

Saved from demolition!

Former Grove Park School awarded Grade 2 listed status

Members of the Save Our Heritage campaign group in Wrexham are overjoyed with CADW's decision to grant the former Grove Park Grammar School for Girls, a historic listing status. This decision immediately halts the plans to demolish the building and will require Wrexham County Borough Council to maintain the building at a level that ensures it will not be vulnerable to further decline.

The report from CADW states: “Listed for its special architectural interest on the grounds of its quality and character as a key example of an inter-war girl’s grammar school in the neo-classical tradition (in a 1930s interpretation) which survives largely intact, and in view of its aesthetic merit as an ambitious building, which demonstrates stylistic flair in features such as the quality of the double-sweep stair and the external brickwork. ”

Elaine Guntripp-Thomas, from Save Our Heritage said “Whilst we have worked tirelessly to save the building and wish to celebrate this important milestone, we know that there is still a long road ahead. We hope that Wrexham Councils Executive Board will reconsider its position in terms of the future use of the school building. Rather than dismiss the building as unsuitable for the 21st Century School Programme, we urge them to look at the many examples of retrofitted, modernised heritage schools across the UK, and embrace the unique design opportunities presented. We also encourage them to listen to the hearts and minds of local residents, rather than dismiss the collective will of the people.”

The group has also stated that they would be happy to provide any information that the Council needs to assist with the restoration and redevelopment of the building. Their research over the past 6 months has uncovered many interesting facts about the school, and their knowledge of how buildings of this type can be brought back to life could be beneficial to the Council in the future.

Commenting on the listing, Lynne Williams from the campaign group said “The former Grove Park School is one that the people of Wrexham can be proud of, not only because of its architectural merits, but for being one of the first to offer grammar school education to girls in Wales.

As a group, we have remained steadfast in our efforts to save the building for future generations. We have spent countless hours researching the schools place within the fabric of Wrexham. Some of our members attended Grove Park, others have never stepped foot in the building. What has kept us going is our desire to stop the erosion of Wrexhams architectural character, which in turn impacts heavily on the appeal of the town centre. People simply don't want to visit or live in a bland, boring town.”

Wrexham came next to last on the Heritage Index for Wales, a survey produced by the Royal Society for the Arts, and commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund. According to the survey, Wrexham had very few opportunities to improve its ranking. The campaign group hope that retaining buildings of character in the town centre might prevent Wrexham from slipping into last place in future surveys.

The school was to be sold to Coleg Cambria, who were successful in gaining planning approval to renovate the building in November 2015. A week later, the Council pulled out of the deal, citing that it needed the land for future primary school provision.

Contacts:

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Web Links:

Save Our Heritage Wrexham website - www.soh.wales

CADW - <http://cadw.gov.wales/?lang=en>

Wrexham County Borough Council - <http://wrexham.gov.uk/>

About Save Our Heritage:

The Save Our Heritage Group are non-political volunteers opposed to the destruction of older buildings which give the market town of Wrexham its character. Since forming in January 2016, they have concentrated their efforts on saving the former Grove Park School for Girls. Their website is at www.soh.wales .