

Heritage Statement

163 Windmill Street Gravesend DA12

The application site is located on the western side of Windmill Street towards its southern end with its junction with Railway Place and Manor Road. It is part of a terrace of 6 three storey units of Georgian style constructed towards the end of the 19th Century. The units are primarily retail or commercial on the ground floor with two storeys above either used for storage or residential use although several of the upper floors have remained empty for some time.

The architectural mix in Windmill Street is notable as many buildings that stand side by side have been built to different styles or have been altered. The ground floor retail/commercial uses have a variety of shop fronts which have changed many times in the past and now are predominantly modern frontages in aluminium or UPVC. Few of the original timber shop fronts remain.

Historically the ground floor has been used as offices with the upper floors being accessed via stairs within the frontage unit. It is understood that the upper floors have been used for offices and/or residential use ancillary to the ground floor although have been vacant for some time. The internal layout of the upper floors have remained unaltered until recently and still retain its Georgian sliding sash windows to the Windmill Street elevation.

The retail and commercial units towards the junction with New Road and King Street are later additions and are noticeably grander in scale, most of them dating from the early 20th century and purposely built for commercial and public use. The Robert Pocock Public House is a fine late 19th century building over three storeys whose solid appearance next to the equally grand McDonalds building which was formerly a hotel. These buildings are complemented on the opposite side by the Nat West Bank building and the public library both of which are listed buildings. Following the style and fashion of their time of construction they are built in red brick with stone dressings and rich architectural detailing that distinguishes them from the earlier, comparatively unadorned yellow stock brick buildings at the southern end of the street.

A range of styles, heights and façade treatments accumulates and is continued along the road. The roofline dips and rises, and the building line shifts slightly on the western side. At the southern end of Windmill Street some cohesive appearance is restored on the western side with the application site and its neighbours whilst the eastern side continues in a characterful mix of styles and

heights and the street level is dominated by predominantly modern shopfronts. Only the early 20th century shopfront of Munns, nos. 8-9 Windmill Street, is the best preserved example of its time and date.

The Conservation Area appraisal (2009) lists the poor quality shopfronts and signage and the under-utilised and under-maintained upper floors as being the negative features within the CA. This application seeks to redress negativity by replacing the existing aluminium shop front with a new traditional timber shopfront.

Works to update the application site commenced in 2020 during the Covid lockdown with internal works to remove walls and to improve the layout particularly at first floor level. Works to the other upper floors were relatively minor in comparison. It was at this point it was decided to 'self-contain' the upper floors which necessitated a new shop and internal wall to enclose the stairs. The shop front was the only change to the external fabric of the building and utilised the same materials as the shop front it replaced. However this was deemed not comply with the King Street Conservation Area appraisal and its shop fronts SPD.

We are satisfied that the revised proposal for a timber shop front would improve and enhance the visual amenity of the conservation area and have no adverse impact on the setting of the listed buildings which are some 100m further north.

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Planning Director

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