Cassidy+Ashton

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Architecture + Building Surveying + Town Planning

Wrexham University – Change of Use Class D2 to B1(a)

Supporting Planning Statement

5th February 2026

CASSIDY + ASHTON

10 Hunters Walk, Canal Street,
Chester, CH1 4EB

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cassidy + Ashton have been instructed by Wrexham University to prepare and submit this full planning application for the change of use of underutilised space within the existing campus sports centre to accommodate opportunity for office space.

1.2 The application site is part of the first floor of Wrexham University Sports Centre, Plas Coch Campus, Mold Road, LL11 2AW.

1.3 The application is for the following:

Change of Use of part of sports centre (Class D2) to office space (Class B1(a)).

1.4 This supporting planning statement sets out the context of the site and considers the planning merits of the proposal, reaching the conclusion that the proposed development is compliant with local and national planning policy.

1.5 This statement is to be read in conjunction with a series of plans and other documentation, comprising the planning application pack as a whole:

- Location Plan
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans
- Supporting Planning Statement

2.0 SITE AND CONTEXT

2.1 The application site forms part of the wider Wrexham University Main Academic Campus.

2.2 The campus site as a whole is comprised of the universities academic buildings and its ancillary amenities, including sports facilities, car parking and open space.

2.3 This application relates to Wrexham Universities Sports Centre (first floor), indicated on Figure 1 below.

2.4 The application site is located adjacent to other University educational buildings, North Wales Regional Hockey Stadium and a car park.



Fig. 1 Site Location [Source: Google Maps]

2.5 Situated less than 1 mile from the centre of Wrexham, the campus site is in close proximity to local amenities and public transport facilities.

2.6 Wrexham General Railway Station is located approximately 500m South-east of the site, providing services to Bidston, Chester, Holyhead, Cardiff, Birmingham, and Llanelli.

2.7 Walking and cycling are also key methods in accessing the site, with the town centre being easily accessible via these methods.

WREXHAM UNIVERSITY – FUTURE STRATEGY

2.8 Wrexham University is a publicy funded research institution with charitable status, formed in 2008, following the transition from the former North East Wales Institute of Higher Education.

2.9 'Campus 2030' represents the University's long term strategic vision, aimed at strengthening its role within the higher education sector by providing a learning environment suited to the demands of the 21st century.

2.10 Campus 2030 presents the primary objective to create a contemporary and adaptable campus, with flexible spaces capable of evolving alongside changes in teaching and learning practices.

2.11 The University are committed to continued investment in its campus to create an engaging, student focussed and sustainable campus where students are encouraged to thrive. Reinvestment in the University campus and facilities are integral to the University's strategy.

2.12 The proposed change of use has been informed by the University's Future Strategy, to make more effective use of this currently underutilised space.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The proposed development seeks to change the use of underutilised first-floor space within Wrexham University Sports Centre from Class D2 (dance studio and gymnasium) to Class B1(a) office space. This change will make productive use of currently neglected space within the Sports Centre, enhancing the functionality of the building.

3.2 In particular, the multi-use sports area on the first floor is especially underutilised. As part of a wider programme of rationalisation and more efficient space utilisation across the campus, the proposed change of use development will enable the first floor of the sports centre to be brought into more effective, productive use.

3.3 The new office space will support investment and employment opportunities on the University campus across the wider Wrexham area, enabling the University to continue its expansion and contribute to local economic growth.

3.4 Whilst not secured, interest in the space has been expressed by Wrexham AFC. They are looking at a Joint Sports Partnership, comprising a tripartite business comprising Wrexham AFC Foundation, Wrexham CBC and Wrexham University.

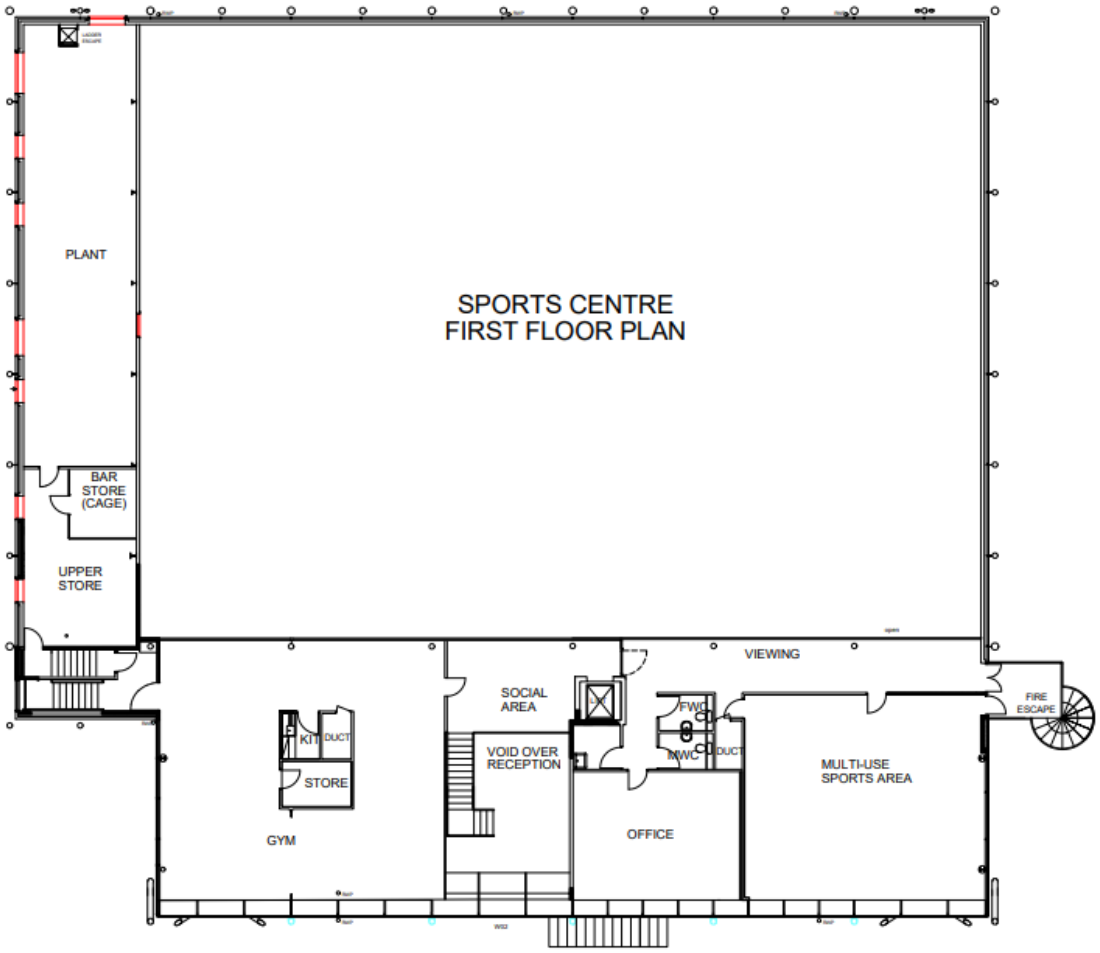


Fig. 2 Existing Floor Plan

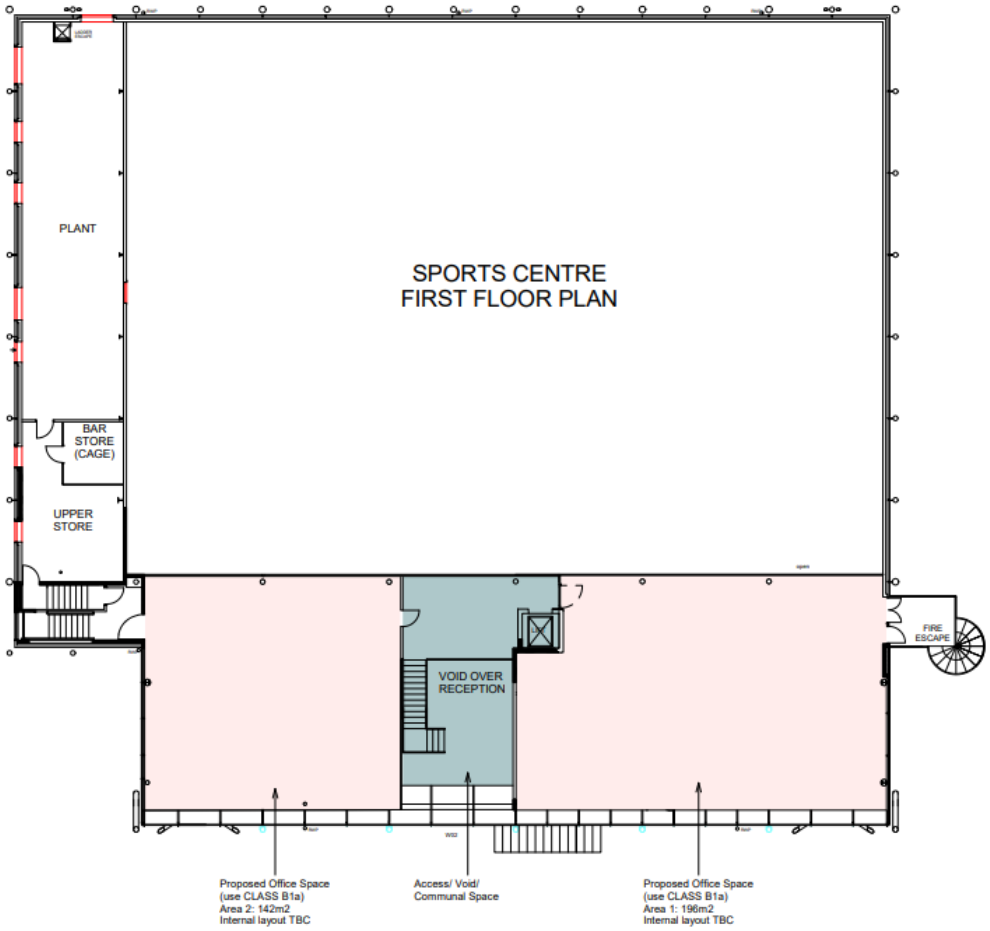


Fig. 3 Proposed Floor Plan

3.5 Access to the proposed office facilities will be provided via the main reception lobby, using existing stairs and lift facilities to ensure inclusive and convenient access for all users.

3.6 The office facilities will support and complement the operation and management of the Sport Centre as a whole, contributing to the effective functioning of the wider sporting facilities.

4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (PPW) was published in December 2018 and last updated in July 2024. PPW sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's planning policies for Wales and how these should be applied. This provides local government with the guidance to prepare their own local development frameworks and guidance in decision making.

4.2 Future Wales: The National Plan to 2040 applies the key principles of PPW and establishes how Wales should develop and grow.

4.3 Alongside the PPW and Future Wales sits 24 Technical Advice Notes (TAN), which form planning guidance at a national level on various topics.

4.4 This section will set out a summary of national planning policy guidance taken from PPW, Future Wales and the TAN documents.

PLANNING POLICY WALES

4.5 The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

4.6 A plan-led approach is the most effective way to secure sustainable development through the planning system and it is essential that plans are adopted and kept under review. Legislation secures a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, to ensure that social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced and integrated.

4.7 The planning system should be efficient, effective and simple in operation. It is not the function of the planning system to interfere with or inhibit competition between users of and investors in land. It should not discriminate against or favour any particular group or members of society.

4.8 **Paragraph 2.8** states that planning policies, proposals and decisions should support sustainable development and enhance the well being of people and communities across Wales.

4.9 **Paragraph 2.13** explains the key planning principles to deliver sustainable development. These are:

- Growing our economy in a sustainable manner
- Making best use of resources
- Facilitating accessible and healthy environments
- Creating and sustaining communities
- Maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact

Commentary

This change of use will bring an underutilised site back into productive use, making efficient use of existing resources and infrastructure. It supports long term economic well-being, delivers a high-quality development and overall supports sustainable development.

4.10 **Paragraph 3.3** states that

> *"Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of the building but the relationship between the natural and built environment and between people and places."*

Commentary

The proposed change of use will support University students and staff by providing high quality office accommodation that creates an attractive environment for working and learning. The diversification of space within the Sports Centre contributes positively to placemaking and supports wider community objectives. On this basis the proposal is consistent with Paragraph 3.3 of PPW.

4.11 **Paragraph 3.13** states that existing infrastructure must be utilised and maximised, wherever possible.

Commentary

The proposed change of use maximises existing infrastructure that is currently under used and neglected.

4.12 **Chapter 5 'Productive and Enterprising Places'** encompasses the economic components of place making.

A Prosperous Wales can be achieved through increased economic activity across all sectors and at all scales. This is realised through the availability of employment land, lifelong learning and training opportunities, reliable communication networks and investment in renewable and low carbon energy sources.

4.13 **Paragraph 5.4.**4 states that wherever possible planning authorities should encourage and support developments which generate economic prosperity and regeneration.

Commentary

The proposed office space will stimulate increased economic activity in Wrexham while supporting the ongoing growth of Wrexham University, therefore contributing to both the local and national economy.

FUTURE WALES: THE NATIONAL PLAN TO 2040

4.14 Future Wales sets out a 20 year national planning framework guiding how Wales will grow and change up to 2040. It provides a strategic approach to tackling key national priorities through the planning system, including supporting a strong diverse economy, driving decarbonisation and clime resilience, strengthening ecosystems and enhancing the health and well being of communities across Wales.

4.15 Future Wales identifies that our economy is becoming increasingly service-based, with the fastest growing sectors 2008-2018 inclusive of education.

4.16 Wales 2020 to 2040: Challenges & Opportunities sets out the following with regard to prosperity:

> ***Our universities can play an important role both nationally and regionally, leading innovation and research and providing opportunities for students of all ages to grow and develop. They play a key role in their local communities,***

attracting students from all around the world to different parts of Wales and supporting local economies and businesses. Planning authorities should proactively engage with Universities to maximise the role they can play in supporting national and regional development.

4.17 Future Wales sets out 11 ambitions / outcomes, supported by 36 specific policies.

4.18 **Policy 1 – Where Wales will grow** identifies 'Wrexham and Deeside' as a National Growth Area. These locations are recognised for their strong and distinctive economies, supporting a wide range of businesses, enterprises and higher education institutions. The strategy supports and encourages their continued growth and development.

4.19 **Policy 20 – National Growth Area - Wrexham and Deeside** is identified as the main focus for strategic economic growth and investment in the North region.

4.20 **Policy 21 – Regional Growth Area** recognises the universities Bangor and Wrexham as key assets within the region. They contribute by delivering higher education, carrying out research, fostering innovation, creating employment, attracting students and supporting surrounding businesses and communities. Strategic and Local Development Plans should take account of the universities regional role and consider how they can further contribute to economic growth, innovation and community development.

Commentary

On the basis of the above there is clear recognition within Future Wales for the role of Universities in contributing towards national and regional development. The proposed change of use will maximise university space and allow for investment and economic growth across the region and Wales as a whole.

TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTES

4.21 Technical advice notes (TANs) provide detailed planning advice. Local planning authorities take them into account when they are preparing development plans. Of those currently in place, the following is considered most relevant to this proposal:

Technical Advice Note 23 – Economic Development (2014)

TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE 23 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.22 TAN23 sets out detailed guidance in relation to economic development.

4.23 At 1.2.1 "It is essential that the planning system recognises, and gives due weight to, the economic benefits associated with new development."

4.24 At 1.3.1 "The planning system should steer development to the most efficient sustainable locations."

4.25 At 2.1.1 "It should not be assumed that economic objectives are necessarily in conflict with social and environmental objectives. Often these different dimensions point in the same direction. Planning should positively and imaginatively seek such 'win-win' outcomes, where development contributes to all dimensions of sustainability."

4.26 At 2.1.3 "It is a central object of the planning system to steer development to appropriate locations".

Commentary

The proposed change of use is expected to support further investment and growth at Wrexham University. The re-use of underutilised dance and gymnasium space for office space will deliver economic benefits for the University and the wider region. Given the sites location, close to Wrexham General railway station and Wrexham town centre, the proposal is not expected to conflict with any social or environmental objectives of either the University or the wider Wrexham area. The site is therefore considered to be an appropriate and sustainable location for the proposed change of use that will bring economic benefits.

5.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations of which PPW, together with emerging development plans, indicate otherwise.

5.2 The current Development Plan relevant to this application site is comprised of – in addition to National policy - the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011. The Local Development Plan (LDP) 2013-2028 was un-adopted by Order of the High Court of Justice, dated 19 May 2025. That said, given the UDP is significantly out of date, the LDP is the most up to date and therefore remains a material planning consideration.

5.3 The economic ambition of the Wrexham Local Development Plan includes a focus for growth and investment in education services in Wrexham, City and Wrexham City Centre.

WREXHAM UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.4 **Policy PS2** states that development must not result in significant adverse impacts on the countryside, landscape or townscape character, open space or the quality of the natural environment.

Commentary

The proposed change of use from D2 to B1(a) will take place entirely within the existing Wrexham University Sports Centre. As a result, there will be no impact on the townscape character, open space or the quality of the natural environment.

5.5 **Policy GDP1** sets out that all new developments should be well-designed, safe and sustainable. Development should respect the character of the site and local area, make efficient use of energy and resources, provide safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists and have good connections to public transport. It should protect the environment, avoid risks such as flooding or contamination and contribute positively to economic, social and cultural well being of the community.

Commentary

The proposed internal change of use from D2 to B1(a) at Wrexham University Sports Centre aligns with Policy GDP1. The change of use will make efficient and productive use of underutilised space without altering the building's external appearance. The proposal respects the character and visual quality of the site and surrounding area, provides safe and convenient access for employee and supports sustainable economic growth. As an internal change of use, it will not result in adverse impacts on neighbouring amenities, traffic, the environment or open space and promotes the social, economic and environmental well-being of the University and the wider Wrexham area.

5.6 **Policy GDP2** encourages the enhancement of community infrastructure and facilities, including the ongoing development of higher education institutions. The policy aims to support a modern, strong and diverse economy across all sectors.

Commentary

The proposed change of use will enhance Wrexham University's facilities and space utilisation, contributing to the development of higher education and helping to strengthen the local and regional economy.

WREXHAM LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2028

5.7 **Policy SP7** states that Wrexham City as defined on the proposals map will be the focus for new development including housing, employment, commercial, retail, leisure, tourism, services, education, transport, infrastructure and the arts in order to strengthen the City's regional function as a settlement of national importance.

Commentary

The proposal is located within the settlement boundary of Wrexham which is identified as an area of focus for new education and employment services. The proposal will provide new office facilities which will improve the campus environment and attract investment to the University strengthening its position within the region.

5.8 **Policy SP8** states the importance to strengthen Wrexham County Borough's role as a key economic driver in North Wales. It seeks to diversify the local economy by encouraging employment development, while protecting important ecological networks. The policy aims to create around 4,200 jobs across a range of sectors and to respect its unique character and heritage.

Commentary

The proposed change of use from D2 to B1(a) at Wrexham University contributes to local economic growth and employment. By providing office space within the University, the development strengthens the local economy, promotes a diverse range of employment opportunities and helps maintain Wrexham's role as a key economic centre in the region.

5.9 **Policy DM1** sets out general development principles, stating all new development, where relevant, must:

i. Accord with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape in terms of their siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping;

ii. Not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties/land; and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers/users of the development itself;

iii. Safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land, noise, light or air, or land instability, arising from development;

iv. Take account of personal and community safety and security in their design and layout;

v. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use ahead of travel by car;

vi. Not give rise to highway safety, pedestrian safety or parking problems on site or in the locality;

vii. Contribute to low carbon communities through energy efficiency, be designed to minimise the use of non-renewable energy, water and the production of waste both during construction and when in use;

viii. Not increase the risk of flooding but make adequate provision for sustainably dealing with foul and surface water drainage and not result in an unacceptable impact upon the water environment;

ix. On sites which have previously been developed, new development proposals should make use of existing suitable building materials wherever possible for appropriate uses in order to re-use recyclable materials and reduce the amount of imported materials; and

x. Ensure that any risks arising from past coal mining, as indicated on the constraints map, can be adequately managed.

Commentary

The proposed internal change of use from D2 to B1(a) respects the character of the existing building. Through use of existing University campus infrastructure the proposal maintains amenity and avoids environmental or highway impacts and making efficient use of existing space to support sustainable economic growth.

6.0 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

HERITAGE

6.1 The main University building 'Newi: Plas Coch (former Denbighshire Technical College)' is Grade II listed.

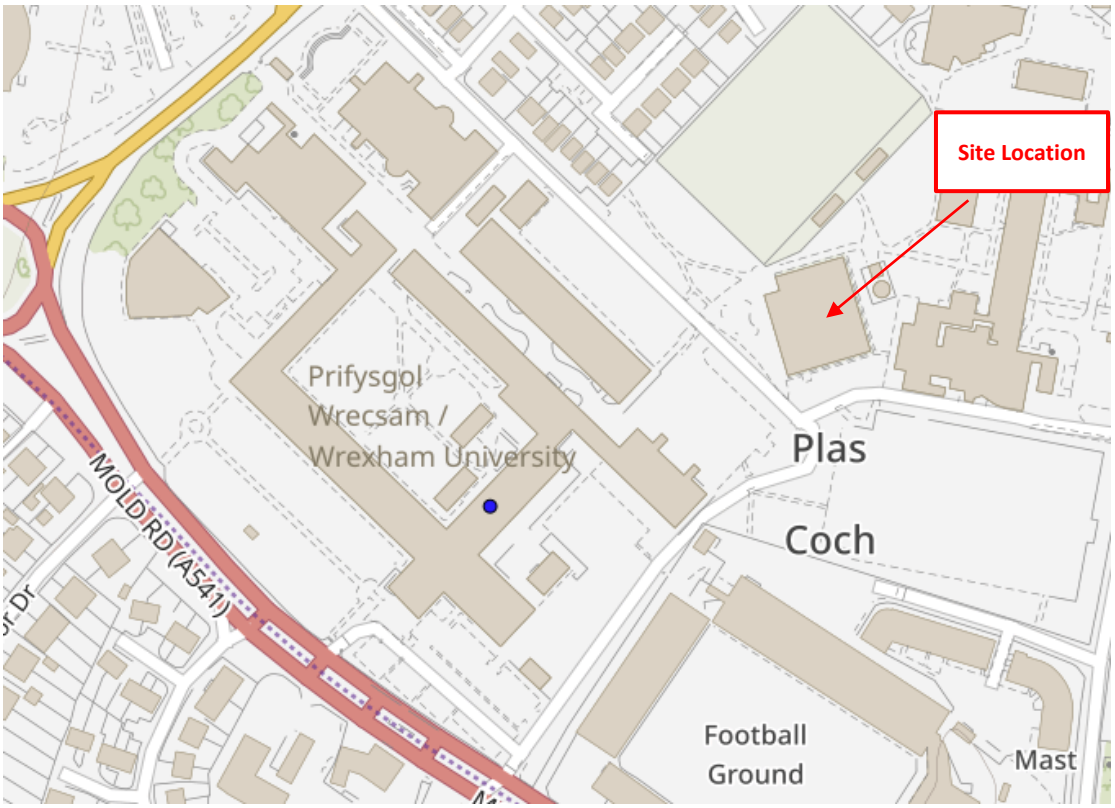


Fig. 4 Historic Assets Map [Source: CADW]

6.2 Given this proposed application is for internal change of use there will be no negative impact on this nearby listed building.

FLOOD RISK / DRAINAGE

6.3 The site is not located within an area at risk of flooding and the proposed development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

6.4 The area of development is existing hardstanding and therefore there is not anticipated to be any change to surface water runoff capacity.

DEE CATCHMENT / PHOSPHOROUS DISCHARGE

6.5 It is acknowledged that the site is located within the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation.

6.6 **Policy NE6: Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality** of the LDP sets out the approach to protecting the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and meeting its conservation objectives. The policy confirms that development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse effect on integrity of the SAC, particularly in relation to wastewater treatment.

6.7 The proposed development is repurposing existing space and therefore will not result in an increase in foul water flows and will not adversely affect the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC, including in relation to phosphorus inputs.

6.8 The development is not expected to increase discharge volume; no new toilet facilities are proposed as part of the development, meaning their will be no additional demand on the waste water network.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

6.9 This application is subject to the requirement for a green infrastructure statement proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed under Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (6.2.12).

6.10 The Wrexham University Sports Centre is surrounded by existing green space with public benches, which will be available for use by future occupants of the proposed office space (B1(a)).

6.11 As the proposal involves an internal change of use only, the site currently has no ecological value and no long term negative impacts on biodiversity are expected. Given the baseline of zero biodiversity, it is considered that additional green infrastructure is not required for this development.

NEIGHBOURING USE AND AMENITY

6.12 The site is located within an area of mixed uses, including residential, education, office and sports facilities. Therefore, the proposed internal change of use to office space (B1(a)) is considered compatible with the surrounding land uses.

6.13 As the development involves an internal change of use only, it will not impact the privacy or amenity of neighbouring properties, nor is it expected to increase noise, traffic congestion or pollution within the Plas Coch campus or the wider Wrexham area.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The proposed development is comprised of the change of use of an existing dance hall and gymnasium (D2) to office space (B1(a)), making efficient use of currently underutilised areas within Wrexham University.

7.2 The rationalisation of this underutilised facility creates new opportunities for the campus and enables further investment to be directed back into the University.

7.3 As set out above, the proposal will provide office space which will bring investment and economic benefits to Wrexham University.

7.4 The proposed change of use is considered consistent with both national and local planning policy, will not give rise to any adverse impacts and represents a sustainable and appropriate form of development.

Cassidy+Ashton

C+A

North Wales Office:

St. Andrews Business Centre,
Queens Lane, Mold, Flintshire,
CH7 1XB

T: +44(0)1352 706246

E: mold@cassidyashton.co.uk

Chester Office:

10 Hunters Walk, Canal Street,
Chester, CH1 4EB

T: +44(0)1244 402 900

E: chester@cassidyashton.co.uk

Preston Office:

7 East Cliff, Preston,
Lancashire, PR1 3JE

T: +44(0)1772 258 356

E: preston@cassidyashton.co.uk

Email us:

architecture@cassidyashton.co.uk

surveying@cassidyashton.co.uk

planning@cassidyashton.co.uk

Follow us on:

www.cassidyashton.co.uk

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