities, which are none the less embodied within the fabric.

Significance expresses itself in three main ways:-

- (1) The surviving fabric demonstrates how the building was constructed and used for its purpose and how it has changed over time to reflect changing circumstances.
- (2) The building acts as a reminder of people, events, activities, and ways of life which are otherwise lost.
- (3) The built form stimulates both senses and imagination.

Identifying the significance of a building as a whole and of its constituent parts is a two-part process of recording and evaluation. The significance can be at three levels:

National: a unique example of the type of element

- not necessarily a unique building or feature, but one of a limited group which (individually or collectively) contributes to the understanding of national events/movements/etc.
- an example of the work of a significant company or individual

Regional:

- a building or feature typical or exemplary of the work of a company or individual known across the region
- an example of a building type or element particular to the region

Local:

- a feature significant to the integrity of the overall design of the building.
- an example of the work of a company or individual known in the local area.

- 3.1.2 Factors which influence the evaluation of significance include rarity, typicality, intactness and authenticity. Placing features in any one group is a difficult, partially subjective, task and is seldom manifest.

As well as the many aspects of the building, its design and its history that contribute to our understanding of the site and its significance, different parts of the building vary in their importance. Different rooms and spaces are of varying quality contained within a common external envelope and must therefore be considered as parts of a greater whole. As with so many complex artefacts, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

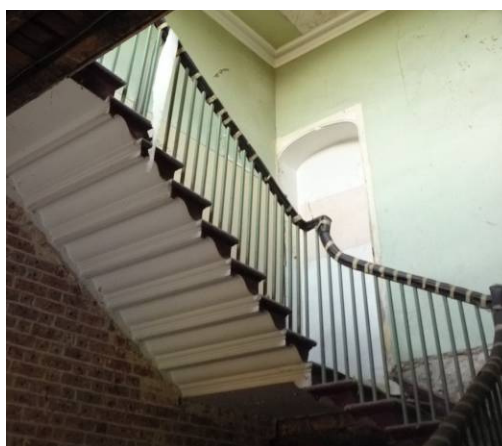
The significance of different areas of Plas Kynaston is therefore considered under aspects relating to the building as a whole, as well as aspects relating to particular zones and rooms. When making decisions about any individual room or zone, its impact on the wider zone or greater whole has been taken into account and new insertions are clearly defined as a next and new phase of development within the site's history, seeking only to highlight and differentiate from historic fabric and

phasing, rather than to suffocate or confuse.

To conclude, Plas Kynaston is listed Grade 2 and is an important building of national importance in Wales. The site is of particular value in that it has been adapted incrementally over three hundred odd years with a sequence of development. However, within the site, there are areas which do not themselves contribute to this status, and where alteration or, in some cases, removal does not diminish the significance of the listing.

3.1.3 In general a minimum intervention and repair approach has been adopted, and restoration of 'lost' features has been allowed for. The repair proposals are specialist and the skills and experience of the conservators, plus on site dialogue with them, will be vital to the success of the project. The historically noteworthy and intact features, worthy of being carefully retained and repaired to outline their standard of national importance, are listed as below.

- All structural fabric to the house to include load bearing walls.
- Cast iron rainwater goods.
- Roof slate.
- Clay ridge and hip tiles.
- 2 chimney stacks.
- All decorative stone profiles.
- 2 Full height canted bay windows.
- Sash windows and shutters.
- Arched head window and stone surround.
- Entrance doorway with stone pediment, radial fan and side lights.
- Remaining historic doors.
- Remains of intact lath and plaster ceilings.
- Remains of intact lath and plaster wall finishes.
- Remains of lime plaster decorative cornices.
- Remains of decorative joinery profiles.
- Decorative herringbone Victorian tiled floor.
- Parquet timber flooring.
- Cantilevered stone main staircase.
- Timber attic stair.
- Room AF02 Contemporary fireplace.
- Any remaining historic ironmongery



3.1.4 If archaeological features are revealed by modifications to the building these should be recorded.

3.1.5 Areas of negative interest and significance, worthy of alteration to enhance the building's significance, are listed as below:

- Replacement of modern hard cement render of poor overall condition with evidence of cracking with lime render.
(The HLF officer has confirmed that removal of the existing render is preferred, trial for removal has been carried out on site – all further removal to be carried out using non mechanical methods to prevent damage to the substrate).
- Replacement of modern roof structure and bituminous felt to structural engineers details.
- Removal of modern timber attic door.
- Removal of modern chimney cap, rebuilding chimney to match adjacent.
- Removal of remains of redundant services to elevations.
- Removal of large concrete plinth to west of building.
- Removal and replacement of undersized rain water gutters with new larger gutters to match existing.
- Removal of masonry paint to stone features.
- Replacement of metal security door with oak door.
- Removal of boarding and mesh from openings.
- Room GF03 removal of modern partition.
- Replacement of life expired ceiling / wall finishes.
- Room FF01 removal of modern skirting to east and west walls.
- Room FF01 removal of modern brick fireplace.
- Room FF03 removal of fireproofing panel to door.
- Room FF03 removal of grill to fireplace.
- Removal of modern ironmongery and replacement with new to match any remaining historic ironmongery or to suit period of property.
- Removal of any defective lintels.



3.1.6 The house and site in general represents a modified c.18 house with later detailing of some refinement which is a prominent feature of Cefn.

THE PROPOSALS

Repairs philosophy and effect on the context and character.

- 3.1.7 The main objective of the proposals is to safeguard the historic fabric of Plas Kynaston for the future, and provide a meaningful interpretation of material of historic significance.
- 3.1.8 The proposals further seek to enhance the internal historic character. The fabric identified as historically noteworthy, will be carefully repaired on a like with like basis – and more sensitive fabric will be conserved utilising conservative repair methods in situ to retain as existing. Repairs in such cases will be conceived with consideration for careful consolidation of all ancient fabric, by suitable specialist conservation methods always.
- 3.1.9 The proposals make no attempt to change the character of the building and its context. It will retain its appearance within the site setting. All proposals respect the existing building character by utilising its remaining good historic merits. Interventions are done to the external fabric only to introduce natural light and ventilation into the building.
- 3.1.10 The submission reflects the detailed outline consultations held with – Wrexham County Borough Council officers - Anne Lloyd Morris (WCBC), Anne Irwin (WCBC), Paul Blackburn (THI Officer), The Welsh Georgian Trust - Michael Tree (WGT), Andrew Beckett (WGT), CADW – Mick Davies, Donald Insall Associates, Engineering and More Ltd consulting structural engineers and Alison Johnston Ecological Consultants.
- 3.1.11 Structural Engineer consultations – Engineering and More Ltd carried out an inspection in September 2012 and produced a report on the structure to inform options to convert the structure.
- 3.1.12 Environmental consultations – Alison Johnston Ecological Consultants carried out a protected species survey in February 2015 and provided a report to inform the proposals for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for renovation.
- 4.1.7 Estate Agents were consulted and it was confirmed that splitting Plas Kynaston up into various sized units would allow for proposed accommodation to be sold or rented.

Environmental Sustainability

- 3.1.8 The proposals seek to utilise and re-use the existing building and historic materials, thus reducing the environmental impact of the development.
- 3.1.9 The use of natural materials (external lime render, oak windows, oak doors) fulfil Donald Insall Associates' Practice philosophy to promote materials with low embodied energy and intervention.
- 3.1.10 Local skills and builders will be used to limit carbon footprint. Natural light and ventilation are introduced and integrated within the scheme sensitively.
- 3.1.11 There is evidence that the building is being used by bats and investigations have been carried out by Alison Johnston Ecological Consultants. The proposals include for

dividing off an area of the basement for sole use by bats and the provision of unlit access via existing vents.

3.1.12 Bird boxes are to be provided within the site.

3.1.13 Cycle rack to be provided to the rear of the property.

Design Philosophy for House - interior

3.1.14 Various options for splitting Plas Kynaston up into various sized accommodation units were explored during the feasibility stage with the most feasible change of use being the provision of six, one bedroom residential units. 2 on the ground floor, 2 on the first floor and 2 within the attic space all being self-contained. The proposed layout fits into the existing layout of the house with minimal intervention and alteration in the most part, and where new integrations are required to allow the building to adapt to a modern standard of use for use as dwellings; new walls are conceived as structurally independent and isolated solutions in materials to contrast visually but respectfully with the existing.

3.1.15 These insertions will have absolute and minimal physical impact on the historic fabric, will be wholly reversible where appropriate, and will seek within its careful design to complement the existing materials rather than confuse and distract.

3.1.16 The basement level with appropriate structural penetrations as required has been designed to be used for laundry requirements and provision for separate bat roost.

3.1.17 Structural repairs to all areas will be as identified by Engineering & More Ltd.

3.1.18 An appropriate and high quality of fit out and services for six, one bedroom units.

3.1.19 Floors remain unpunctuated and the main circulation and doorways featured in the building remain as originally proposed with minimal destruction to the buildings fabric.

4.0 Design Philosophy for House - exterior

4.1.1 Ultimately, the proposals seek to enhance the street appearance and historic character in accordance with the Conservation Areas guideline documents.

4.1.2 The proposals seek to enhance the external historic character and all existing historic fabric will be retained and repaired on a like with like basis and to strict conservation standards and in accordance with the recommendations as made during consultations.

4.1.3 Amending the existing modern roof structure to structural engineer's details to allow for accommodation within the attic space. Utilising historic photographic evidence as a guide for the reinstatement of the dormer windows and pitched roofs over the bays.

4.1.4 The 'existing survey' shows a modern stair leading to the basement from the back (west). This has been cast over with a very crude concrete deck and it is possible to see some voids beneath this deck on site where the poor quality of the cast has meant it has pulled away, however – Donald Insall Associates are unable to establish exactly what is below this area at present and further investigation will be required. Proposals allow for the provision of a new staircase to the back, or utilise existing (if present under concrete plinth).

- 4.1.5 New windows to north and south elevations and new rooflights to the east and west elevations to provide natural light and ventilation.

5.0 Design Philosophy for External Works

The property is well positioned within an ample site with adequate space for parking, clothes drying, bin storage and an additional area of ground to the front of the property overlooking well maintained community areas. The property is positioned within an ideal location for local amenities with a formal garden to the east / front of the property which overlooks the bowling green. Beyond this is a football ground and to the south east is a play ground. There are grassed areas to the north and the west of the site boundaries which public footpaths cross. The property is therefore located within a wide area of open ground located between Oxford Street to the north, Hill Street to the north west and Plas Kynaston Lane to the South. Bringing this boarded up property back into use by creating accommodation would help to improve a building and area which is the current back drop to a space that appears to be well used communally in Cefn Mawr for bowling, playing, football, and walking.



- 5.1.1 In accordance with the Local Planning Guidance Note No 6 parking bays are proposed to be provided within the site boundary, to the rear/west of the building and site. To suit requirements the proposals include for 10 Standard size parking bays and 2 spaces reserved specifically for people with disabilities as recommended by WCBC. The less able spaces are proposed to be located within 50m of an accessible entrance with parking bays wide enough to accommodate wheelchair traffic to and from the car and denoted with clear signposting.



- 5.1.2 The car parking is to be accessed from the south of the site along the main drive past the library.
- 5.1.3 A new ramp with 900mm high 40mm diameter handrails each side is proposed to replace the existing ramp at the entrance.
- 5.1.4 In accordance with the Local Planning Guidance Note No 5 Landscaping proposals include for existing boundaries and materials to be retained. The car park area to the west is to be resurfaced with a resin bound surface finish which is firm, non slip and well laid to assist in demarcating the private space. Existing areas of hard and soft landscaping to be retained.
- 5.1.5 In accordance with the Local Planning Guidance Note No 5 clothes drying areas are to be provided to the north west and south west corners of the site and an enclosed bin store surrounded by timber fencing panels is to be provided to the west / rear of the property.

Amount – Proposed Floor Space

- 5.1.6 The site area is 0.12 hectares comprising the main building (with basement; ground; first and attic level), and grounds, the back/west of the site is the existing and proposed location for the parking bays.
- 5.1.7 The basement floor of 44.36m² will host;
- Bat accommodation (BF01)
 - Circulation space (BF02)
 - Laundry (BF03)
- 5.1.8 The ground floor of 114.94m² will host;
- Flat 1 – Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (GF01)
 - Circulation space (GF02)
 - Flat 2 Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (GF03&GF04)
- 5.1.9 The first floor of 114.94m² will host;
- Flat 3 – Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (FF01)
 - Circulation space (FF02)
 - Flat 4 Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (FF03)
- 5.1.10 The attic floor of 114.94m² will host;
- Flat 5 – Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (AF01)
 - Circulation space (AF01)
 - Flat 6 Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen & Living Dining Room (AF02).
- 5.1.11 Please refer to accompanying Donald Insall Associated Limited proposed drawings for all room references.

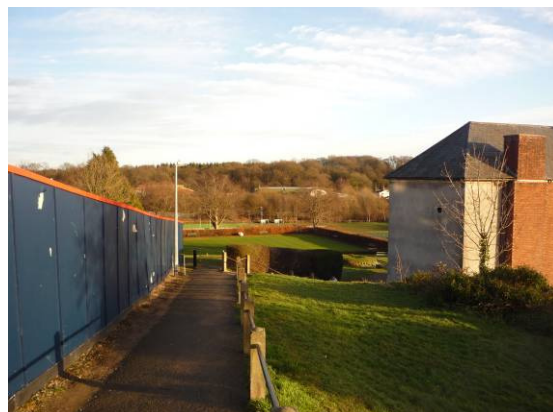
6.0 Community Safety.

- 6.1.1 The use of the building will not pose a threat to community safety it will in fact promote it.

8.0 ACCESS

Movement to and from the development.

- 8.1.1 Movement to, from and within the development have been considered within the designed proposal. Access to and from the property is incorporated within the existing openings and routes, with no changes to existing threshold heights nor material fabric.
- 8.1.2 Access within the interior of the proposal is incorporated within the existing routes and staircases, with no changes in threshold heights nor material fabric.
- 8.1.3 Access to the car parking bays will be for the tenant's personal use. There will be no alteration to the existing access drive to the south of the property.
- 8.1.4 Pedestrian access to the site can be gained via the access drive and also via two footpaths, one from the north east from Oxford Street and another from the north west with stepped access from Hill Street.
- 8.1.5 Vehicular access to the site is via the main existing drive from the south accessed from Plas Kynaston Lane. Driving past the east elevation of the library, bearing west past the south elevation of the property to the proposed parking bays to the west of the property.
- 8.1.6 The building use will be as six, one bedroom flats. The pedestrian traffic in the area will be increased by the number of residents occupying the building and there will be increased car vehicle usage. The car park allows for 12 No. cars, which is no more provision than the owner currently can utilise at present.
- 8.1.7 The manoeuvring space for turning to enable vehicles to enter and leave is sufficient.



Approach to Access.

- 8.1.8 All efforts have been made to ensure "pedestrians; the disabled; the elderly; pram or wheelchair users" are not affected by the proposed repairs or developments. As

far as is practicable for a building of this listing calibre, proposals are always considerate “to provide for convenient and safe access”.

- 8.1.9 The site remains unchanged with no additional or new features to ensure access to the development. The entrance drive accessed from Plas Kynaston Lane is currently the main entrance to and from the building, and will remain so.
- 8.1.10 The ground level door position and threshold level will remain as existing with a new ramp to replace the existing – refer to design philosophy for external works.

Specific Issues that may affect access.

- 8.1.11 We do not consider any specific issues relevant that would affect access at the site.

How features that ensure access to the development will be maintained.

- 8.1.12 The main access into the building, from the east and west elevation will be retained as existing. The access to the cellar from the west may retain an existing stair or a new stair may be provided but this is dependent on further investigative work.
- 6.1.13 The main access to the site along the drive and footpaths (vehicular and pedestrian) will be retained.



KEY REFERENCES

- Donald Insall Associates – Condition Report
- Engineering & More Ltd – Structural Report
- Alison Johnston Ecological Consultants – Protected Species Survey Report

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