HENDERSON HERITAGE

Heritage Impact Statement

The Boat Inn,

Erbistock

The Boat at Erbistock

May 2026

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The Boat Inn

Executive Summary

This report has been written to assess the impact of the installation of 40 solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) on the rear north bank and rear roof of The Boat Inn, Erbistock. This Heritage Impact Assessment has been written to identify the significance of the heritage assets and the impact of any development upon them. This is in accordance with national and local planning guidance.

The Boat Inn is a Grade II listed landmark building on the north side of the river bank at Erbistock. It lies within Erbistock Conservation Area. It is close to the Church of St. Hilary. It is in the vicinity of several heritage assets that collectively have group value. They contribute to the conservation area's special architectural and historic character and interest.

The Boat Inn is in a rural and scenic location. The Boat Inn, formerly two buildings close to the site of a former ferry crossing on the River Dee, appears to date from the 17th century, is evidenced as an inn from at least 1820, and has been remodelled in the 19th, late 20th and 21st century. It is now a successful public house and restaurant. The significance of The Boat Inn is derived from its evidential, historic, aesthetic, and communal significance as an inn in a highly picturesque location, an early destination venue, associated with a ferry crossing on the River Dee. It is an early 19th century public house with 17thcentury origins, with a clearly articulated and distinct vernacular architectural character built in red sandstone. It was deliberately sited for the pleasure of the view, as well as being in a practical location of a relatively narrow strip of riverbank for the ferry crossings. The buildings form a strong relationship with its landscape and river setting, which contributes to views, vistas and setting; and its historical and aesthetic value, which helps define its sense of place.

Erbistock is a small conservation area that derives its character and special interest from its unspoilt rural setting, lanes, isolation and enclosure and its relationship with the River Dee and the wooded sandstone escarpments. The setting of the application site is closely associated with this context. To the north and west are the red sandstone bedrock escarpments, which with some man-made alterations, create a unique tiered backdrop to the Boat Inn, and which are part of the wider setting of this part of the conservation area.

The setting of a historic asset, in this case The Boat Inn, includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated, embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. In this case, the significance of the designated heritage asset, The Boat Inn, is high, as is the Church of St Hilary and the Erbistock Conservation Area.

The proposed development of 40 solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) to two rear main roof sections and the bank will cause some change. The roof is divided into two parts; the rear outrigger and a more modern flat roof. Both roofs are later additions to the buildings. The proposed new solar panels will cover most of these sections of roof. The panel array will be set back from the perimeter edge to allow for safe maintenance and wind load, and to reduce the visual impact. The weight of the impact is low. In terms of visibility, the solar panels are set at an angle so will not be seen from road or river level and are unlikely to be seen to any real degree from any vantage points.

In terms of impact on the fabric of the building, the weight of the impact is, both figuratively and literally, most significant to the roof. The change is to the least sensitive part of the building and the area that is least likely to be publicly viewed. It is also in an area where plant equipment is located and so there is a precedent of 'back of house' and other ancillary installations here. The covering over of these ancillary roofs with PV's would not impact on the authenticity of the building. The impact is lessened by the fact that the roof would remain in place below the panels. The weight load has been assessed, and it has been established that this extra weight will not cause structural harm.

The installation of the solar panels will create a modest degree of physical change to the bank behind The Boat Inn. They are located on flat ground, above a gabion wall, and laid in rows. Each solar panel will be at a slight angle. The panel array will be bordered by old oak railway sleepers with planting in front of rosemary and sage to mitigate the impact. It will not affect the foreground view that draws the eye to The Boat Inn. The framing of the view, and its setting, is created by the varying scales of mature trees, the various bank levels, some natural, others manmade, the roof heights of the various part of The Boat, but all this is seen kinetically and not front on because of the proximity of The Boat to the river edge.

The bank behind is not overly prominent. The viewpoint to the bank is incidental because of these kinetic views. There are other long ranging viewpoints that have been assessed to the west of The Boat Inn from the car park and footpath and from the opposite side of the river bank. The view of The Boat Inn will not adversely change as a result of this proposition, and overall, this is not a significant visual change or impact.

The setting of the listed building, and those nearby in the conservation area will not significantly change because of this development. It is the experience and weight of the impact on the buildings and conservation area's significance that is important. The tight road layout pattern means that there are a select number of kinetic views of the buildings in the conservation area and none of these views are directly focused on buildings. The scale of the proposed change is moderate, with the impact largely confined to incidental viewpoints from the car park. It is not considered to cause harm to the setting of the listed building or the conservation area. On balance it is considered to preserve the conservation area's character and appearance. It is a thoughtful response to context.

However, should the Council consider that there is a degree of less than substantial harm caused by the number of solar array panels and the limited degree of visibility seen of them, the public benefits are substantial. The Boat Inn has a high energy consumption, due to it being a local pub for the public, open 7 days a week, though-out the day and evening and with an active kitchen and bar. The electricity expenditure for the building is its highest and most significant cost. The use of solar energy will allow The Boat Inn to substantially reduce these costs in a sustainable manner. The Boat Inn's commitment to sustainability is by choosing solar energy to meet its growing electricity demand. It is also a sensible economic choice for its future growth.

The installation of the panels is related to The Boat Inn's drive to improve renewable energy generation and to make the running of the building more sustainable. The design of the solar panel installation means that the roof and the panels can be regularly inspected, and maintenance undertaken. It is fundamental that The Boat Inn reduces its future energy bills and carbon footprint in response to the climate crisis. The Boat Inn is an important local landmark building in Wrexham County. This scheme will allow the building to continue to be so for many years to come.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report has been written to assess the impact of the installation of 40 solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) on the rear north bank and rear roof of the outriggers to The Boat Inn, Erbistock. The application site is within Erbistock Conservation Area.

1.2 The relevant designated heritage assets relevant to the application site are:

- Listed Building: The Boat Inn (Grade II) - designated 1995.
- Conservation Area: Erbistock – designated 1974

1.3 The purpose of the assessment is to identify the significance of the heritage assets affected, and to consider and describe the effects of the proposals to them. This includes direct and indirect impacts up the building, its setting, and views. It identifies mitigating measures, where necessary, to address this impact.

1.4 This document has been prepared following a site visit in March and April 2026, and historical research. It is to be read in conjunction with other associated documents in relation to the planning and listed building consent applications.



Fig 1. The Boat Inn



Fig 2. Location Plan

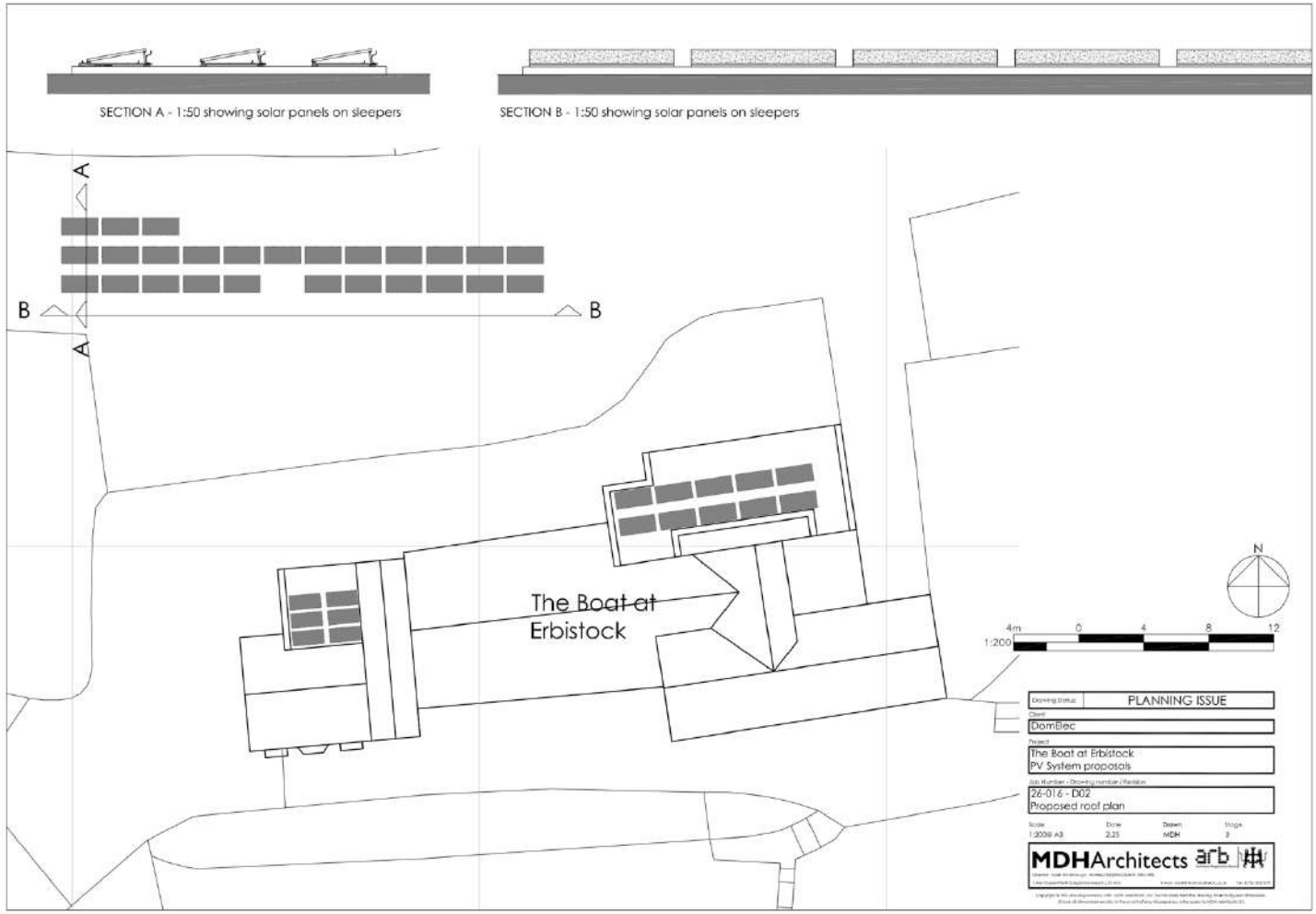


Fig 3. Proposed site plan (Copyright: MDH architects).

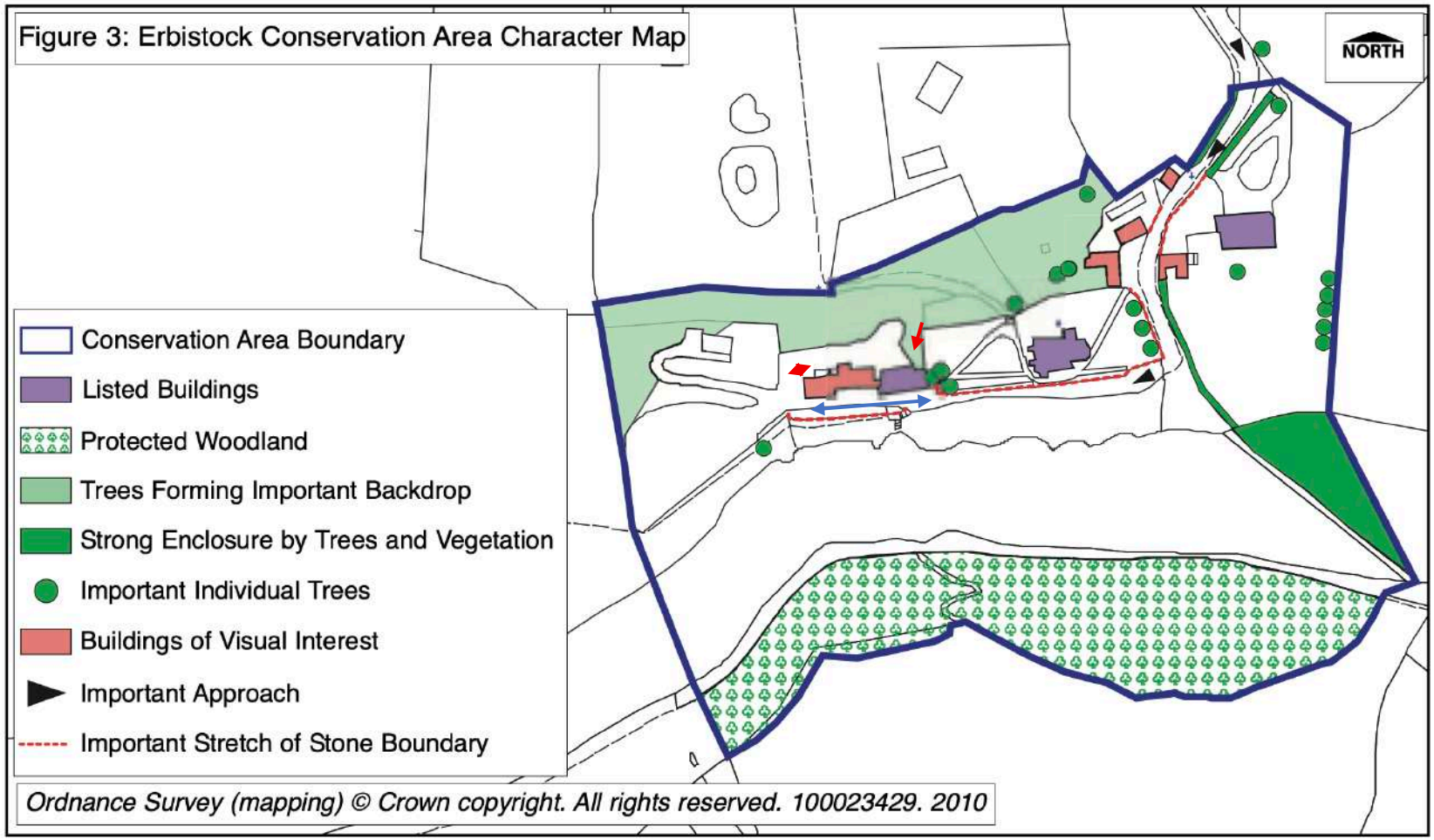


Fig 4. Location of relevant heritage assets as identified in the Erbistock Conservation Area (Copyright: Wrexham County Borough Council). The Boat Inn is arrowed blue, and the location of the solar panels are arrowed in red.



Fig 5. The bank

2.0 Legislative and policy background

2.1 Welsh legislation on the Historic Environment is contained in The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023. Chapter 2: Control of Works to Listed Buildings is relevant here. The Act requires any works of demolition, alteration and/or extension which would affect the character of a listed building to be authorised through the process of listed building consent.

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (2024) is the national planning policy framework. Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places puts great emphasis on protecting the natural and built environment for historic, scenic, aesthetic and nature conservation reasons, recognising that they give places their unique identity and distinctiveness. This includes the protection of historic buildings, preserving sites on the register of historic parks and gardens and the character and appearance of conservation areas and setting, based on their significance and the impact of changes. The policy specifies that the objective of the Welsh Government is to "safeguard the character of historic buildings and manage change so that their special architectural and historic interest is preserved". It states that "There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage. For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses." (6.1.10)

2.3 Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017) provides guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning and listed building consent applications. It states that the planning system should look "to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets." The impact of any planning decisions that change the historic environment in terms of its significance and heritage values, where they contribute to the character of place, must be fully considered by the decision maker. Paragraph 1.7 states that "In policy terms, the historic environment is defined as 6: "All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed."

2.4 Setting is not a heritage designation. However, “the setting of a historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. Setting is not a historic asset but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset.” TAN 24 (paragraph 1.25)

2.5 In terms of assessing setting, the contribution that the setting makes to the house is of importance. Case law has determined that to 'preserve' in in the context of national planning policy means not to cause harm to the setting, rather than not to change the setting. If there is harm of any magnitude, then the harm must be evaluated in terms of assessing and mitigating positive and negative impacts in a holistic and balanced manner. This is to establish an overall conclusion on the level of harm, the weight that could be attributed to each element, seasonal effects and non-visual impacts and mitigating measures. TAN24 document states that for any development within the setting of a historic asset, some of the factors to consider and weigh in the assessment include: -

- The significance of the asset and the contribution the setting makes to that significance,
- the prominence of the historic asset,
- the expected lifespan of the proposed development,
- the extent of tree cover and its likely longevity,
- non-visual factors affecting the setting of the historic asset such as noise.

2.6 The definition of significance in relation to heritage policy is defined in Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales (Cadw, 2011). “To identify the heritage values of an asset, its history, fabric, and character must first be understood. The relative significance of the different values then needs to be considered. It will be necessary to compare the values of the asset under consideration with others in the locality, region or even nationally, depending on its importance.”

2.7 Therefore, a balanced view is required on use, viability, and conservation. If harm is identified, the degree must be given sufficient weight and balanced against the public benefits generated by the proposals. In the case of *City & Country Bramshill Ltd v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities And Local Government & Ors* [2021] EWCA Civ 320 in the Court of Appeal, Lord Justice Lindblom stated “what amounts to "substantial harm" or "less than substantial harm" in a particular case will always depend on the circumstances. Whether there will be such "harm", and, if so, whether it will be "substantial", are matters of fact and planning judgment.”

2.8 Other relevant Cadw guidance is contained in the best practice guidance booklets ‘Renewable Energy and your Historic Building – Installing Micro-Generation Systems - A Guide to Good Practice’ (2010), ‘How to Improve Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales’ (2022). ‘Setting of Historic Assets in Wales (May 2017), ‘Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales (May 2017), and ‘Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales’ (May 2017).

2.9 Relevant local plan policies are in the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan: 1996 - 2011; adopted 2005. Policy EC9 relates to listed buildings and stipulates the legislative requirements.

3.0 Historical context

3.1 Erbistock is an ancient hamlet along the River Dee close to the border of Wales and England. It lies 6 miles south of Wrexham, 2m to the west of the village of Overton-on-Dee and 7.5 miles to the north west of Ellesmere in Shropshire. It is connected to the Overton to Wrexham Road, built c1820, via a network of narrow winding country lanes. This part of the River Dee forms part of the Cheshire Plain in Maelor Saesneg.

3.2 The River Dee is the largest river in North Wales, 70 miles in length. It is of high ecological importance and is also of high importance for fishing and biodiversity. It has high tourism value. It is picturesque, with many settlements along its banks. The Dee was used for coracle fishing, salmon fishing, coracle racing, and continues to be used for fishing and canoeing today.

3.4 The Boat Inn at Erbistock has some 17th century features internally, including a plank door, substantial chamfered and stopped beams, low ceilings, large joists to the ground floor. Documents and newspaper articles record its use as an inn from the early 19th century onwards. It was known as The Boat Inn in 1832, and The Boat House from 1836, tenanted by William Shone, formerly of Overton Bridge, who married a Miss Elizabeth Francis of the Boat Inn in 1832. The landowner in 1838 was Watkin Williams Wynne. It was used for many events including for example, tea for 50 poor women in 1841 as part of the coming of age of Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, and like many inns was used also routinely for auctions and inquests.

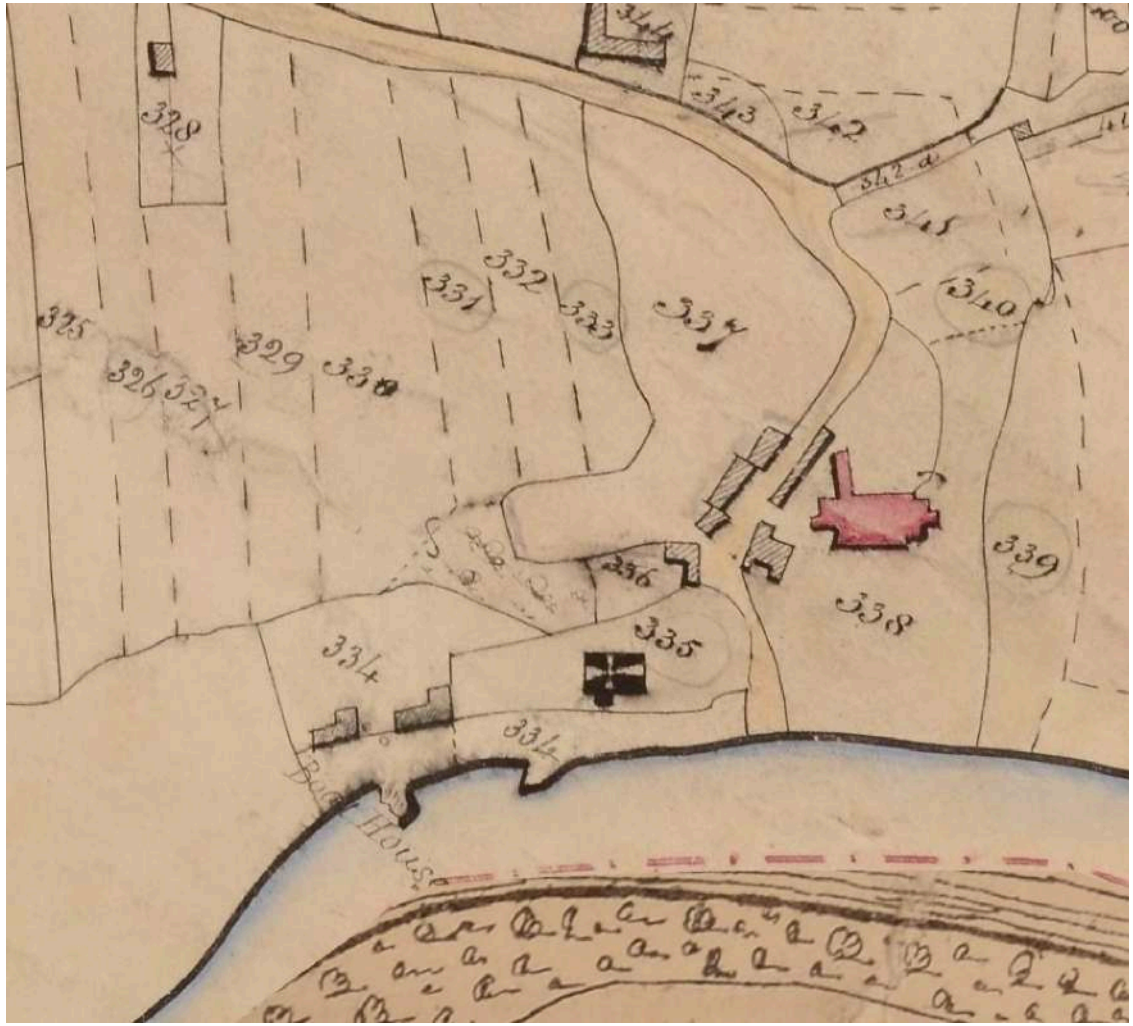


Fig 6. The Tithe Map of 1844. The Boat Inn, called the Boat House is Tithe apportionment 334. This also includes the land to the front of the Church.

3.5 Mrs Shone died in 1871, her adult son tragically drowned in the river in 1863. In her obituary, Erbistock was described as “There are few such charming or romantic spots on the river Dee … as this little village. There it nestles, like an alpine home, completely hid from view until you come right upon it from the top of the hill. Its churchyard watered by the river, with its neat little church overshadowed by foliage, is a picture of quiet repose. Its little inn, too, so much frequented by the disciples of Izaak Walton [i.e. anglers], tourists and picnic parties, is a model of simplicity, cleanliness and antiquity.” *(Wrexham Advertiser - Saturday 10 June 1871).* In 1873 The Boat House was described as “a well-known place, and a great resort for pleasure and recreation. The inn can afford good accommodation and in addition to the house itself a large room over the stables is available for tea parties. It is also the resort of picnic parties who avail themselves of the meadow and a favourite spot for anglers who flock here in abundance, particularly from Wrexham”. This article also describes the ferry, which is drawn across the river by means of ropes, and the wood on the opposite side which affords pleasant walks leading to Bryn-y-Pys cemetery and Overton. (*Wrexham Advertiser - Saturday 17 May 1873).*



Fig 9. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map six inch to 1 mile, Flintshire Sheet XXII surveyed: 1872 to 1873, Published: 1879. This shows an L-shaped building, which is the Inn, and stables to the west. It shows that there is an orchard behind the stables, and pathway between each building that runs eastwards to the newly built Church of St Hilary to the east, The Church was erected 1859-61 as a memorial to Henry Ellis Boates of Rose Hill by his wife, and following her death was completed by their daughter Gertrude. The Rectory to the east, was built earlier. Unlike the Boat Inn, the Church was described as being very inconveniently situated at the end of the parish by local parishioners.



Fig 10. Left: The Boat Inn (undated) behind the hand-operated chain ferry crossed the River Dee, connecting Erbistock to Overton. The building is limewashed. The stable and a malthouse lies to the west of the Inn. Right: View looking west to east from the footpath outside the Boat Inn. This also shows the hand-operated chain ferry that once crossed the River Dee outside the Boat Inn. *(Source: Graham Price)*

3.6 In the 1880's the pub was let to Mr and Mrs John Kelsall, and newspaper reports note that the division line for the two counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire ran through The Boat Inn, with a sitting room on one side and the kitchen on another. The bulk of The Boat Inn was in Flintshire. Thus, Mr Kelsall obtained his licence but was able to have a vote in each county. In 1888 Erbistock was described as "a fresh air and pleasure resort for people form the neighbouring towns," with free fishing in the Dee. The woods of Knolton and Llan-yr-Cefn were described as being open to every stranger. The countryside setting was described as "gentle English beauty as the scene from the gate at the top of the hill – the stone belfry, the far off sun-lit glittering river, the ever changing woods, the ripening cornfields, the rooks…" *(Wrexham Advertiser - Saturday 13 October 1888).*

3.7 In 1890 it was run by John and Elizabeth Roberts and called The Boat House Inn. In 1891 tenancy was transferred to Miss Harrald, who employed an ostler at the stables. In 1893 it was tenanted to Mr Edward Fitzjohn. In 1900 it was tenanted to Mr Gait of Liverpool.

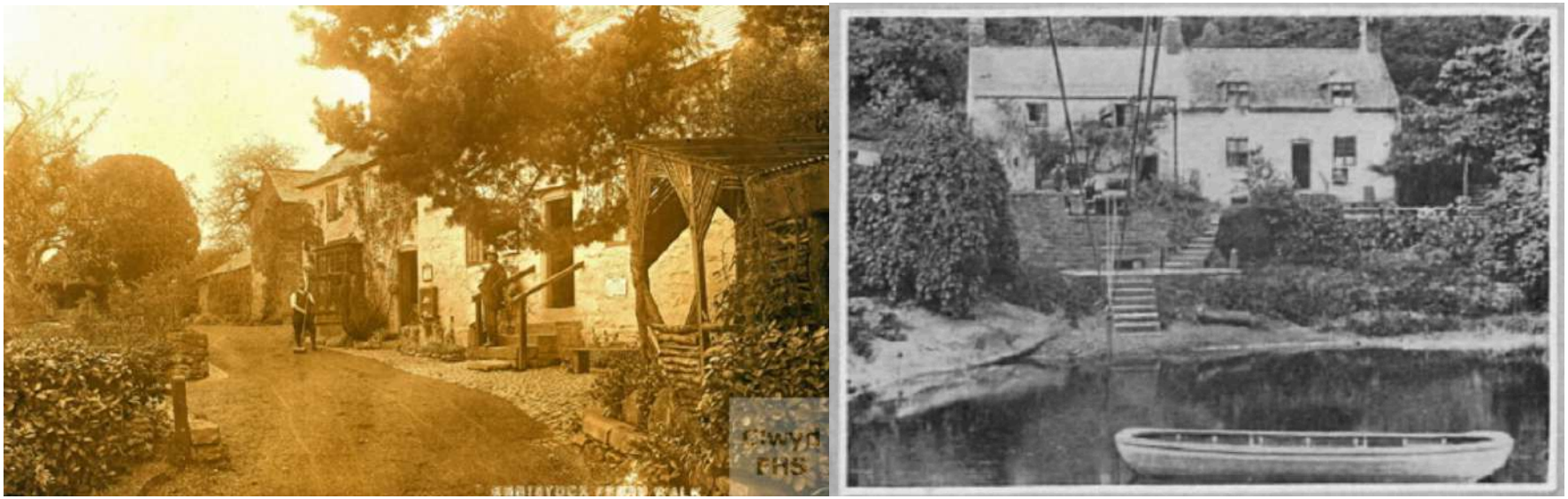


Fig 11. Left: Sepia photograph, assumed to be late 19th century, showing The Ferry Walk and the Boat Inn on the north bank of the River Dee. *(Source: Graham Price)*. Right: Postcard dated 1910.



Fig 12. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map six inch to one mile Flintshire Sheet XXII.SW Revised: 1898, Published: 1900. There is little change in the 1910 Ordnance Survey Maps.

3.8 In 1916 it was tenanted to Stanley Gillard. In the 1920's it catered for tea parties. It the 1930's it was an Inn and Hotel, run by G. Cunningham also of The Red House in Chester. It was noted for salmon and trout fishing, with day trips from afar as Liverpool.

3.9 In 1959 an outbuilding, described as a converted malthouse, was completely destroyed by fire. The licensee was Joan Williams, who had run it with her husband since 1939. In April 1965 The Boat Inn was put up for sale, freehold, complete with salmon fishing rights. It was described as having an extensive car park for about 100 cars, and fishing rights that extend for 425 feet along one bank of the Dee with two excellent holding pools. It was used for wedding receptions and remained a popular place to visit.

3.10 The Boat Inn was put up for sale again in June 1989, following the death of John Chamberlain, who had run the place for 24 years. It was described as a free house with a 7 day licence with covers for 72. It had a separate function suite with covers for 55, and a detached 3 bedroom managers house, car parking for 60 and salmon fishing rights.

3.11 Relevant planning permission and listed building / conservation area consents include the following: -

CB/19998/2216 and 2217	Erection of extension to form restaurant – granted 18/8/1998
P/2019/0185 and 0186	Application For Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent For Part Demolition To Rear, Rear Single-Storey Extensions To Provide New Kitchen Facilities, Refurbishment Of Internal Arrangements Including New Bar And Toilet Areas And Minor Openings – granted 29 July 2019

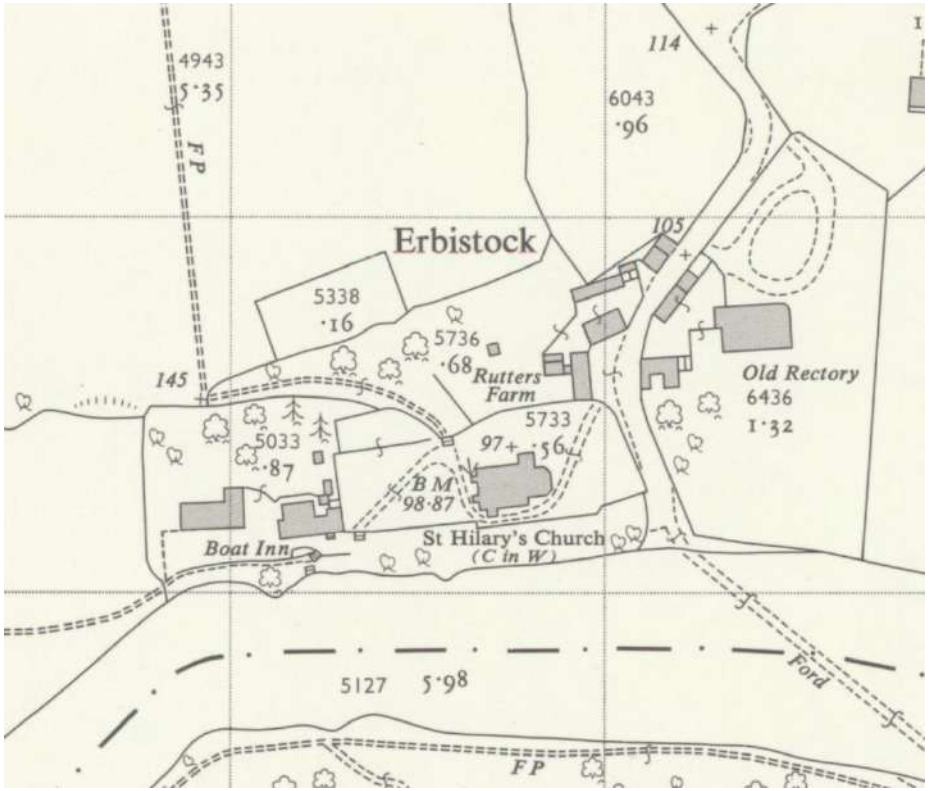


Fig 13. The National Grid Ordnance Survey Map SJ3441-SJ3541 – AA Revised: 1960 to 1961, Published: 1962, shows the two separate buildings.

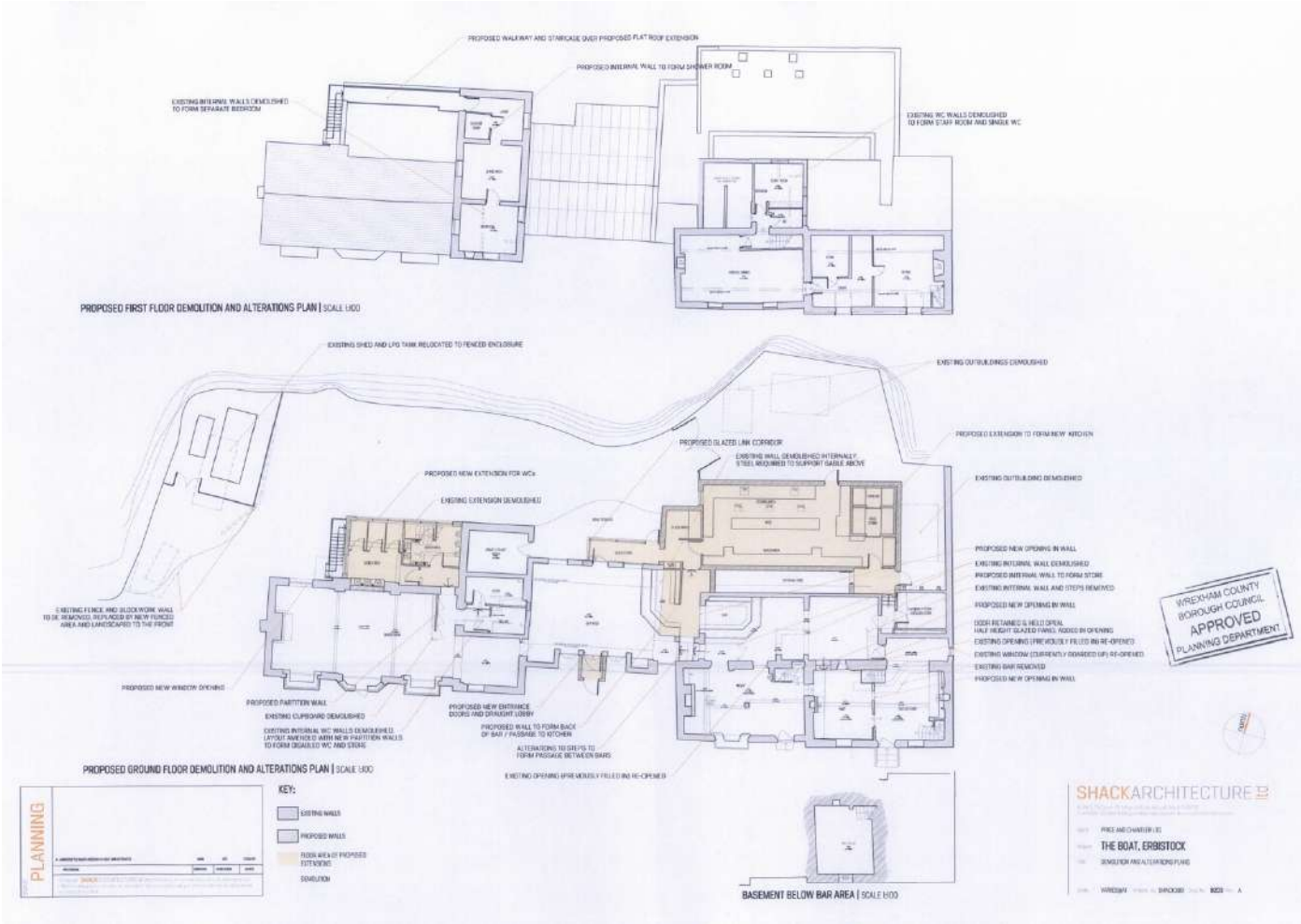


Fig 13. Approved plans under P/2019/0185 and 0186 - Application For Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent For Part Demolition To Rear, Rear Single-Storey Extensions To Provide New Kitchen Facilities, Refurbishment Of Internal Arrangements Including New Bar And Toilet Areas And Minor Openings – granted 29 July 2019

4.0 The significance of the heritage assets

4.1 **Assessing significance** is embedded in national planning policy. Heritage values that contribute to a greater understanding of significance are identified by Historic England in 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (April 2008)' as being: -

- Evidential
- Historical
- Aesthetic
- Communal

4.2 There are six commonly accepted levels of significance. These are as follows: -

• Outstanding	Highest level of importance, SAMs, WHS, Grade I / II* listed buildings, Historic Parks & Gardens
• High (significant)	Grade II listed buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens and conservation areas
• Medium (moderate)	Locally listed buildings, and those buildings that contribute to a listed building's setting.
• Low (limited)	Limited heritage value
• Neutral	Neither positive nor negative features
• No significance	Features that detract from the heritage values

4.3 The public house is a nationally significant building that has played a significant role in shaping British national identity. Often the focus of community life as a social centre, ale and beer have formed part of the historic diet of the country for centuries, primarily due to the brewing process making the liquid safer to drink than water. Brian Harrison, in his seminal work Drink and the Victorians (1971), identifies fives types of nineteenth-century business that sold alcohol for consumption on the premises: the inn, a well-regarded establishment that accommodated travellers; the tavern, which catered for wine drinkers and was often located in urban commercial districts; the alehouse, which sold no spirits and could be found in both town and country; the gin shop, which sold spirits; and, following the introduction of the Beer Act of 1830, the beer house. Inns, such as The Boat Inn, were architecturally and spatially distinctive.

4.4 In the 1930's pubs became a destination, for all the family in line with the increased use of the motor car and better road networks, and the emphasis on lessening the emphasis on alcohol consumption. Rooms were made larger and less subdivided, rooms were refurbished to make them cheerful and appealing, and food and non an alcoholic drinks were included, as well as tea rooms, where patrons would be waited upon. Bars were shortened so there was less stand up drinking time, more tables and chairs were added for proper seating, lines of visibility through the pub were created, toilets for both men and women and other recreational activities added. The pub and hotel was to appeal to both sexes and both middle and working class 'respectable' people. The spectacular location at Erbistock, although it had to compete with other pubs and inns, retained its popularity, due in no small feat to the determination of the owners over subsequence decades.

4.5 Heritage Values – The Boat Inn (Grade II)

Evidential Value - High	The Boat Inn is a good example of a vernacular Inn, using local materials distinctive to the area, that has evolved over subsequent centuries. Late alterations have not diminished the building's evidential significance. The site has a history of occupation, as evidenced in archival and archaeological records. This includes tangible and written evidence. Further research into these sources may produce additional material. This is currently limited to a succession of nineteenth century maps and archaeological and newspaper sources. The setting on the River Dee contributes to picturesque views to The Boat Inn.	Overall significance **High** 
Historical Value – High	The Boat Inn is an early stone one and half storey building where materials were used that were in close proximity to their surroundings and influenced the external appearance of the building. It has high historical value for its continued use as an Inn since at least the early 19th century and for its association with the ferry across the River Dee.	
Aesthetic Value - High *(Special Architectural Interest)*	The Boat Inn is a good example of a vernacular building in this part of the Maelor in a locally distinctive style, with random rubble walls and its limited pallete of materials. Its linear form and solid to void ratio of its historic sections of the building contrast with the 20th and 21st century adaptations, and collectively it forms part of a cohesive and attractive whole. Its setting contributes to that experience, with the play in levels to the rear, created by trees and bedrock, and the change in levels from roof ridge, road and the levels leading down to the River form part of that experience of the view between both.	
Communal Value - High	The Boat Inn has been in use for over 200 years as a public house. Newspaper articles of the past and present indicate that its character, and that of its surroundings contributes highly and positively to the visitor experience.	

4.6 Heritage Values – Erbistock Conservation Area

Evidential Value - High	This rural conservation area, encompassing both sides of the River Dee is notable for its relatively unchanged character of the 19th century and the setting that each side of the river contributes to it.	Overall significance **High** 
Historical Value – High	The conservation area is of high historic value for the survival of a small number of buildings, the connection with the Boat Inn and ferry crossing, the church, built for and by a local family, the associated former Rectory and farm and the collective high quality buildings and landscape quality that hasn't changed to any significant degree since the middle of the 19th century.	
Aesthetic Value - High *(Special Architectural Interest)*	The conservation area's aesthetic qualities relates as much as its landscape setting as it does to the buildings within it. It has a picturesque landscape quality, created by its natural geology and topographical setting by the River Dee. The wide open vistas of the Dee contrast with the narrow and enclosed winding roads, and the enclosure of buildings with the conservation area, with the exception of The Boat, which shares its frontage with the river. Notwithstanding the function of the Inn, there is a sense of tranquillity and isolation created in part by the natural landscape of trees and hedgerow. The clear architectural distinction of each building, built in the local red sandstone contributes strongly to the sense of place.	
Communal Value - high	The conservation area is of high regional significance.	

4.7 The Setting of Heritage Assets

4.7.1 Setting is defined as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. It may be positive or negative and may change as the asset and surroundings evolve. Although setting is not a heritage asset, it still requires assessment. To understand how heritage assets are experienced within its surroundings, it is important to define the contribution that the existing site makes to their significance. Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) - The Setting of Heritage Assets states in para. 9 that "settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance". It also provides a checklist approach to identify to what degree sites might contribute to the significance of the heritage asset, once that is identified. The setting of heritage assets can change over time, and it is how the surroundings change. The checklist is not exhaustive, and is as follows: -

- Definition of setting
- Difference between setting and curtilage
- Extent of setting.
- Setting and the significance of heritage assets
- Views and setting
- Landscape assessment and amenity

This may include the extent to which the historic connections and views can still be appreciated.

4.7.2 The effect of a proposed development on the setting of a listed building, makes it necessary for the local planning authority to understand what that setting is – even if its extent is difficult or impossible to delineate exactly – and whether the site of the proposed development will be within it or in some way related to it.

4.7.3 The setting of The Boat Inn is created from the high ground behind and the river in front. It was not deliberately designed to form part of an intended key view, but it has become one since the development of the importance of views were recognised. The scenery surrounding the Boat Inn forms part of a key consideration of views. The most important is the overall context of the building in its landscape setting, the second is from the approaches to it, because as Repton states "the opinion of a place is often formed from what is seen in the approach" and the third is the effects of the building seen from nearby footpaths, considered not only as a route from destination to destination, but also included to display the beauties of the surrounding scenery.

4.7.4 Views from The Boat Inn are focused on the riverside setting, which includes the river foreground view and the background view of the woodland on the banks on the other side. These are deliberate and intended views that are appreciated from within the Inn and from the terrace beyond the road.



Fig 14. Views to and from The Boat Inn

4.7.5 The topography, locality and varying terrains behind the Boat Inn are perhaps more dramatic, because of the variety of scales associated with the river bank, the variety of building heights, chimneys, the bank behind, the trees and the colour associated with the change in seasons. The viewpoint of these can be best appreciated from the footpath across the river and from the river itself, but the variety of scales relate to how close one is to these features to be able to ascertain the impact. The footpath is not particularly well used but nonetheless provides a wider panoramic view of The Boat Inn. For the majority of people, the views are kinetic, best appreciated from the river terrace associated with The Boat Inn.



Fig 15. View from the river bank opposite (Copyright: Wrexham County Borough Council)

4.7.6 The bank behind The Boat Inn appears to be one whole escarpment of red sandstone, but this is not actually the case. Part of the bank has been stabilised by gabion walls, which is evident to the rear of the Inn. This is now largely covered with grass, and it is difficult to tell unless close up, due to the contouring, that this is an engineered operation and not a natural part of the red sandstone bedrock above, The bedrock is exposed in areas, with ivy and large trees above creating a picturesque character.

4.7.7 This is also the area which is not intended to be seen from public viewpoints, forming the back of house are for The Boat Inn. This is seen kinetically and not front on because of the proximity of The Boat to the river edge. The bank behind is not overly prominent. The viewpoint to the bank is incidental because of these kinetic views. The experience of the view of the bank and the setting in this location, because of where it is, is confined to incidental viewpoints from the car park.



Fig 16. Sequential and incidental views from the west from the car park to the rear of The Boat Inn. The photo to the right shows the gabion wall, which is the proposed site of some of the solar panels. This area behind The Boat Inn, is where the new extension was approved in 2019.

4.8 Of outstanding significance and particularly sensitive to change: -

- Nothing

Of high significance and very sensitive to change: -

- The frontage of The Boat Inn
- Several key views and vistas important to the experience of the view to the frontage and river setting
- The building's setting in relation to the river and church

Of medium (moderate) significance and opportunity to change

- The secondary historic buildings linked to The Boat Inn by a 20th century extension
- The roof form and structure as viewed

Of Low (limited) significance and of limited heritage value and opportunity to change

- The rear back of house
- New extensions

Of Neutral or no significance with neither positive nor negative features, or detracting from the building and opportunity to change

- Modern plant equipment; extractors etc

5.0 Impact of The Development Proposal on The Heritage Assets

5.1 This report has been written to assess the heritage impact of the installation of 40 solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) on the rear north bank and rear roof of the outriggers to The Boat Inn, Erbistock. The application site is within Erbistock Conservation Area.

5.2 The main issues are as follows:

- The effect of the proposal on the setting of The Boat Inn, a Grade II listed building
- The effect of the proposal on Erbistock Conservation Area
- The effect on any key views and landmark buildings

5.3 Cadw's Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales document sets out four criteria: -

1. Explaining objectives and the purpose for proposed changes, including options for the different ways in which it can be met and the most appropriate option and design response. What the works are intended to achieve and why they are desirable or necessary.

2. Understanding and identifying significance –The significance of the asset needs to be considered when making the changes.

3. Identifying proposed changes – the proposed schedule of works – identifying the best way to achieve the objectives that respect its character.
4. Assessing the impact –

    - how would the proposals affect the evidential value of the historic asset?
    - Would they result in the loss of or damage to historic fabric, including archaeological evidence, or make it harder to appreciate the way in which the building or site was used in the past, and how it has changed over time?

- how would the proposals affect the aesthetic or design qualities of the historic asset? Will they compromise its historical design principles — such as its layout, scale, and proportion — or result in the loss of historic detail or craftsmanship?
- how would the proposals affect communal value? Would they make it easier for people to access and appreciate the building or site?
- are there any other risks or benefits? For example, risks might include increased maintenance and management liabilities, or compromised performance using incompatible materials; benefits might include the introduction of a sustainable new use.
- Offsetting measures – where damage is unavoidable, opportunities to introduce compensatory measures.

5.4 It is noted that all listed buildings are treated equally in terms of listed building consent. It is important however, to understand why the building is listed before assessing any changes, as this will have a bearing on how the application is assessed.

5.5 There are five considerations for listing – architectural interest, historic interest, close historic associations, group value and age and rarity. The Boat Inn is listed for the following reasons:

- "Listed as a 17th century building with 19th century remodelling retaining some original features. Group value with St. Hilary's Church."

The following points are relevant: -

- Whilst the reasons for listing does not mention the setting, it is included within the description of the special interest within the conservation area and contributing to the area's special interest.
- All of the historic buildings and structures in the conservation area contribute to the collective group value.

5.7 Location of the solar panels

5.7.1 The scale of the solar panel installation is suitable for the energy requirements of The Boat Inn, and the payback energy costs should be recouped within 4 – 5 years. The optimum location to face the solar panels are south facing. This is not a location that is suitable on the roofs at The Boat Inn, because the south roof slopes form part of the principal elevation. Nor could it be installed to the south of the building as this would be in the foreground of The Boat Inn. Any solar installation here would be highly visible and detrimental to the setting and views of The Boat Inn and conservation area. Options were looked at to establish where the solar panels could go that would allow for minimum impact, minimum shading, optimum sunshine and limited views.

5.7.2 Some solar panels needed to go on the building. The roofs where the solar panels are proposed are on the new roofs approved in 2019. The roof is lower to the rear than to the front and the roofs are not the principal roof slopes. The bank to the rear of The Boat Inn was considered a suitable location off the building and for a larger area of panels. This area will be the largest installation of the locations chosen and will maximise the panels output.

5.7.3 The solar panels are Infinity N-type Bifacial modules with double glass commercial solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) and will be mounted on a metal frame at a fixed tilt angle of 10 degrees. They will be orientated as landscape. The panels are black and have a low sheen finish. They are encased in grey metal frames. The panels will be predominately configured to point in an east/west pattern to ensure a smooth power transmission throughout the day and laid on a frame to allow the panels to be angled at 10 degrees. Maintenance spaces for cleaning and rainwater dispersal has been designed between the panels. Panels will be demountable from the frame if further access is required.

5.7.3 They will sit on top of the modern roofs to the rear, which will isolate the frame from the existing roof. The panels are not fixed to the roof, as this would risk water ingress. Instead, they will be installed on a ballasted frame that sits on the roof. There is a maintenance and safety strip around the perimeter of the panel array. The shading would largely be confined to the east rising sun, and the principal roofs and would have more of a shadow in summer.

5.7.4 The bank is set sufficiently back so that shading is more limited. The top layer of soil will be removed, a membrane installed and pea gravel base will be put on top before the solar frame and panels are installed. The panels will be surrounded by reclaimed railway sleepers. The sleeper at the front of the array will 200mm high. At the highest point at the rear of the panel, it is anticipated that whilst the solar panels are angled and there will be some visibility, there will be approximately only 15 mm of panel viewed. There will be a 30mm gap between the sleeper and panel.



Fig 17. The primary location of the panels will be on this bank, above the gabion wall, outlined in red. Sleepers will be installed In front of the panels.



Fig 18. How the panels will look, the view is side on.

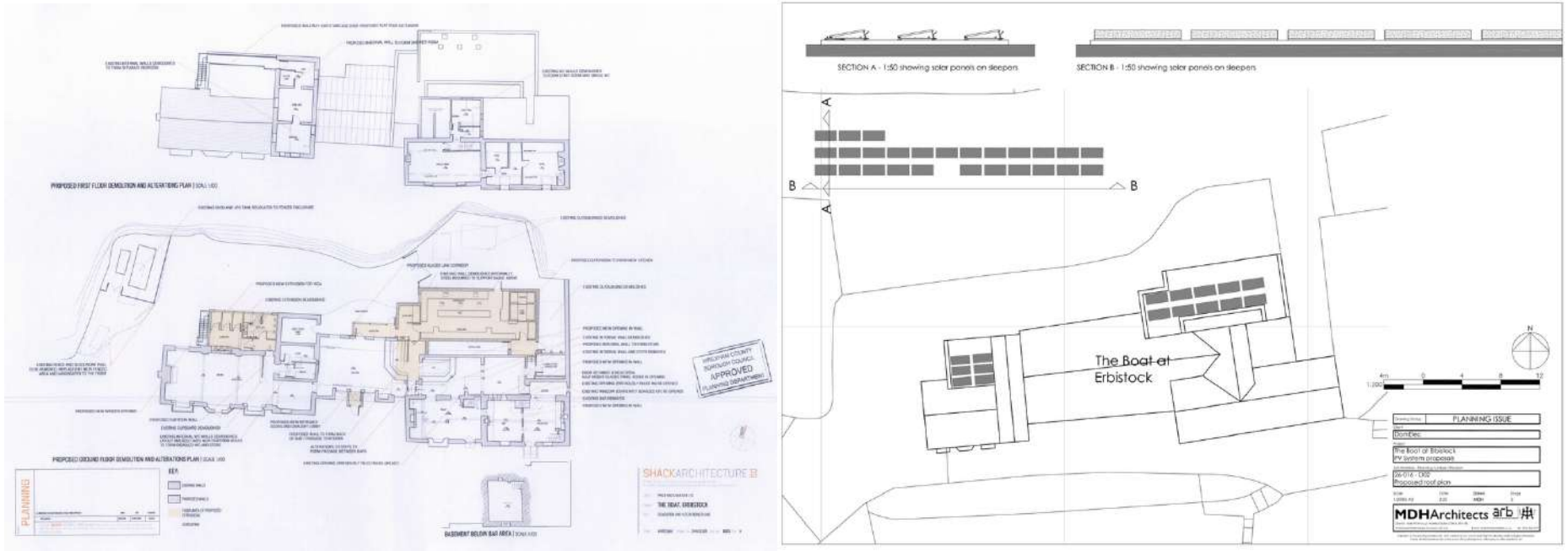


Fig 19. Left: the extensions approved in 2019 and right the proposed solar panel locations on the roofs to these extensions. Once installed the system will significantly reduce The Boat Inn's reliance on the grid.

5.8 Views

5.8.1 The application site can be viewed from various viewpoints. The key silhouettes that punctuate the skyline in this location are the trees and, in the foreground, the varied linear roof lines of The Boat Inn.

5.8.2 The views identified for assessment in relation this proposal are based on areas where The Boat Inn could clearly be seen from. There are no key views identified in the Erbistock Conservation Area Appraisal, although focal points are described in the text.

5.8.3 Part of the analysis of the impact was to look at the impact on short views, at pedestrian level, within and around the proposed development, both static and kinetic. These are generally surrounding the site. The viewpoints selected are: -

- The view from the northern side of the river bank in front of The Boat Inn.
- The Boat Inn car park which leads to a footpath to the west.
- The view from the south side of the river bank.

5.8.4 The interrogation of the views has been assessed using the Staged Process in Historic England's 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' (2017), which replaced 'Seeing the History In The View'. It is read alongside Cadw's 'Setting of Heritage Assets in Wales'. 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' identifies the following when assessing views which contribute more to understanding the significance of a heritage asset. These include:

- those where the composition within the view was a fundamental aspect of the design or function of the heritage asset
- those where town- or village-scape reveals views with unplanned or unintended beauty
- those with historical associations, including viewing points and the topography of battlefields
- those with cultural associations, including landscapes known historically for their picturesque and landscape beauty, those which became
- subjects for paintings of the English landscape tradition, and those views which have otherwise become historically cherished and protected
- those where relationships between the asset and other heritage assets or natural features or phenomena are particularly relevant

5.8.5 The matrices in 'Seeing the History In The View' are useful to categorise and have been adapted for the purposes of this assessment to show the following: -

Value / Importance of Individual Heritage Assets Identified Within The View

High - A World Heritage Site, Grade I or II* listed building or historic park and garden, scheduled monument, historic battlefield which is a central focus and whose significance is well represented in the view. The Viewing Place is a good or only place to view the asset. The view is likely to be nationally or regionally important whose heritage significance is well represented in the view, and which benefit from being seen in combination with each other.

Medium - A Grade II listed building or historic park and garden, conservation area, locally listed building or other locally identified heritage resource which is a central focus of the view and whose significance is well represented in the view. The Viewing Place is a good / only place to view the asset. High value heritage assets can be included where they do not form a focus of the view, but whose significance is still well represented. The view is likely to be of importance at the county, borough or district level.

Low - A Grade II listed building, Grade II historic park and garden, conservation area, locally listed building or other locally identified heritage resource which does not form a focus of the view, but whose significance is still well represented. In this case the Viewing Place may not be the best or only place to view the heritage asset. The view is likely to be a locally valued view.

6.8.8 The magnitude or qualitive judgement of the impact of development is also a consideration and have been identified as follows: -

- The development considerably enhances the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development enhances to a clearly discernible extent the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development enhances to a minor extent the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development does not affect the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development erodes to a minor extent the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development erodes to a clearly discernible extent the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
- The development severely erodes the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values. Assess the effects of the development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance

Viewpoint	Heritage Asset in View	Landmark and skyline features	Description of view and identify how heritage significance can be sustained	Overall value of view	Magnitude or Impact of Development
The view from the northern side of the river bank in front of The Boat Inn.	Erbistock Conservation Area The Boat Inn The Church of St. Hilary	The Boat Inn	The foreground view of The Boat Inn creates a strong linear composition of varying building lines and roof heights and the relatively narrow road in front of it allows the building to enclose and funnel the view along its frontage to towards the river to the south. The rear bank is not in the view.	The value of the view is medium.	Negligible. The development does not affect the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
The Boat Inn car park which leads to a footpath to the west.	Erbistock Conservation Area The Boat Inn	The Boat Inn	This is a series of kinetic pedestrian views which lead to the west wing of The Boat Inn. This shows the bank and side gable of The Boat Inn in the same view, and the view widens to show the bank, with the general mass of buildings and roofs at lower level in the foreground, and the river in the distance. The view of The Boat Inn from here represents a change of low impact and a slight change in silhouette.	Low to moderate. The view is not a fundamental aspect of the design or function of the heritage asset.	Low. The proposed sleepers will hide to some degree the solar panels and this will be enhanced with herb planting. The development does not affect the heritage values of the heritage assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or the ability to appreciate those values.
The view from the south side of the river bank.	Erbistock Conservation Area The Boat Inn The Church of St. Hilary	Erbistock Conservation Area The Boat Inn The Church of St. Hilary	This is where the experience of the riverside view and setting is best appreciated from. The pathway is not easy to navigate, nor does it appear to be well used, although it is part of the Maelor Way. Trees on this side of the river bank frame the view of The Boat and the bank is visible in the view but not prominent; the buildings providing	The value of the view is high.	Very low / negligible. The Boat Inn and Church of St. Hilary is more dominant in the street scene. The development does not affect the heritage values of the heritage

			the principal views. The proposed development area is not really experienced to any high degree of visibility from the naked eye because of the distance from the river bank.		assets in the view, or the view as a whole, or



Fig 20. The view from the northern side of the river bank in front of The Boat Inn.



Fig 21. Kinetic views from The Boat Inn car park which leads to a footpath to the west.



Fig 22. The view from the south side of the river bank. It is the best view but not a well-used or popular route.

5.9 The proposed development of 40 solar panels (2278×1134×30mm) to two rear main roof sections and the bank will cause some change. Both roofs are later additions to the buildings. The proposed new solar panels will cover most of these sections of roof. The panel array will be set back from the perimeter edge to allow for safe maintenance and wind load, and to reduce the visual impact. The weight of the impact is low. In terms of visibility, the solar panels are set at an angle so will not be seen from road or river level and are unlikely to be seen to any real degree from any vantage points.

5.10 In terms of impact on the fabric of the building, the weight of the impact is, both figuratively and literally, most significant to the roof. The change is to the least sensitive part of the building and the area that is least likely to be publicly viewed. It is also in an area where plant equipment is located and so there is a precedent of 'back of house' and other ancillary installations here. The covering over of these ancillary roofs with PV's would not impact on the authenticity of the building. The impact is lessened by the fact that the roof would remain in place below the panels. The weight load has been assessed, and it has been established that this extra weight will not cause structural harm.

5.11 The installation of the solar panels will create a modest degree of physical change to the bank behind The Boat Inn. They are located on flat ground, above a gabion wall, and laid in rows. Each solar panel will be at a slight angle. The panel array will be bordered by old oak railway sleepers with planting in front of rosemary and sage to mitigate the impact. It will not affect the foreground view that draws the eye to The Boat Inn. The framing of the view, and its setting, is created by the varying scales of mature trees, the various bank levels, some natural, others manmade, the roof heights of the various part of The Boat, but all this is seen kinetically and not front on because of the proximity of The Boat to the river edge.

5.12 The bank behind is not overly prominent. The viewpoint to the bank is incidental because of these kinetic views. There are other long ranging viewpoints that have been assessed. The view of The Boat Inn will not adversely change as a result of this proposition, and overall, this is not a significant visual change or impact.

5.13 The setting of the listed building, and those nearby in the conservation area will not significantly change because of this development. It is the experience and weight of the impact on the buildings and conservation area's significance that is important. The tight road layout pattern means that there are a select number of kinetic views of the buildings in the conservation area and none of these views are directly focused on buildings. The scale of the proposed change is moderate, with the impact largely confined to incidental viewpoints from the car park. It is not considered to cause harm to the setting of the listed building or the conservation area. On balance it is considered to preserve the conservation area's character and appearance. It is a thoughtful response to context.

5.14 However, should the Council consider that there is a degree of less than substantial harm caused by the number of solar array panels and the limited degree of visibility seen of them, the public benefits are substantial. The Boat Inn has a high energy consumption, due to it being a local pub for the public, open 7 days a week, though-out the day and evening and with an active kitchen and bar. The electricity expenditure for the building is its highest and most significant cost. The use of solar energy will allow The Boat Inn to substantially reduce these costs in a sustainable manner. The Boat Inn's commitment to sustainability is by choosing solar energy to meet its growing electricity demand. It is also a sensible economic choice for its future growth.

5.15 The installation of the panels is related to The Boat Inn's drive to improve renewable energy generation and to make the running of the building more sustainable. The design of the solar panel installation means that the roof and the panels can be regularly inspected, and maintenance undertaken. It is fundamental that The Boat Inn reduces its future energy bills and carbon footprint in response to the climate crisis. The Boat Inn is an important local landmark building in Wrexham County. This scheme will allow the building to continue to be so for many years to come.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The proposed development is within the curtilage of a listed building of high sensitivity. It would not affect the ability to appreciate or understand the special architectural and historic interest of The Boat Inn or detract from the quality of the townscape of the Conservation Area.

7.2 The proposals would not cause harm to the significance of the listed buildings or the conservation area. These are designated heritage assets of high significance. Great weight has been given to the conservation of these designated heritage assets. The proposed development has been designed with care to avoid harming the essential elements that contribute to their significance.

7.3 The proposed development would have a neutral impact on The Boat Inn and the immediate setting of the listed building and whilst it would cause change, the weight of the effect is low. Whilst setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, the setting contributes to a heritage asset's special interest. It would therefore be in accordance with the statutory duties of Sections 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the requirements of the NPPF and the relevant local plan policies.

7.4 The proposal has been informed by understanding of the significance of The Boat Inn, its various parts, its setting and key views. The physical impacts are reversible. Visual impacts are very limited and localised. It would not affect the evidential value of the historic asset. It would not result in the loss of or damage to historic fabric, including archaeological evidence, or make it harder to appreciate the way in which the building or site was used in the past, and how it has changed over time.

7.5 The concept and scale of public benefits is broad and in the context of heritage assessment is not restricted to heritage benefits. The importance of using solar panels strike a balance between conserving the conservation area's character and setting of listed buildings and reducing the carbon footprint.

7.6 Cadw's 'Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment in Wales', March 2011 states that "Conservation Principles are based on the premise that change is an inevitable part of the sustainable management of historic buildings. Changes involve many types of activity, ranging from repair and renewal, on the one hand to new work or alteration on the other". The proposals follow the five principles outlined for 'new work or alteration to a significant place' in Section 28 of this document '. These are:

- The need for the work is fully justified - The works are justified in terms of reducing the energy costs of running The Boat Inn and retaining the high quality visitor offer and promoting a beneficial and sustainable use in an appropriate way and to secure the site's longevity.
- There is sufficient information to understand the significance of the heritage assets and the proposals upon it.
- The proposals would not materially harm the values of the listed building or the conservation area.
- The proposals overall, have a neutral to positive impact on the value of the heritage assets.
- The quality of the design and execution must add value to the existing assets The designs and materials chosen are a carefully response to context.
- It would not affect the ability to appreciate and understand the special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings or conservation area and is an evolutionary process of use and appearance.
- The proposals offer a degree of intervention that is based on the varying degree of history attached to the evidential value of parts of the historic assets.
- The proposals aim to respect and reflect the aesthetic or design qualities of the historic assets. These changes do not compromise its historical design principles — such as its layout, scale, and proportion — or result in the loss of historic detail or craftsmanship.
- Any perceived harm arising from the development are relatively low carbon and easily removed. The holistic vision of the site must be recognised for the site to be preserved and enhanced in a sustainable manner.