

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Clay Coffee + Kitchen

21–22 Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1AS

1. Site and Context

The application site comprises a vacant two-storey commercial unit located at 21–22 Windmill Street, within the Windmill Street Conservation Area in Gravesend.

The building forms part of a traditional high street terrace which is characterised by a consistent rhythm of two-storey commercial frontages with active commercial uses at ground floor level and ancillary commercial or residential accommodation at first floor level.

The immediate parade is occupied by a mix of independent, locally operated businesses, contributing to the established character of the street. The application site is currently vacant and has an established commercial use. The existing frontage includes a painted timber shopfront with fascia signage and glazed display windows.

2. Heritage Significance

The site is not a listed building; however, it lies within a designated conservation area, where the collective character and appearance of the streetscape is considered a heritage asset.

The significance of the site is derived from its contribution to the traditional high street frontage, the retained proportions and form of the shopfront, and architectural detailing, including the existing ornate corbels and fascia arrangement visible on the front elevation.

The wider conservation area is valued for its historic commercial character, continuity of frontage, and visual cohesion across adjoining units.

3. Description of Proposed Works

The proposed development comprises the change of use of the existing vacant commercial unit to a café (Use Class E), together with alterations to the existing shopfront to provide a new entrance door within the right-hand side of the frontage.

The majority of the existing shopfront will be retained, including structural elements and architectural features, with replacement fascia signage to display the business name *Clay Coffee + Kitchen*, positioned across both shopfront bays.

Existing shopfront lighting will be retained where possible or replaced with like-for-like trough fittings incorporating low-energy warm LED lighting.

A kitchen extraction system will be installed, with a flue located on the rear elevation of the building.

The proposed front elevation demonstrates that the original proportions and key architectural features, including the central corbels, are retained. The proposed rear elevation incorporates a discreet and low-profile flue.

4. Impact on Heritage Significance

The proposed works have been carefully designed to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The works to the front elevation are limited in scope. The majority of the existing shopfront is retained, with intervention restricted to the formation of a new entrance door within the existing glazing to the right-hand side. This approach maintains the overall proportions and structure of the façade.

The retention of original features, including the corbels and fascia line, ensures continuity with the existing architectural character of the building and surrounding terrace.

The shopfront will be finished in muted, neutral tones appropriate to the conservation area. This represents an improvement over the existing condition and ensures the development sits comfortably within the streetscape.

The proposed fascia signage is simple in form, proportionate to the building and positioned within the existing fascia zone across both shopfront bays. The use of applied lettering avoids overly dominant or visually intrusive signage and respects the traditional shopfront hierarchy.

Existing fluorescent lighting will be retained where possible or replaced with like-for-like trough fittings incorporating low-energy warm LED lighting. This provides a softer and more appropriate illumination, reducing visual impact and improving the overall appearance of the frontage within the conservation area.

The proposed extraction flue will be located on the rear elevation and designed as a discreet, low-profile installation to minimise visual impact. It will be positioned centrally within the building to avoid close proximity to neighbouring properties. The system will incorporate appropriate filtration to manage odour and grease and will operate at a low noise level. Given the healthy nature of the proposed café use, with limited frying and modest cooking volumes, the overall impact is expected to be minimal.

Along the parade, several neighbouring commercial units have undergone recent shopfront updates. The proposed works are in keeping with this evolving character and through the use of restrained design, neutral colour tones and simple signage, is aligned with the wider streetscape.

The proposals are limited to alterations within the existing building envelope, with no extensions or changes to the overall footprint, ensuring the scale and form of the building and its contribution to the wider conservation area remain unchanged.

5. Justification

The proposals represent a sensitive and proportionate approach to the reuse of a vacant commercial unit within the conservation area.

The building is currently unoccupied and the proposed development will bring the unit back into active use, supporting the vitality of the town centre. The introduction of a café use is consistent with the established commercial character of the area and the surrounding independent businesses.

The formation of a new entrance is necessary to enable independent and functional use of the unit and has been designed to minimise intervention to the existing structure.

Overall, the proposals retain the majority of the existing shopfront, preserve key architectural features, introduce appropriate materials and finishes, align with the character of the surrounding parade and avoid harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

6. Conclusion

The proposed development has been carefully considered in the context of the Windmill Street Conservation Area.

It is concluded that the works will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and through the reoccupation and enhancement of a vacant unit, will provide a positive contribution to the local environment.