



**Project**

Housing/mixed-use development project at Denbigh

**Location**

Denbigh, North Wales

**Client**

Quad Architects Ltd, Jones brothers, Denbighshire County Council and North Wales Growth Fund

**Powers involvement**

Measured building survey

**Project completion**

Powers' part May 2023

The former Mental Health hospital on the outskirts of Denbigh, North Wales, is being partially demolished and the site is being converted into a mixture of apartments and new homes. The site is an important part of North Wales's history, having been home to Wales's first psychiatric hospital. The original Main Range is a Grade II\* listed building that has fallen into a severe state of disrepair, which represents a major challenge to its redevelopment.

# Measured Building Survey of North Wales Hospital housing development



## THE PROJECT

North Wales Hospital, formerly North Wales Counties Lunatic Asylum, near the town of Denbigh, opened in 1848 to provide care for Welsh-speaking people with mental illnesses. It housed up to 1,500 patients and until the 1930s, the only recognised form of treatment for mental illness was 'employment and recreation'. It was also used as a treatment centre for soldiers affected by the First World War.

By the 1960s it was known as North Wales Hospital for Nervous and Mental Disorders, but by the time of its closure in 1995, it was simply North Wales Hospital. In September 2021, Denbighshire councillors approved plans to restore the central hospital building and convert it into apartments, with a further 300 new homes and commercial accommodation to be built on the surrounding acreage.

## OUR INVOLVEMENT

Powers became involved with the project in April 2023. The plans for

the site include the building of 300 new homes, 34 new apartments and facilities for businesses, shops and leisure at the extensive 50.6-acre (20.4 hectare) site. The building had by now been empty for three decades and was derelict. The Victorian façade has been retained. In addition to this historical frontage, the two wings were also being kept, with the remainder of the building being demolished.

Powers was commissioned by the developer, Jones Brothers and Quad Architects Ltd, the project architect, to provide measured building surveys of the existing structure, to facilitate the design process. Three surveyors were working on the project, which involved putting in fixed site control so all future contractors can work to the same grid, and carrying out a 3D laser scan survey of the inside and outside of the building. The 3D digital point cloud data gathered from the scanned surveys was used to draw up detailed internal floor plans and elevation drawings. The work was completed in May 2023, prior to the commencement of further design and construction works.



## THE CHALLENGES

After its closure in 1995, the North Wales Hospital site became notorious when it was featured in 2008 in the TV show 'Most Haunted'. As a result of this, the site became popular with ghost hunters and urban explorers and was plagued by arson and vandalism. The extent of this meant the once-grand Victorian building became a derelict shell. Much of the timber floors had been burnt away, which meant access to the remaining building was very dangerous and the work had to be carried out with caution.

Using digital 3D laser scanning equipment, enabled data on missing upper floors to be accurately measured from the safety of the ground floor.

Although mostly stripped out, there was still a possibility of some asbestos remaining within parts of the building. This meant that Powers' surveyors were required to wear asbestos suits, masks and gloves with hard hats, which was hot work. At times, this also hampered some of the data collection.

However, Powers' surveyors are used to working in all types of conditions and were happy to comply with the health & safety requirements, designed to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

All necessary health and safety measures were taken throughout Powers' involvement with the project.

## THE OUTCOME

The redevelopment of a significant piece of Welsh history is ensuring that part of the county's heritage is being restored – especially with the retention of portions of the original façade being incorporated into the new apartment block section of the project. Furthermore, due to it being partially funded by the North Wales Growth Deal – a £1billion investment in the region's economy – the project will greatly benefit the surrounding area, with a £75million boost to the local economy and the creation of 1,200 employment opportunities over the next 10 years. Powers is proud to be involved in the redevelopment of such an iconic building.



“

The development of the Former North Wales Hospital site is an important, complex and challenging project in this historic rural setting. Restoration of the original, former main range building is the catalyst for developing the overall site and accurate measured survey information was required to progress the proposed design of this Grade II\* listed building. Powers' surveyors used the latest technology to overcome

access problems, whilst gathering measured data and complying with health and safety challenges at this early stage of the project. This information has enabled us to begin reviewing alternative design proposals for the re-use and restoration of this significant historic building.

Nick Davies  
Northop-based Quad Architects Ltd