Wrexham Scouts and Guides relocation



Design and Access Statement – Wrexham Scouts and Guides relocation

Introduction

This Design and Access statement has been prepared to support the planning application by Wrexham County Borough Council for the demolition of the former Rhosddu Community Centre, Price's Lane, Wrexham, LL11 2NB and the construction of a detached building use class D2 of 574sq.m GIA with mezzanine of 147sq.m GIA with external space enclosed with 2m high Paladin fencing and associated external works.



The site location edged red forms part of Prices Lane Playing fields

The existing site forms part of Price's Lane playing fields, located centrally in the Rhosddu locality. The area is primarily residential in character with substantial houses built from red Ruabon brick and slate from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Diagonally opposite the site is 9 Acre fields which has recently been designated a public open space, having been used as football training facilities by Wrexham FC. To the Western boundary there are publicly run allotments.

The existing Community Centre dates from the late 1970's and is a single storey building, made up of brick panels and sections of glazing with a flat felt roof. It has been vacant since early 2020 when a roof failure caused it to close on safety grounds. Prior to this the Centre had been an important and valued community space.

The Centre can be accessed off the main road and has 14 existing parking spaces.



Existing Community Centre

Evaluation

The Scouts and Guides headquarters are currently located opposite the Wrexham General Train Station and the relocation forms part of the larger Wrexham Gateway Regeneration project. In the course of this process the council has looked at a number of options.

The opportunity arose to relocate the Scouts and guides to this location when another site on Crescent Road was not deemed suitable.

Prices Lane Playing Fields is an important community asset, hosting annual outdoor events as well as day to day leisure activities. It features a new skatepark and a play area opened in late 2024. The play area, designed with input from local children, offers nature-themed equipment and pathways for accessibility.

The new building was thought to be the perfect accompaniment for the park with its focus on outside leisure and sporting activities for young people. In addition, the centre will also be available for local community user groups.

The site is centrally located and very visible which will help to promote the excellent work that the Scouts and Guides do in the local community. To have a purpose built facility will ensure they continue to grow, meaning more young people benefiting from this valuable experience.

In practical terms the site benefitted from vehicular access from the main road and ample parking spaces along with accessible paths. The site also has existing drainage, electrical, water and telecoms services.

In terms of the current use the existing community centre is classed as D2 assembly and leisure and the new scout and guide headquarters would similarly fit into this class.

Overall the scheme presents an excellent opportunity to re-use a previously developed site within a mature parkland setting.

Involvement

Wrexham Council are the client for this scheme as part of wider Wrexham Gateway Project and have taken the lead on identifying and exploring options for the relocation. A number of sites have been assessed during the process and rejected for a number of reasons.

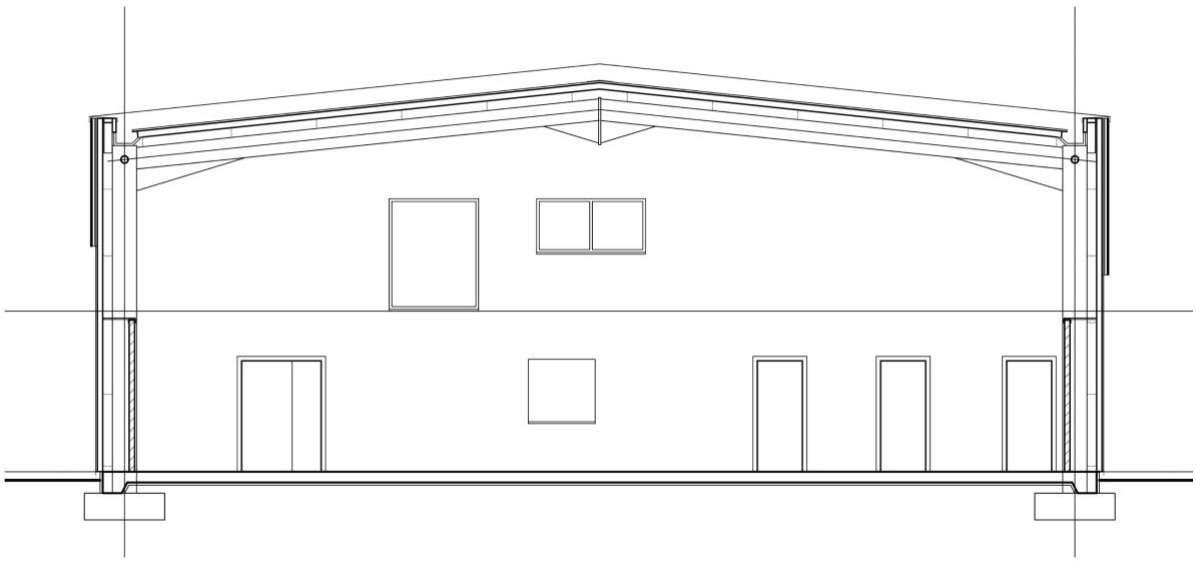
Running parallel with the site finding exercise has been the design process with the end-users. Beginning with an assessment of the current accommodation to the formation of a brief for the new building which has informed the design. There have been periodical design team meetings with both groups as well as internal discussions to ensure a well-considered scheme has been delivered.

In addition, local councillors have been consulted and have expressed their support for the development. A recently published media article officially announced the proposed move with unanimous support from all stakeholders.

Design

The brief was to provide a new building for 2 different user groups, which in itself is an interesting and challenging design proposition. The Scouts and Guides had different expectations in terms of size and amount of accommodation, although there was a lot of commonality in the types of spaces required, however due to there being 2 different entities, these needed to be separated.

The Scouts' brief required more accommodation plus a high ceilinged activities hall to accommodate a badminton court, that suited a 2 storey arrangement, whilst the Guide's requirements were more modest and could be arranged across a single floor but also with a high ceilinged hall. The initial approach was to provide a functional, flexible but compact building type that could be adapted if required in the future for the end users but also for the service life of the building.



Cross section through Scouts activity hall

The solution was a commercial type building form utilizing a steel portal frame with no internal columns to afford maximum flexibility to the layout and to accommodate the large activity spaces that needed to be free of structure. The flexibility internally can also be reflected externally as the building can be wrapped in any number of materials to suite the site and surroundings.

Use

The application is for use Class D2 assembly and leisure. The location of the building is within a well-established Council and community run Park with excellent existing leisure facilities. Replacing an existing community facility provides a compelling precedent for the development.

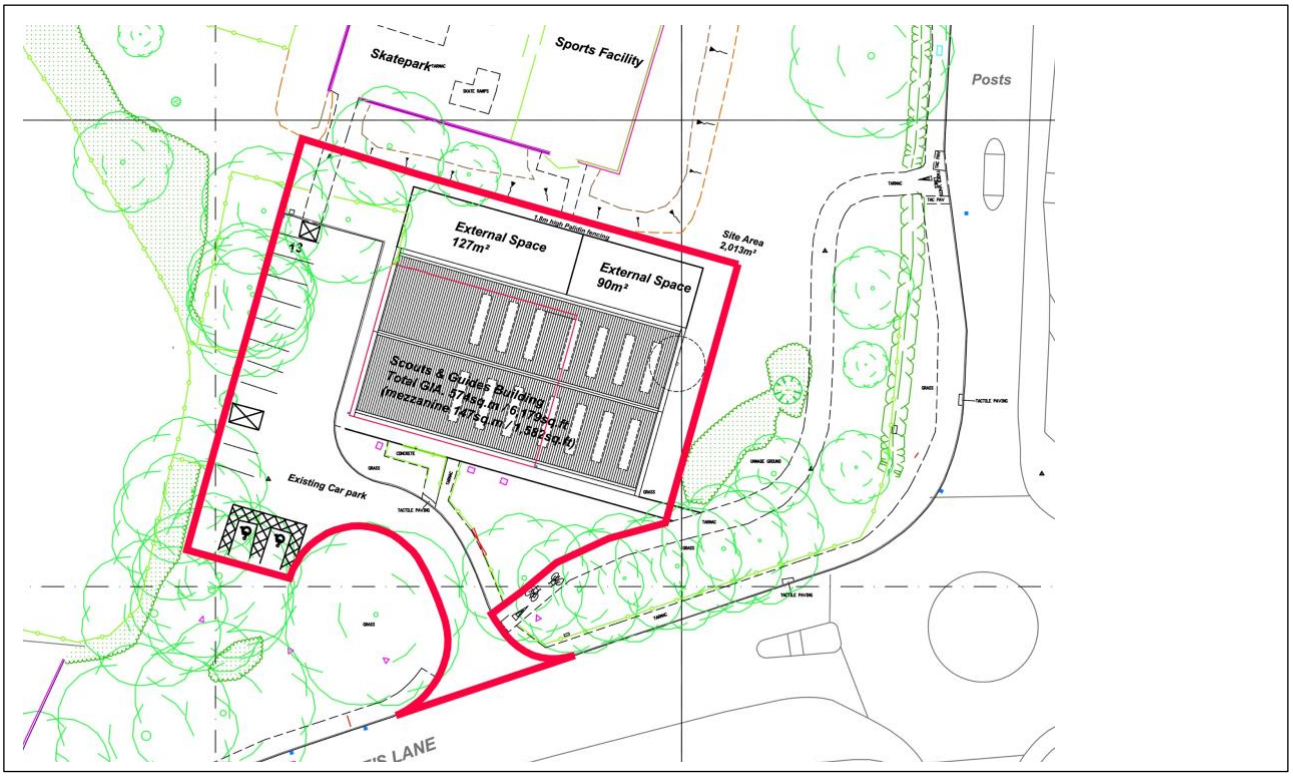
Amount

The development brief set out the sizes and types of rooms and their activities. The building is very similar in size to the existing Headquarters but with the benefit of a well-planned footprint is far more space efficient. The design across 2 floors has also made the footprint more compact and therefore easier to locate on the site. Also the existing arrangement has 2 separate buildings for Guides and Scouts on the site which is very inefficient in terms of space and has an effect on energy consumption.

The proposed building will be 574sq.m GIA at ground floor level with an additional mezzanine of 147sq.m.

Layout

The organisation of the site will be unaltered with the vehicular routes, parking area and pedestrian pathways all being retained. The original single storey building footprint indicated in red is 350sq.m GIA and the proposed building will be 574sq.m GIA.



Proposed Site layout plan

The proposed building will be set-out identically on the South Western corner to the existing, retaining the existing edges to the park and car parking areas but with the Northern and Eastern boundaries extending further into the park due the increased size of the footprint. Given the orientation of the existing building, how it addresses Price's Lane and has influenced the orientation of the skate park and play grounds behind it, keeping the original siting was the logical step.

In addition to the new building, there are enclosed external grassed areas at the rear that allow different types of activities to take place. These are separated from the park with open mesh Pallidin fencing. There is an existing path at the rear that runs parallel with our boundary that will be unaffected.

Scale

The scale of the proposed building has been driven by the brief and the need effectively for 2 storey activity spaces. This informed the decision to organise the accommodation across 2 floors. The internal layout is therefore compact and the building simple in form with a low pitched roof that doesn't unnecessarily increase the volume of the building.

The new building is larger in volume than the community centre it will be replacing and up to 6m closer to the public highway, although the closest South Eastern corner is still approximately 15m from the pavement, it will be more visible when viewed from Price's Lane. Even so there is still a substantial, green buffer space around the building and the benefit of a strong mature treeline around the perimeter and between the road and building where it is most visible.

Landscape

The development aims to integrate as much as possible into the existing park setting. There is an existing pathway around 2 sides of the building that will be repaved but the other 2 sides will just have a simple gravel margin and narrow paved edging to the park's grassland. In terms of soft landscaping there will be no planned structural works.



View of the front elevation from the Roundabout

We were conscious of the surroundings and especially the existing mature trees which play a huge part in defining the quality and space of the park so it was a key consideration that the development didn't adversely affect them. This has been achieved with just some minor crown lifting and root protection measures during construction required. For more information, please refer to the Tree Report by Old Oak Tree Care.

Appearance

An unusual aspect of this project was the fact that the building was designed originally for another site. The car park site on Crescent Road was ultimately rejected by the end users but similarly was a site where the building was relatively isolated and could have been described as back land. Ordinarily a complete change of site location would have a dramatic effect on the design of a building for say a development site within an infill situation with a strong street scene or an area with a strong local distinctiveness. The design of the building was always more about its function and practical delivery and due to its scale would likely have been unique within its proposed location. Both options placed the building on a site with substantial space around it, although the car park site was more urban, it still felt appropriate to retain the original form.

However, given the quality of the new park location we felt that the external appearance warranted some reconsideration. The original scheme benefitted less from natural surveillance and was more separated from its surroundings with fencing and as the new location was more open to the original car park and parkland, enclosing the site in security fencing was not going to be appropriate. Therefore some windows and the original canopy features have been removed as these were considered potentially more vulnerable to anti-social behaviour.

The choice of cladding colours was also revisited, with a more natural palette of coppers, dark reds and browns considered. The timber cladding was retained but instead of just dressing the front elevation due to the 360 degree views of the building afforded, it was felt the treatment needed to be applied to all sides. Originally a clean horizontal split was proposed between different cladding colours to reduce the scale of the building's appearance to all elevations, but the clinical nature of this then developed into a more natural, shallow wave which softens the building in its park location mimicking the undulating canopies of surrounding trees.



View of the front elevation from the existing access off Price's Lane

Economic

The development will generate local construction jobs whilst being built.

Access

The location is very sustainable being within a predominantly residential area. It is envisaged that a lot of people will walk or cycle to the location. The site is generally flat and offers level access with ample existing car parking available with Disabled parking spaces. New secure cycle parking will be provided as part of the development.

Price's Lane also benefits from 2 bus routes which run from Wrexham to Whitchurch and Bangor on Dee.