

CPAT Report No. 1787




Old Council Yard, Machynlleth, Powys

Heritage Impact Assessment



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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 CPAT Project No: 2530
 Project Name: Old Council Yard, Machynlleth
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Summary

In April 2021 the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust carried out a heritage impact assessment in relation to proposals for the redevelopment of a building within the grounds of Plas Machynlleth in Machynlleth, Powys.

The assessment involved the consideration of potential impacts on the listed buildings in the area, together with the Machynlleth Conservation Area and the park and garden in the grounds of the Plas. The results demonstrated that the building was probably used in the minor functions of the estate and was accordingly withdrawn from the main areas of interest; as such it would not be expected to occupy significant views and it was also hidden from the main road that passes to the north-west by the wall which forms the boundary of the estate on that side.

Internally, there were some features of interest that probably merit preservation, but the main consideration was the poor condition of the boundary wall that forms the north-west side of the building. This has been subject to temporary repairs by the insertion of iron rods designed to tie it to the south-east wall of the building, but the overall condition is such that this will need to be remedied at some point in the near future to prevent a catastrophic collapse into the roadway. Remedial work on that wall could be contemplated as part of this proposed redevelopment.

Crynodeb

Fis Ebrill 2021, bu Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys yn cynnal asesiad o effaith ar dreftadaeth yn gysylltiedig â chynigion i ailddatblygu adeilad yn nhiroedd Plas Machynlleth ym Machynlleth, Powys.

Roedd yr asesiad yn galw am ystyried effeithiau posibl ar adeiladau rhestredig yn yr ardal, yn ogystal ag Ardal Gadwraeth Machynlleth a'r parc a'r ardd yn nhiroedd y Plas. Yn ôl y canlyniadau, defnyddiwyd yr adeilad, mae'n debyg, ar gyfer mân swyddogaethau'r ystâd ac felly tynnwyd ef o'r prif feysydd o ddiddordeb gan na fyddai disgwyl iddo fod yn rhan sylweddol o unrhyw olygfeydd ac roedd hefyd wedi'i guddio o'r brif ffordd sy'n mynd heibio i'r gogledd-orllewin ger y mur sy'n ffurfio ffin yr ystâd ar yr ochr honno.

Yn fewnol, roedd yna rai nodweddion o ddiddordeb a oedd, mae'n siŵr, yn haeddu eu cadw, ond y brif ystyriaeth oedd cyflwr gwael y mur terfyn sy'n ffurfio ochr ogledd-orllewinol yr adeilad. Bu rhywfaint o atgyweirio dros dro i hwn trwy fewnosod rhodenni haeam â'r bwriad o'i gysylltu â wal dde-ddwyreiniol yr adeilad, ond mae'r cyflwr cyffredinol yn golygu y bydd angen cywiro hyn rywbyrd yn y dyfodol agos i'w atal rhag cwmpo'n drychinebus i'r ffordd. Gellid ystyried gwaith cywiro ar y mur fel rhan o'r ailddatblygiad arfaethedig hwn.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. In March 2021 the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by Anthony Roberts to conduct a heritage impact assessment in connection with proposals for the conversion of a building within the Old Council Yard in Machynlleth, Powys into a dwelling (Powys planning application 20/1924/FUL and 20/1925/LBC). These works would involve removal of the roof and demolition and rebuild of a section of the Grade II listed wall bounding the road.
- 1.2. The planning advice from Powys County Council's Built Heritage Officer dated 3rd February 2021 states "*The validation checklist produced by Cadw identifies that the Heritage Impact Assessment should provide an explanation of why the works are desirable or necessary; an assessment of the significance of the building; an assessment of the impact of the proposed works on the special architectural or historic interest of the building and its significance; a summary of the options and the reasons for the preferred approach.*" In addition the officer required an assessment on the setting of historic assets, including both the adjacent listed buildings, the Registered Historic Park and Garden and the conservation area. Although the submitted application had been supported by an initial Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) (November 2020)¹ the conclusions reached by the Officer were that "*The proposed alterations to this listed building are considered inappropriate and if implemented would severely affect the character and appearance of this listed building*" and that a new HIA produced by an appropriately qualified professional would be required before the application could be determined.
- 1.3. The Old Council Yard lies on the south-west side of Machynlleth, in the grounds that were once part of Y Plas, and south of the A487 as it leaves the town heading for Aberystwyth. (Fig. 1; SH 7445 0050).
- 1.4. The objectives of this application and the proposed changes to a historic asset summarised in the planning details are:

20/1924/FUL *Conversion and extension of former council storage depot building to form a dwelling and all associated works Former Storage Building at The Plas Heol Pentrerhedyn Machynlleth SY20 8ER, and*

20/1925/LBC *Listed building consent for alterations and renovations of former council storage building and replacement of tin clad extension with sunroom in connection with proposed conversion to form a dwelling Former Storage Building At Y Plas Aberystwyth Road Machynlleth Powys.*
- 1.5. This study is therefore designed to enable a full assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the building and on its setting. A Heritage Impact Assessment is defined as "a structured process to make sure you take the significance of your historic asset into account when you are developing and designing proposals for change".² The results should be summarised in a Heritage Statement submitted with applications for listed building consent, and conservation area consent.

1.1.

1.1. ¹ authorship and professional credentials unattributed

1.2. ² Cadw May 2017 Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales p.3



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Fig. 1: Location of the Old Council Yard (in red).

2 Legislative Provisions, Planning Policy and Published Guidance

Legislation

- 2.1. The legislative framework for the historic environment in Wales was revised by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The 2016 Act amended the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It extended the definition of scheduled monuments and enhanced their protection, as well as making changes to the process of scheduled monument consent. Changes were also made to the protection of listed buildings. The 2016 Act also provided for a statutory register of historic landscapes, a statutory list of place names, and imposed a statutory duty on Welsh Ministers to compile and maintain Historic Environment Records (HERs).

Planning Policy

- 2.2. National policy within Wales is set out in Planning Policy Wales (11th edition, 2020) (PPW), which was revised with the purpose of harmonising PPW with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). Issues relating to the historic environment are set out in Chapter 6, Distinctive and Natural Places. This notes that the 'protection, conservation and enhancement of historic assets is most effective when it is considered at the earliest stage' of a project; hence

the need for a reasonable and proportionate impact assessment to ensure that any proposed development is sustainable and to prevent unnecessary harm to historic assets.

- 2.3. PPW is supported by Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (TAN 24) of 2017. It is designed to assist local authorities with developing their local plans and for determination of planning applications or listed building consent in relation to historic assets. PPW is also supported by associated Cadw best practice guidance on the historic environment (see below).
- 2.4. Local planning policy is contained within Powys Council's Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (adopted 2018). This includes Strategic Policy SP7 - Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets - development proposals must not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the resource or asset and its operation. It defines resources as 2. Historic environment designations, including:
 - i. Registered Historic Landscapes;
 - ii. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
 - iii. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains;
 - iv. Listed Buildings and their curtilages; and
 - v. Conservation Areas (and the settings for these designations)

Guidance

- 2.5. The assessment follows guidance produced by Cadw, on behalf of the Welsh Government, for managing historic assets: *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (2017); *The Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (2017); and *Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales* (2011).
- 2.6. The assessment was also conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* (2020). CIfA is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas.

3 Methodology

- 3.1. The proposed development is one which has been identified as requiring a Heritage Impact Assessment. The assessment is designed to comply with Welsh legislative and planning policy frameworks, adopting relevant guidance from Cadw and other relevant bodies.
- 3.2. The work involved the aspects listed below:
 - HER data procurement and its manipulation to provide an accurate and appropriate GIS layer
 - Historic map regression
 - Consultation with online documentary sources and adding the results of this and the map regression to the GIS layer
 - Site visit
 - The application of the guidance to assist with the assessment of the significance and setting of heritage assets
- 3.3. The values of each relevant heritage asset are considered under the following headings:

Evidential value

- 3.4. This derives from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity and could include the physical remains or surviving fabric of an asset, the contribution of documentary sources, pictorial records and museum collections.

Historical value

- 3.5. A heritage asset might illustrate a particular aspect of past life or it might be associated with a notable family, person, event or movement. These illustrative or associative values of an the asset may be less tangible than its evidential value but will often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present. They are not so easily diminished by change as evidential values and are harmed only to the extent that adaptation may obliterate or conceal them.

Aesthetic value

- 3.6. This derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an asset through its form, external appearance or setting.

Communal value

- 3.7. This derives from the meanings that the asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Setting

- 3.8. This is an analysis of the locality of the asset to determine which parts of its surroundings contribute to its appreciation, viewed from within and without the boundary of the asset..

Statement of Significance

- 3.9. This is a summary of the relevant aspects of the heritage asset which contribute to its significance.
- 3.10. Cadw's guidance Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales outlines a five stage process which has been followed in this report:
- Explaining the objective and why change is desirable
 - Understanding the significance of the historic asset
 - Identifying proposed changes
 - Assessing the impact of those proposals on the historic asset
 - Justifying the preferred design option in the light of the assessment process
- 3.11. Stage 1, the objective of the project, has been set out in the introduction as conversion of a former council store into a residential dwelling. This would change and impact upon a historic structure, which has been designated as a listed building, and would introduce a new element into the conservation area and setting of various other designated assets. The condition of the existing listed wall, and therefore this associated building, is poor and liable to collapse, and so an appropriate design which includes conservation and restoration of the historic asset would be a desirable outcome for this application.

4 Stage 2a: Understanding the historic asset

Designated and Registered Heritage Assets within 200m of the Development Area

Listed Buildings

- 4.1. There are 10 listed buildings within 200m of the Development Area, of which one is listed at grade II* (Table 1). The Development Area is directly adjacent to two of the listed buildings, 8485 and 8486, the later including the stone boundary wall which forms the north-western side of the plot, while the building proposed for conversion is considered to be curtilage listed.

Table 1: Designated assets within 200m of the Development Area

Record No	Name	Grade
8482	Former Smithy to Plas Machynlleth	II
8483	Section of Boundary Wall at Plas Machynlleth & including the Main Entrance up to the former coach house	II
8484	Section of rubble wall bordering the outer Entrance Courtyard between the former coach house & stables	II
8485	Former Coach House and Stables to Plas Machynlleth (Plas Kennels)	II
8486	Two Sections of Boundary wall to Plas Machynlleth from the former Coach house and Stables down to the gates at the West lodge	II
8487	Gates and Gatepiers at the SW Entry to Plas Machynlleth Park	II
8488	Deildy (also known as West Lodge)	II
8499	Plas Machynlleth	II*
8500	Fountain in the Gardens of Plas Machynlleth	II
8501	Pedestal and Bust of Marchioness of Londonderry in the gardens of Plas Machynlleth	II
PGW (Po) 26(POW)	Plas Machynlleth park and gardens	II
N/A	Machynlleth Conservation Area	N/A

Undesignated Assets within 200m of the Development Area

- 4.2. The regional HER records 14 undesignated assets within 200m of the Development Area, while the NMR has provided 12 further assets. Two further assets, PRNs 167194 and 167195, lie within the Development Area. The locations of the assets are depicted on the plan in Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

Table 2: Undesignated Assets within 200m of the Development Area

Record No	Asset_Name	Period	Type
17977	Machynlleth Flint Find	Prehistoric	Findspot
19465	Plas Machynlleth, Heol Pentrehedyn Road	Post Medieval	Road
19468	Plas Machynlleth, Post Medieval Activity II	Post Medieval	Malt House
29135	Machynlleth Medieval Town	Medieval	Urban Area
31930	Plas Machynlleth, Boundary Wall	Post Medieval	Wall
31935	Plas Machynlleth, Boundary Wall	Post Medieval	Wall
32484	Plas Machynlleth, Boundary Wall	Post Medieval	Wall
32980	Plas Machynlleth, Garden	Post Medieval	Garden
43110	Plas Machynlleth, 'Melin y Wig' Sawmill	Post Medieval	Saw Mill
57727	Plas Machynlleth, Post Medieval Activity I	Post Medieval	Malt House
110888	Plas Machynlleth, Cobbled Yards	Post Medieval	Courtyard
110889	Plas Machynlleth, Long building	Post Medieval	Dwelling
110904	Plas Machynlleth, Well	Medieval	Well
110917	Plas Machynlleth, Outbuilding	Post Medieval	Outbuilding
167194	Plas Machynlleth, Building	Post Medieval	Building
167195	Plas Machynlleth, Building (site of)	Post Medieval	Building
NPRN			
29344	Heol Pentrehedyn	Post Medieval	Dwelling
29819	Plas Machynlleth-Cobbled Yards	Post Medieval	Courtyard
29821	Plas Machynlleth - house nearby; ?Lledfair Hall	Post Medieval	House
29824	Plas Machynlleth, Walled Garden, Machynlleth	Post Medieval	Walled Garden
43510	Plas Machynlleth Ice House	Post Medieval	Icehouse
43511	Plas Machynlleth, Outbuilding	Post Medieval	Outbuilding
96111	Pentrehedyn Street No 33	Post Medieval	Dwelling
96112	Culvert in garden of Lletty Gwyn, Pentrehedyn Street	Post Medieval	Conduit
265185	Plas Machynlleth, Garden, Machynlleth	Post Medieval	Country House Garden
407443	Greenfields, No 6, Machynlleth	Post Medieval	House

421551	Former Tollhouse, Heol Pentrerhedyn, Machynlleth	18th Century	Toll House
423354	Lledfair Place	19th Century	House

- 4.3. This section provides a brief summary of the archaeology and history of the study area and its immediate surrounds, to enable the findings of the assessment to be placed in a wider context.

Prehistoric Era (10,000BC – AD 43)

- 4.4. Evidence for early activity in the Machynlleth area is limited. A polished stone axe (PRN 712/1274) is recorded as having come from house foundations in 1885 opposite the Chest Hospital or perhaps from Gallt y Gog, north of the town. A standing stone, Maen Llwyd (PRN 715), now lying on a traffic island, may have been a Bronze Age standing stone though its original position is unknown, and there is a supposed Iron Age hillfort, Gallt y Gog (PRN 711), overlooking the town.

Roman Period (AD 43 – 410)

- 4.5. Any link with the Roman settlement of Maglona, for long a favourite antiquarian speculation, has been comprehensively refuted. The nearest major Roman site is the fort at Pennal, some 4km to the west on the opposite side of the Dyfi.

Medieval Period (410 - 1500)

- 4.6. The earliest form of the name is Machenthleith which was recorded sometime between 1201 and 1213. Other later forms such as Machenloyd (1254) and Machynllaith (1385) all reflect only minor variations. The most recent commentators on Welsh place-names suggest that mach should be equated with 'plain' and that Cynllaith is a personal name, though nothing is known about such an individual. 'Cynllaith' is mentioned as a medieval territorial unit by Richards (1969, 54), but this refers to an area in eastern Wales coinciding with the Ceiriog Valley, in what was formerly Denbighshire and is now Wrexham County Borough.
- 4.7. The town was founded by the Welsh prince, Owain de la Pole, supposedly late in the 13th century, for in 1291 he was granted the right to hold a weekly market and two annual fairs there by Edward I. Machynlleth was usefully placed on the trade route between Aberystwyth and Gwynedd, which would have made it an attractive prospect. If other mid-Wales towns are any guide, there was probably some settlement already in existence earlier in the century, a contention supported by the earlier place-names cited above. By the end of the 13th century there were 61 tax payers resident in the town. The original perimeter of the churchyard can still be recognised on the ground and its sub-circular appearance suggests that there may have been a pre-Conquest foundation here.
- 4.8. The layout of the new town was a regular T-shape with an east-west road (Maengwyn Street) meeting a north-south road at a market place. The former was the principal thoroughfare. The earlier settlement is likely to have been in the vicinity of the church and might be reflected in the alignment of Pen-yr-allt Street which is not in keeping with the rest of the regular planned layout and may, at least in part, already have been in existence.
- 4.9. One of Machynlleth's principal claims to fame is that Owain Glyndŵr called a parliament here in 1404. Though short-lived it has left an indelible mark on Machynlleth's history. The building

now known as Parliament House, which has traditionally been seen as the location for the 1404 parliament is, however, later in date, having been built around 1470.

- 4.10. The town declined in the late medieval period, although John Leland, who passed this way in the 1530s, classed it as the second town of Montgomeryshire, and with both a market and assizes it was considered amongst the most important twenty-five towns in Wales in the 16th and 17th centuries. It seems to have had a strong commercial base and as the Dyfi was navigable to within a mile and a half of the town, water-borne transport was of some importance.

Post-Medieval and Modern Periods

- 4.11. The Dyfi was bridged in 1533, providing easy access to the north and the bridge was apparently the site of a minor Civil War skirmish in 1644.
- 4.12. When the cattle droving era was in its heyday between the 17th and 19th centuries, Machynlleth emerged as one of the most important collecting centres for stock making the journey to England. A coach link with Shrewsbury was established in 1798 and the railway reached Machynlleth in 1864.
- 4.13. The pattern of long narrow tenements leading off the two main streets is still clearly represented on the ground. Beyond this zone, artisans' and workers' dwellings had sprung up by the later 19th century. In 1763, for instance, the site of Brickfield Street below the church was represented by a linear sheet of water, perhaps a mill pond.
- 4.14. The earliest available map for Machynlleth is a 1763 survey of the estate of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, which cannot be reproduced here for reasons of copyright. The map shows part of the Development Area but provides no useful information.
- 4.15. The 1833 Ordnance Survey Surveyor's drawing (Fig. 2) provides no useful information for the Development Area, but does identify Greenfields, which later became Plas Machynlleth. The land here was purchased by John Edwards, who built the original house, in the 1750's.
- 4.16. The history of Plas Machynlleth is intimately connected to that of nearby Llynloedd, a substantial farmhouse situated towards the south-east side of the park. Llynloedd was in the possession of the Owen family from at least the 15th century. In the early 18th century Thomas Owen of Llynloedd married Anne Edwards, daughter of Lewis Edwards of Talgarth and brother of John Edwards. John married his sister's grand-daughter, Cornelia, thus forming a strong link between the two families. In the 1750s John Edwards bought the Plas Machynlleth property and by about 1765 had built the house called 'Greenfields'. This was a brick-faced, double-pile town house of three storeys with cellars beneath, and appears to have been the first house in Machynlleth to use brick. Short, three-storey extensions were added to the north and south sides in the late 18th/early 19th centuries (Barfoot 1997, 5).



Fig. 2: Extract from the 1833 Ordnance Survey Surveyor's drawing

- 4.17. The fabric of 'Greenfields' was subsequently incorporated into the large and complex mansion that developed around it, and now forms the core of the main east block of the present building. Remnants of earlier buildings have been found during building works. Sir John Edwards, the son of the John Edwards who bought the property in the 1750s, retired to Plas Machynlleth in 1841 and devoted the next nine years, until his death in 1850, to the improvement of the house and estate. Sir John extended and remodelled the house, adding the north and south wings and the east front facade. This period of rebuilding included the diversion of Heol Pentrerhedyn and presumably the destruction of houses along it to make way for the house and grounds.
- 4.18. The entrance was switched from the north to the east side and the portico added. The last addition, after 1845, was a north range, now demolished. On Sir John's death Plas Machynlleth passed to George Vane-Tempest, later the 5th Marquess of Londonderry who had married Sir John's daughter and heiress, Mary Cornelia, in 1846. By 1888 the house had been renamed Plas Machynlleth. In 1896 and 1911 Plas Machynlleth received royal visits and on both occasions the royal party planted trees in the grounds. In 1931 the vast landholdings of the Londonderry family were sold off following the death of Lord Herbert Vane-Tempest. During the 1930s the house was closed up and in the Second World War was used as a girls' school. In 1948 the 7th Marquess gave the Plas and 40 acres of parkland to the town of Machynlleth. The grounds were opened as a public park and the Plas run as council offices. During the 1990s the Plas was remodelled and opened as 'Celtica', an interactive museum and major Welsh tourist attraction, though this has since closed.

- 4.19. Sir John Edwards created a grand landscape park to provide a fine setting for his mansion and grounds. Most of the landscaping work, including planting, dates from the 1840s. The gardens of Plas Machynlleth were about four acres in extent and surrounded the house on the north-east, the east and the south, with a further woodland in the south-west. The gardens remain in form but much has been lost to development or redesign. The earliest known record of the park occurs on a map of the Machynlleth Estates of 1828 by G.T. Whitfield.
- 4.20. The tithe map of 1844 (Fig. 3) shows the street pattern in this part of the town which predates that of the present day. The Development Area fell within the grounds of Greenfields, later Plas Machynlleth, owned by Sir John Edwards, Baronet. Although the map is not entirely accurate, it appears that a building along the street frontage, adjacent to the plot, may be the kennels, while there was an L-shaped building which is partly within the Development Area.



Fig. 3: Extract from the 1844 Tithe Survey for Machynlleth parish, showing the Development Area outlined in red

- 4.21. The park boundary wall can be traced for much of its length though whether this includes the listed structure within the application site is uncertain. The main approach was from entrance gates on Maengwyn Street, to the north-east of the house, along a gently curving drive to the east front of the house. A lodge, North, or Norbury Lodge, stands to the east of the drive. Another drive ran westwards from the east front, on the edge of the garden, to an entrance and lodge, West Lodge, on the west boundary. On the south-east boundary there was originally a drive from Forge Road to Llynllloedd, but this has now gone.
- 4.22. The large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Figs 4-5) show the Development Area as being occupied by an outbuilding associated with Plas Machynlleth.

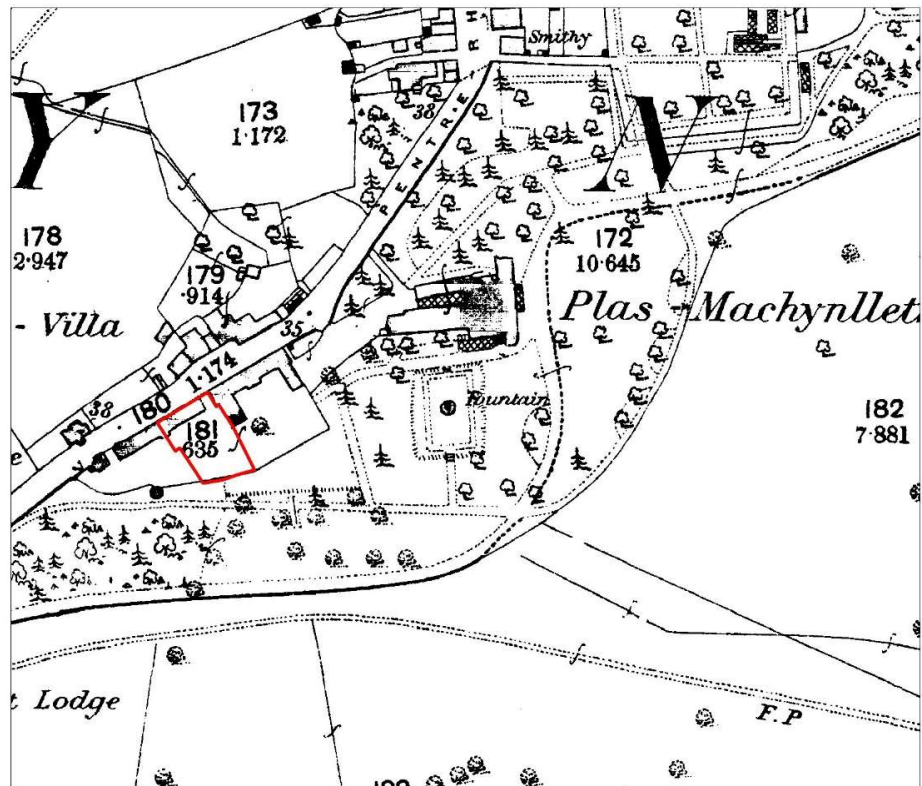


Fig. 4: 1889 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map showing the development area outlined in red

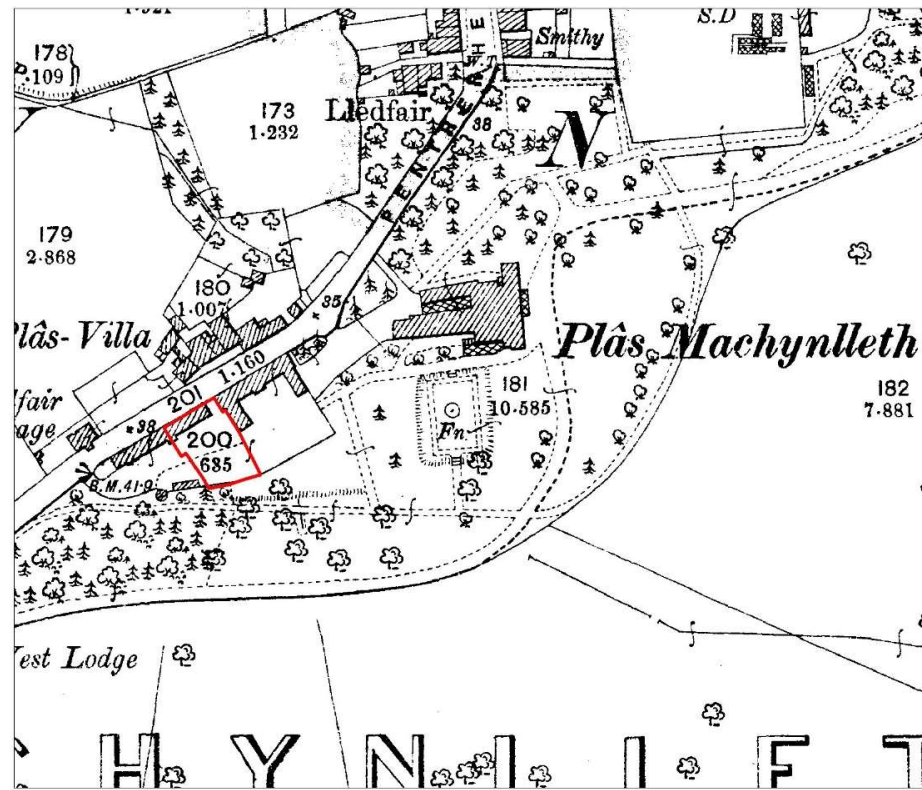


Fig. 5: 1901 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map with the development area outlined in red

- 4.23. Since being given to the town, several peripheral parts of the northern and eastern sides of the park have been developed. To the east of the garden an area has been enclosed to make a rugby pitch and football field. This area is surrounded by a beech hedge, larch-lap fencing and stock fence. In the north of the park, just to the north-west of the Llynllloedd farm gates, a new housing development has been constructed on about 1 acre of ground. Before the housing there was a Methodist chapel here and then an aircraft factory. A hospital has been built on the northern edge of the park, further east, and a larger area at the east end of the park, on Forge Road, has been developed as an industrial estate.
- 4.24. Excavations in 1994 in advance of the redevelopment of Plas Machynlleth as the Celtica centre revealed traces of buildings, including a malt-house, as well as the former line of Heol Pentrehedyn. Pottery associated with the buildings dated from c. 1650-1820 (Gibson and Barfoot 1997).
- 4.25. The application site is located on the southern side of Heol Pentrerhedyn and was until recently used as a Council depot. The building proposed for conversion is constructed from stone and formed a storage facility at the depot, though most of the area was an open yard partially surrounded by a stone wall which survives on the east side of the yard, to the south-east of the building.

5 Stage 2b: assessing significance for the asset and its setting

- 5.1. The desk-based assessment was restricted to searches of the regional Historic Environment record (HER) and National Monument Record (NMR), the results of which are shown on the plan in Appendix 1 at end of this report), together with readily available on-line sources owing to restrictions resulting from the Covid19 pandemic. A site visit was conducted on 30 March 2021 and the results from this incorporated into the following paragraphs.
- 5.2. The baseline assessment has considered all known heritage assets within the development area, and up to 200m distant.

Historic Assets within or immediately adjacent to the Development Area

Designated Historic Assets

Listing number 8485 Former Coach House and Stables to Plas Machynlleth (Plas Kennels)

Evidential value

- 5.3. This Grade II listed building lies adjacent to the north-eastern side of the proposed application site. Contrary to the listing description it is probably later 19th-century in origin as it is not conclusively depicted on the Tithe map of 1844, and may be contemporary with the addition of a Gothic wing on the Plas. A recent feasibility study suggests the stables and kennels date from 1853, although the Plas Machynlleth foxhounds were not established until 1900. It is stone-built with a slate roof and comprises a main north-east/south-west range, with wings projecting to the south-east from either end which form a courtyard. There is a central octagonal bellcote with swept roof and louvred pointed openings. The side facing the main road has five gables. On the south-east, the central bay of the main range is advanced into the courtyard.



Fig. 6: The coach house and stables from the south-east. CPAT 4902-0065

Historical value

- 5.4. The building has group value with Plas Machynlleth and associated historic assets. It illustrates one of the phases in the development of the Plas in the 19th century, and represents an important element of a large country house estate complex. It has clearly been designed by an architect rather than being of a vernacular character, and presumably comprises improvements made by George Vane-Tempest, 5th Marquess of Londonderry.

Aesthetic value

- 5.5. The building is one of the more attractive parts of the frontage presented to the main road to Aberystwyth and is indicative of the likely appearance of the estate buildings in the later part of the 19th century following significant remodelling of the appearance of this locality.

Communal value

- 5.6. The area of the Plas and its associated buildings, of which this is one, have had an obvious communal value to the residents of the town in the past. They were donated to them in 1948 and this building continued to be occupied until 2007, but is now somewhat disused and overgrown. Although this suggests the building has lost its communal value, Machynlleth Town Council is aiming to restore this important historic building and to contribute to the economic, environmental and social fabric of Machynlleth by supporting its development as

a tourism hub and to build on its reputation as a strong community at the heart of the Dyfi Biosphere³

Setting

- 5.7. The immediate setting for the building is localised on the south-east to encompass the courtyard and wider walled yard which occupies this side. On the north-west, the setting includes the main road to Aberystwyth, where the building forms part of the southern side of the A487 Heol Pentrehedyn and forms part of a street scape comprising continuous coursed-stone-walled structures as part of the Plas Machynlleth estate. Mixed residential housing occupies the northern side of the road opposite the coach house and stables. The view is more limited on the south-west, where the proposed development lies; there are a small number of openings on the south-west side of the building, but this was evidently not an important direction of view. The Plas is located to the north-east and it seems likely that this would have led to a desire on the behalf of the owners to create a more appealing view based on its visibility from the gardens on the south side of the house.

Statement of Significance

- 5.8. The coach house and stables gain their significance from being part of the estate belonging to Plas Machynlleth. They are one of the more attractive structures that survive and are important in providing an idea of the intended appearance of the estate buildings in the second half of the 19th century. Currently, they are in a somewhat dilapidated condition and scrub growth in the associated courtyard largely masks the view from this side, the direction from which they should be best appreciated as this is the view which opens into the designed landscape surrounding the main house.

Listing number 8486 Two Sections of Boundary wall to Plas Machynlleth from the former Coach house and Stable down to the gates at the West lodge.

Evidential value

- 5.9. The wall is a Grade II listed building which borders the park of Plas Machynlleth on its west and runs from the former stables and coach house down to the gates at the west lodge. It is probably contemporary with the 19th-century former coach-house and stables and possibly also with the addition of the Gothic wing on Plas Machynlleth. The asset has been designated for its group value with Plas Machynlleth and associated listed structures, and also for its townscape value on the southerly approach to the town. The physical evidence it provides for what style and quality of stonework was considered appropriate for a country estate of this importance, and the technology applied in its construction, the potential source of the material and workmanship in production, and its appearance as a finished artefact in the landscape, all contribute to its evidential value.

The wall forms the north-west side of the building for which planning permission is sought, which is accordingly considered to be curtilage listed. The masonry of the building on the south-eastern side of the wall abuts it, indicating that it is later in date.

1.1. _____

- 1.3. ³ Charlie Falzon Associates April 2020 The Old Stables Feasibility Study
https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/sites/walesruralnetwork/files/documents/The%20Old%20Stables%20Feasibility%20Report_Final.pdf

Historical value

- 5.10. The wall is evidently related to the 19th-century remodelling of the townscape of this part of Machynlleth that was undertaken as part of the works at Plas Machynlleth and is a contributing element to the understanding of the scope of that work.

Aesthetic value

- 5.11. It seems likely that the wall was originally built to afford some degree of privacy to activity within the grounds of Plas Machynlleth in relation to traffic passing out of the town in the direction of Aberystwyth. In recent years this aesthetic has been seriously impacted by the reduction in the height of the wall and the construction of a block of residences, which have a markedly different character, immediately to the south-west of the plot under consideration. Opposite the wall, mixed residential housing to the north-west has also significantly altered the historic setting, which according to mapping faced on to fields.

Communal value

- 5.12. With the gifting of Plas Machynlleth to the local community, the original reasoning behind the wall no longer applies, but it is indicative of the thinking of the owners of the estate in the 19th century and as such is an important element in the social history of Machynlleth. In today's townscape it still provides clear boundaries for the community, between public space along the road, and a separate space behind the wall.



Fig. 7: The main part of the wall from the west, with the modern building behind overshadowing the building proposed for redevelopment (beyond the street light on the right hand side of the road).

CPAT 4902-0043

Setting

- 5.13. The setting for the wall is provided by the grounds of Plas Machynlleth to the south, which it bounds, and the A487 Heol Pentrerhedyn to the north; it was no doubt intended to separate the two. The wall forms a part of the structures and registered park associated with the Plas, the individual elements of which are individually listed at grade II. These are interrelated and each contribute to the overall setting for the group as a whole.

Statement of Significance

The wall is one of the elements that relate to works on the house and grounds of Plas Machynlleth in the 19th century and it helps to define the heritage character of the grounds and associated buildings. Historically it separated public space from private land, a boundary between the town and country house, and that physical separation remains a significant element of the current townscape. It has undergone changes more recently in relation to the construction of a modern block of dwellings (see Fig. 7) adjoining the application site under consideration in this report and at the point where the development is proposed it is currently in an unstable condition, which risks its long-term integrity.

Listing number 8499 Plas Machynlleth*Evidential value*

- 5.14. The Grade II* listed Plas Machynlleth itself is a good example of a multi-period gentry town house, originally built in the mid-18th century, although its present appearance is largely the result of remodelling in the late 18th century and more particularly in the mid-19th century. The house contains a wealth of architectural detail. The associated parkland retains a number of original features, such as the gatehouses, boundary walls and parkland trees.



Fig. 8: Plas Machynlleth from the east. CPAT 4902-0040

- 5.15. The later phases in the development of Plas Machynlleth were associated with the local Member of Parliament, Sir John Edwards, and the property later passed through marriage to the Marquess of Londonderry.

Aesthetic value

- 5.16. Plas Machynlleth provides examples of varied architectural influences, indicative of changing architectural styles and fashions. The parkland presents an attractive Victorian parkland landscape, in a fine natural setting, on the edge of the town.

Communal value

- 5.17. Plas Machynlleth, and its predecessor, Greenfields, has been a prominent local landmark for several centuries, although its communal value is mostly associated with the gifting of the Plas and 40 acres of parkland to the town, after which the grounds were opened as a public park and the Plas was used as council offices. During the 1990s the Plas was remodelled and opened as 'Celtica', an interactive museum and major Welsh tourist attraction, although this was short-lived.

Setting

- 5.18. The setting for Plas Machynlleth is provided by the formal gardens to the south and east, the extensive parkland to the south and south-east, and associated structures such as the coach house, boundary wall, gatehouses and gate piers. The individual elements, which are individually listed, all at grade II, are interrelated and each contributes to the overall setting for the group as a whole. To the north and west the setting is that of Machynlleth town.

Statement of Significance

- 5.19. Plas Machynlleth is a good example of a multi-period mansion, built around a mid-18th century house, although its present appearance is largely the result of late 18th- and particularly mid-19th-century remodelling. The house contains a wealth of architectural detail and the building provides an example of changing architectural styles and fashions. The parkland presents an attractive Victorian parkland landscape, in a fine natural setting, on the edge of the town. The principal views from the Plas are south, across the formal garden, and south-east, across the parkland.
- 5.20. The mansion house which is now Plas Machynlleth developed following the purchase by John Edwards of a property then known as Greenfield. The historical connections with this family and their importance within the community, including as a member of parliament, forms part of the significance. Following Edwards' death the house passed to the Marquess of Londonderry, whose family remained there until the 7th Marquess gave the Plas and 40 acres of parkland to the town of Machynlleth in 1948. The socio-economic relationship between Plas Machynlleth house and the town would have been a significant element of 19th and earlier 20th century community dynamics, as the house and estate offered employment to many residents of the town, and its consumer needs provided work and income for shopkeepers. The estate as a major landowner also provided opportunities for farming and sold its produce to the local community, and further afield via the railway.
- 5.21. Key elements that define the heritage character and significance of Plas Machynlleth, its parkland and associated structures include:

- the mansion house
- formal gardens including fountain and statue
- the Lodges and gate piers
- former coach house, stables and kennels
- ice house
- the mature parkland trees
- principal views from the house towards the parkland

Registered Park and Garden

- 5.22. There is one registered park and garden, which lies immediately adjacent to the Development Area, PGW (Po) 26(POW) Plas Machynlleth, which is registered Grade II.
- 5.23. The park of Plas Machynlleth lies to the south and east of the house, bounded on the north by the garden and the town and on the remaining sides by field boundaries. The dry-stone park boundary wall (which is partly included in the application site) can be traced for much of its length and entrances are flanked by simple, round-topped, upright stone piers. The significance of the PGW is that it reveals the designed landscape which provided pleasure grounds for the owners and visitors to the house, and since 1948 to the general public.
- 5.24. Ornamental planting within the park was concentrated on the level ground near the house. Deciduous trees, mostly oak, are planted informally. Beech and sycamore are planted along the south and south-east boundaries and the rocky outcrops at the south and south-east ends of the park are planted with oak, beech, ash and cherry. Today most of the ornamental planting remains at the west end of the park, in Lodge Field. The majority of the trees are oaks but along the boundary with Coed Llynloedd there are some huge mature beech trees. Lodge Field has a small stream and low, ruinous stone wall along its west side and is separated from Plas Field by iron railings. The latter originally contained many parkland trees but these have now been removed and the area made into playing fields. The next field to the east, The Park, still has many parkland trees, including two oaks which may be hedgerow remnants from a field boundary removed to make the park. To the south is House Field (Cae Crogloffft), originally separated from The Park by iron railings. There are no trees in this field but it formerly contained oak, ornamental conifers and walnut. At the west end of this field is a rocky outcrop planted with deciduous trees. At the east end is a stream that divides the field from Pond Field (Cae Llyn), which lies to the south of Llynloedd.
- 5.25. The values and significance of the park are the same as that described in the section on Plas Machynlleth, above.

Conservation Area

- 5.26. The Development Area lies within the Machynlleth Conservation Area. The house and grounds of the Plas form an integral part of this area and are a significant contributor to its overall character. More detail is provided under the relevant sections dealing with particular structures.

Undesignated Heritage Assets

PRN 167194 Plas Machynlleth, Building (the application site)

Evidential value

- 5.27. Although it is not listed in its own right, it is reasonable to describe this as curtilage listed, particularly as the north-west wall of the building is formed by the Grade II wall (8486, above)

which fronts onto the main road to Aberystwyth and defines the grounds of Plas Machynlleth (8499). Although also built of stone it is clear that the building was added onto the existing wall at a later date and is butted up to it rather than being tied into the structure. The building once extended further to the south-west (see Figs 4 and 5) but was truncated in advance of the construction of the modern building (Fig. 7) on that side. About half of the original building was lost in the process and the resultant gable end filled with breeze blocks.



Fig. 9: The remaining part of the building from the south-east. CPAT 4902-0061



Fig. 10: The building from the west, showing the modern block wall where the south-west end has been removed. CPAT 4902-0045

- 5.28. The building utilises the stone wall defining the grounds of the Plas as its north-west side and from this a series of four abutting walls project to the south-east, three of which are linked on their opposite ends to create two rooms on the ground floor. One of these (the south-western) has evidence of the presence of a first floor room above in the form of horizontal rows of slots for timber joists on opposing walls (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: The slots for timber joists on the inside of the south-west wall of the building indicating that there had been a first floor room. CPAT 4902-0011

- 5.29. At the north-east end of the building there is an open area of two bays, where the north-east end wall contains six blocked-up slit windows, and which is fronted to the south-east by a modern corrugated iron structure. The roof is hipped at its north-east end and is covered by corrugated asbestos which is not in keeping with the overall appearance of this and the other slate-clad original structures nearby. However, the timber roof trusses on which it is based (Fig. 13) appear to be original and are notable for the presence of the carpenter's marks which aided in their assembly.
- 5.30. Internally, one of the rooms was evidently used as a wash house of some form, as defined by the structure depicted on Fig. 12. The function of the other spaces was less certain but it seems evident that this was a utility building designed to support the activities of the estate.



Fig. 12: The internal structures in the wash house. CPAT 4902-0023



Fig. 13: The north-eastern roof truss. CPAT 4902-0029

Historical value

- 5.31. The historical value of the building comes from its association with other elements of the estate buildings; it indicates some ongoing works post-dating the construction of the boundary wall and coach house/stables, and was used for an agricultural or estate utility function. Its more recent use as a council store contributes nothing to its historic value.

Aesthetic value

- 5.32. The building has little aesthetic value in its current form, being partially masked by other structures and of no particular architectural merit.

Communal value

- 5.33. While the buildings at Plas Machynlleth are of considerable value to the local community, this does not extend to the specific building being assessed, as it is not accessible by the public and provides no benefit to the community.

Setting

- 5.34. This building is hidden when viewed from the direction of the Plas by the coach house and stables building. Its immediate setting includes a walled yard to the south-east but the original setting would have included the modern block of housing to the south-west, which is intrusive and of a markedly different character. The view from the main road to the north-west is little changed from its original appearance, but there was no view in this direction from the building itself and this was most probably a deliberate decision on behalf of those responsible for its construction.

Statement of Significance

- 5.35. The building is another of the elements that relate to works on the house and grounds of Plas Machynlleth from the early 19th century onwards and it helps to define the heritage character of the area as a whole. It has undergone changes more recently in relation to the construction of a modern block of dwellings (see Fig. 7) adjoining the plot under consideration to the south-west. The poor condition of the listed wall that forms the north-west side of the building risks its long-term integrity. In its current state the building and yard make a negative contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area, but as an historic stone building any sympathetic restoration would change this to becoming a positive contribution.

PRN 167195 Plas Machynlleth, Building (site of)

- 5.36. An L-shaped building is depicted on the 1844 tithe survey which appears to lie partly within the Development Area, although the mapping is not sufficiently accurate to confirm its position. There are no visible surface remains that can be assessed and, although possible, it is not certain that there are any surviving buried remains.

6 Stages 3 & 4: proposed changes and impact assessment

- 6.1. The assessment of possible direct impacts is based on the following plan (Fig.14), which is modified from one provided by the client. References to "the building" concerns PRN 167194, which is the one proposed to be redeveloped. The proposed design started from conservation

principles. Due to the historic importance of the surroundings it was considered appropriate to retain the existing appearance and height of the building, and to keep the section to the north-east, which appears to have possibly originated as a barn, open to the ceiling rather than introduce a floor. The clerestory windows would be reproduced to match the existing and would create a light airy living space. A first floor would be introduced above the western end of the building, where there is evidence of a floor previously (see above on Fig. 11) with roof lights to provide light and emergency escape, as dormer windows would be inappropriate in this setting.

- 6.2. The roof is currently clad with asbestos sheets, this would be replaced with natural slate which is the local vernacular and is appropriate for the conservation area. The roof structure would be replaced with a ridge beam and rafters to reduce bulging in the listed wall which is possibly caused by the point load resulting from the truss. The trusses will be retained as features but would not carry a load. The walls would be repaired and repointed in lime mortar and the sections of cementitious render to the front of the building would be removed.

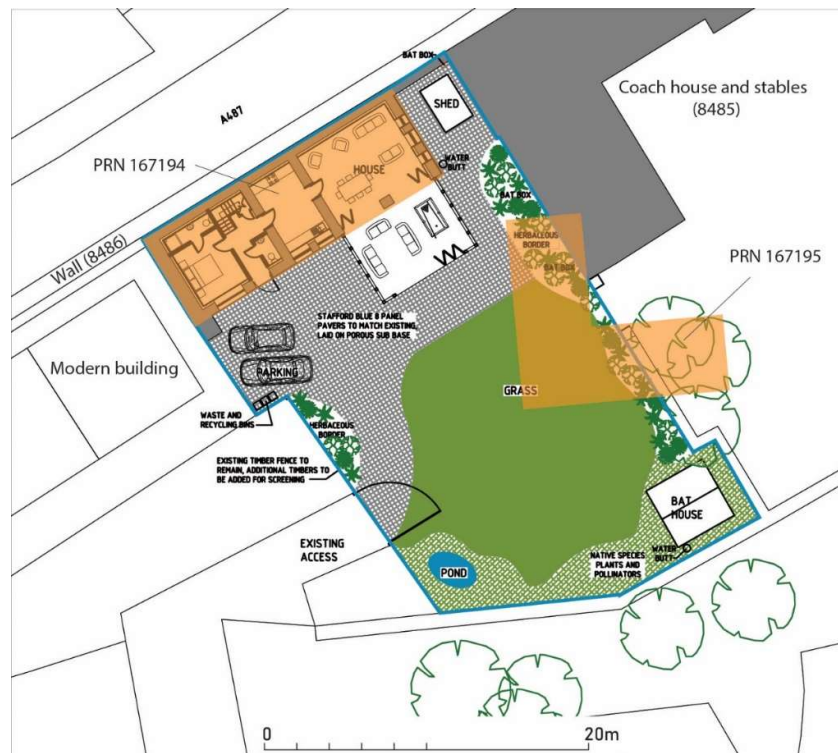


Fig. 14: The proposed layout of the development showing the extent of the surviving building and the approximate location of the building shown on the tithe survey

Possible direct impacts

- 6.3. The proposed development will have no physical impact on almost all of the listed buildings within 200m. Only in the case of the Grade II wall (8486) will there be a definite impact and this can be seen as having the potential to make a positive contribution to the structure, which is currently in poor condition owing to its instability at this point. The face of the wall fronting the main road is bowed out in that direction and attempts have been made in the recent past to improve the situation by installing iron rods to link the wall with the south-east side of the building (Figs. 15 and 16), but these are little more than holding measures and a programme of controlled reconstruction will be needed to ensure the long-term preservation of the wall.

The development proposals provide an opportunity to carry this out, as stabilisation works will certainly be required if the building is to be redeveloped.

- 6.4. In addition to the wall, there are a small number of internal features which could be preserved to retain as much of the historic character of the building as possible. Prime amongst these would be the retention of the internal structure in the washroom (Fig. 12) and the reuse of the original roof trusses (Fig. 13), should these prove to be structurally sound. If the wall can be appropriately stabilised then the unsightly iron bars that have been inserted through the building (Figs. 15 and 16) could be removed.
- 6.5. The listed adjacent coach house and stables (8485) borders the Development Area, but would not be subject to any direct impact as an existing space separates the two buildings.
- 6.6. If any intrusive works are contemplated in the area to the south-east of the building, there is a possibility that these might reveal evidence of the building depicted in that approximate area on the Tithe map (PRN 167195, see Fig.14). It should be possible to mitigate for any potential disturbance through archaeological monitoring and recording.



Fig. 15: Two examples showing where iron bars have been inserted to tie the wall, here bowed outwards, to the rest of the building. Taken from the west. CPAT 4902-0053



Fig. 16: The two open bays at the north-east end of the building, showing the inserted iron bar and block-built structure. CPAT 4902-0058

Possible indirect impacts

- 6.7. The setting of the building is relatively localised as it is overshadowed by the coach house and stables to the north-east and the modern block of housing to the south-west, neither of which were provided with deliberate or significant views in this direction. The building itself was clearly only ever intended to relate to the yard area to the south-east, with an access into the courtyard for the coach house and stables, and would only have been viewed from that side. There is no view towards the road in the opposite direction and from that side only the roof provides obvious evidence of the presence of the building.
- 6.8. In regard to the listed buildings in the locality, the building is not visible from Plas Machynlleth as it is hidden behind the coach house and stables; the same is largely true for all of the other listed buildings and the Conservation Area, apart possibly for the Pedestal and Bust of Marchioness of Londonderry in the gardens of Plas Machynlleth (8501) and the fountain (8500). These are, however, masked by the intervening mature trees in the grounds. From the south-west the building is hidden from the view of the West Lodge (8488) by the modern building on that side, which can be seen on Fig. 7 and is depicted on Fig. 14. In regard to the Conservation Area, it is worth noting that the building being assessed is a minor contributor and has been significantly adversely impacted already by the removal of the south-western half and its replacement by a modern building of markedly different character, resulting in substantial harm.
- 6.9. The setting of the park and garden of the Plas was primarily intended to encompass, and be viewed from, the house. As a result, the building cannot be seen as taking a significant position in the views either from or to the park and garden. Its status as a functional building of the estate would have rendered these views unimportant and it may have been placed deliberately to remove it from the view.



Fig. 17: The proposed location of the 'bat house' from the west. CPAT 4902-0059

- 6.10. On Fig. 14 a 'bat house' constructed from timber with a slate roof is depicted to act as a replacement roost, should one be affected by the proposal. Although the remains of the original boundary wall for the yard survive on its north-east and south sides (see Fig. 17), depending on its height this structure is likely to be more visible from the surrounding area. This would depend on the height of the structure and the screening provided by existing and newly planted vegetation, and it may be possible to adjust its proposed location to minimise any visual intrusion into the settings of the Plas and other listed buildings in the area.

7 Stage 5: justification for preferred design option

- 7.1. The assessment presented in the sections above has identified the historic assets within and surrounding the proposed development. It has also assessed the significance of the listed wall and curtilage listed building, and what contribution they currently make to the conservation area. The wall is in a poor condition, and its stability is currently maintained by unsightly iron tie bars, whilst the building attached to its south-eastern side makes a negative contribution to the conservation area due to its asbestos roof, breeze block western gable, ad hoc modern alterations, and dilapidated condition.
- 7.2. The proposed changes would convert the building and yard from a redundant council depot into a new sustainable and energy-efficient residence. This would be achieved whilst retaining and conserving the most significant elements of the historic structure, using a design philosophy and materials which are sympathetic to the local vernacular and the character of the conservation area. The setting of other historic assets in the vicinity would not be compromised by this development, and planning permission would enable the historic structure to enjoy a viable new function, and prevent its further deterioration and potential collapse.

- 7.3. Detailed design would need negotiation so that elements of the scheme such as the type of windows and doors are acceptable within a conservation area, and utilities are located in least sensitive zones. Nonetheless, the conserved building would maintain the same scale and mass as the existing one, it would be enhanced through the change of roof from corrugated asbestos to slate whilst retaining historically interesting trusses, and from cement render/pointing being replaced by a lime-based alternative. In conclusion, the proposed changes would benefit the significance of the historic building, and ensure its future viability within the conservation area.

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9 Archive deposition Statement

- 9.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive is entirely digital and will be deposited jointly with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 140365

68 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4902

Appendix 1: Plan showing the historic assets within 200m of the proposed development

