



Save Our Heritage  
A COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY  
Wrexham, North Wales

Working to save our historic built environment for use today and in the future

Save Our Heritage cic, a community interest company set up to represent the people of Wrexham's interest in their built environment, oppose Glyndwr Universities proposal (P/2018/0666) for their Mold Road campus for the following reasons.

### **Learning Gateway Building – Plas Coch Academic**

The Universities plans to construct a two storey mostly glass pavilion over the front entrance of the existing Grade 2 Listed building are unacceptable. The new building would totally obscure the existing main entrance, and is not at all in keeping with the refined lines exhibited by the architects' original design.

Whilst the Design & Access Statement mentions that the new building would improve disabled access, this is something that already exists, and if improvements are felt necessary, could be met in another way.

There is nothing about the new pavilion that couldn't be achieved within the existing building. The 'flexible space' created already exists in the form of a large foyer, and theatre spaces. The proposal mentions un-interrupted sight lines to the stone reliefs by Darsie Rawlins, but from the initial plans show, these views are only achievable from certain areas inside the new building.

The Design and Access Statement goes on to say that the planned pavilion is "visually lightweight with extensive glazing to allow continued views to the Listed Building beyond", however, in reality, very little will be visible from the roadway, and even from closer up, due to the internal layout detailed in the plans. The statement continues with "the physical junction is delicate and sympathetic" but nothing could be further from the truth.

The planned pavilion fails to celebrate the existing building. It is out of context and unsympathetic. If the University feels that the existing main entrance isn't prominent enough, this is because of the wayfinding clutter and poor hardscaping choices made in recent years. A fresh approach using materially appropriate hardscaping techniques to this area of the listed building would certainly make the main entrance more visible, but without the need to construct a new building.

The Heritage Impact Assessment submitted in the proposal states that the existing main entrance is "the most characterful and instantly recognisable element of the main building" – yet the University considers that it needs to obstruct the view of this element rather than celebrate it.

### **Demolition of the former gymnasium and music rehearsal rooms**

The proposal to demolish a significantly large section of a Grade 2 Listed building requires exceptional justification. The Heritage Impact Assessment acknowledges that by demolishing this building, “harm” would be caused to the Listed Building as a whole. Yet goes on to state apart from the uPVC windows, the former gymnasium survives largely as originally constructed.

The assessment mentions that there is a significant backlog of outstanding repairs and maintenance, but this is a failing on the part of the University, and should have no bearing on the justification to demolish. None of the outstanding repairs could be serious enough to warrant demolition, as the building is still in use by the Student Union today.

### **Demolition of the Engineering Block**

Save Our Heritage were surprised that this building wasn't included in the original listing description of 1994. Constructed in the late 1960's, its unusual form stands out amongst the more conventional buildings on the campus.

The Heritage Impact Assessment recognises that the Engineering Block “is the only non-listed building that exhibits any heritage significance” and that it “displays some degree of aesthetic sophistication”.

We feel that the demolition of this building is a huge oversight, and with creative thinking, it would have been possible to integrate the structure into an additional new build behind the block. We would urge the University to look again at the proposal, and to consider whether demolition is truly the only solution.

### **Closing Statement**

We would add that any window replacements should be made with steel or aluminium frames, and not uPVC, as powder coated frames outlast uPVC significantly, have slimmer glazing bars and better sightlines than plastic equivalents. They are also considerably more environmentally friendly.

We recognise and appreciate that the University has a desire and need to grow its campus, but we feel that some elements of this proposal are poorly thought out, and have not been led with consideration of Listed Building status at the forefront of the design.

In conclusion, having examined the proposal thoroughly, we feel the addition of the glass pavilion on the front of the Plas Coch building fails to respect the buildings heritage or original design. The demolition of the former gymnasium is unjustified, and likewise, the demolition of the Engineering Block is a huge oversight that may well be regretted in later years. We have no comments to make regarding the extension to the Sports Hall.

*Save Our Heritage cic  
Wrexham*