HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Change of Use of Existing Ground-Floor Commercial Premises to Convenience Store and Associated Shopfront Alterations

Site: 60a Oldham Street, Manchester City Centre
Existing Use: Vacant former pub/bar
Proposed Use: Convenience store
Approximate Ground-Floor Area: 75 m^2
Heritage Asset: Stevenson Square Conservation Area

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the change of use of an existing approximately 75 m^2 ground-floor commercial premises on Oldham Street, Manchester, from its former pub/bar use to a small convenience store, together with associated alterations to the existing glazed shopfront.

The premises are currently vacant. The residential accommodation located above the ground-floor commercial unit will remain unchanged.

The site lies within the Stevenson Square Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. The purpose of this statement is to identify the relevant heritage significance of the conservation area, consider the effect of the proposed development upon that significance and demonstrate that the proposal has been designed to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The assessment is proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. There is no extension to the building, no increase in floorspace and no proposed alteration to the height, massing or overall form of the building.

2. Heritage Context

The site is located within the Stevenson Square Conservation Area, situated on the north-eastern edge of Manchester city centre. The conservation area was designated in 1987 and includes Oldham Street and the surrounding historic commercial streets.

The Council's conservation area information identifies the area as one in which a significant proportion of Victorian buildings remain intact, together with earlier buildings and historic commercial streets. The area developed from a predominantly residential

environment into a commercially oriented part of the city, with Oldham Street historically becoming an important shopping street.

The Council's description of the history of the area notes that Oldham Street was opened to the public in 1772 and that, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, properties around the area were increasingly replaced by commercial buildings. Oldham Street subsequently became associated with retailing and fashion before experiencing decline following the opening of the Manchester Arndale Centre in 1975.

The conservation area therefore derives much of its character from its historic street pattern, buildings, architectural detailing and established commercial character.

The Council identifies that the conservation area contains a substantial number of Victorian and early twentieth-century buildings and that the historic buildings and their architectural qualities make an important contribution to its character and appearance.

3. Significance of the Conservation Area

The significance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area derives principally from its historic urban form, architectural character and long-established commercial function.

The principal elements contributing to its significance include:

- the historic street pattern and urban grain;
- the continuity of historic buildings along Oldham Street and surrounding streets;
- the scale, proportion and rhythm of the buildings;
- historic shopfronts and commercial frontages;
- architectural details and materials;
- the relationship between ground-floor commercial activity and upper-floor accommodation; and
- the continuing commercial and mixed-use character of the area.

Oldham Street is an important component of this character. Its established role as a commercial street means that active ground-floor frontages and appropriate retail uses are consistent with the historic evolution of the area.

The site itself comprises an existing ground-floor commercial unit with residential accommodation above. The proposal does not involve the demolition of the building or alteration to its overall scale, massing or height.

4. Proposed Development

The proposal comprises:

1. Change of use of the existing approximately 75 m^2 ground-floor commercial premises from its former pub/bar use to a small convenience store;
2. Associated alterations to the existing glazed shopfront;
3. Installation of a black perforated/open-type roller security shutter

The convenience store will provide general convenience goods, including packaged, chilled and frozen food.

No extension to the building is proposed and there will be no increase in the existing floorspace.

No alteration is proposed to the upper-floor residential accommodation.

5. Shopfront and Security Shutter

The existing shopfront glazing is a modern alteration and does not form part of the original historic fabric or make a significant contribution to the architectural or historic significance of the building. The proposal includes replacement of the existing modern glazing as part of the shopfront works. As the existing glazing is of modern construction and is not considered to be a significant heritage feature, its replacement would result in no material harm to the significance or character and appearance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

The principal element of the proposal with potential heritage implications is the installation of the security shutter to the existing shopfront.

The proposed shutter will be a black perforated/open-type roller security shutter, rather than a solid external shutter. The shutter is intended to provide security to the premises outside trading hours while maintaining visual permeability and avoiding the blank appearance associated with solid security shutters.

The shutter box will be concealed within the existing fascia, avoiding the introduction of a visually prominent external shutter box.

The shutter will be positioned immediately in front of the existing glazing, as shown on the proposed shopfront elevation and cross-section submitted with the application.

The shutter will be raised during the store's trading hours, which are proposed to be long, and therefore the existing glazed shopfront will remain visually open and active for the majority of the operating period.

The use of a perforated/open shutter is intended to minimise its visual impact by allowing views through the shutter when closed, retaining a degree of transparency and maintaining the relationship between the shop interior and the street.

The proposed black finish will provide a visually recessive treatment and will be compatible with the existing shopfront.

Importantly, the shutter box will not project above the existing fascia or require the introduction of a new external box that would obscure architectural detailing.

The detailed arrangement is shown on the submitted existing and proposed shopfront elevations and cross-section.

6. Manchester Conservation Area Guidance

The proposal has been considered against the Council's guidance relating to the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and shop security.

The Council's Stevenson Square Conservation Area guidance recognises the importance of shopfronts and advises that signs and canopies should be carefully designed so that they do not compete with or conceal the architectural details of buildings.

The Council's shop security guidance also recognises that security measures can have a visual effect upon the character of historic commercial streets. It identifies open-type shutters as preferable where security shutters are necessary and advises that shutter boxes should be carefully incorporated so that architectural details are not obscured.

The proposed design responds directly to these principles.

In particular:

- the shutter is of an open/perforated form rather than solid construction;
- the shutter provides visual permeability when closed;
- the shutter box is concealed behind the existing fascia;
- no prominent external shutter box is proposed;
- the existing shopfront and building form are substantially retained;
- no historic upper-floor fabric is affected; and

- the security installation will be raised during trading hours.

The proposal therefore seeks to provide the required security function while minimising its effect upon the appearance and character of the conservation area.

7. Assessment of Heritage Impact

The proposed change of use from a former pub/bar to a convenience store would not in itself result in harm to the significance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

Commercial and retail activity forms an established part of the historic and present-day character of Oldham Street. The proposed convenience store would maintain an active commercial ground-floor use and would provide continued occupation of an existing vacant premises.

The principal visual change is therefore associated with the shopfront/security shutter.

The proposed shutter has been designed to minimise this impact through its open/perforated construction, dark finish and concealed shutter box. The use of the existing fascia to accommodate the shutter mechanism avoids the need for a visually intrusive external shutter box.

The proposal would consequently have no material adverse effect on the architectural or historic significance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

To the extent that any effect is identified, it would be limited, localised and reversible, and would not adversely affect the overall character or appearance of the conservation area.

8. Public and Heritage Benefits

The proposal would provide a number of benefits relevant to the conservation area.

First, it would facilitate the re-use of a currently vacant commercial premises, contributing to the continued vitality of Oldham Street.

Second, the proposal would maintain an active ground-floor commercial frontage, which is consistent with the historic and established commercial character of the street.

Third, the proposed works are limited in scale and avoid unnecessary intervention in the building's fabric.

Fourth, the security measures have been designed to respond to the conservation-area context by using an open/perforated shutter with a concealed shutter box rather than a visually dominant solid shutter and exposed box.

The proposal therefore supports the continued viable use of an existing building while seeking to conserve the character and appearance of the surrounding historic environment.

9. National Planning Policy Framework

The proposal has been assessed having regard to the heritage policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), including the requirement for applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by development and to provide an assessment proportionate to their importance.

The NPPF recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and seeks their conservation in a manner appropriate to their significance. It also supports the sustainable and viable use of heritage assets where this is consistent with their conservation.

The proposal is consistent with these principles because it:

- enables the continued viable use of an existing commercial premises;
- retains the existing building;
- does not result in demolition or substantial alteration;
- retains the established commercial character of the ground floor;
- minimises physical intervention; and
- incorporates security measures designed to minimise their visual effect.

The Council is also required to give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets and to consider whether any harm is justified. In this case, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and would not result in material harm to its significance.

The NPPF also identifies opportunities for development within conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. The proposal provides an opportunity to bring an existing vacant commercial unit back into active use without requiring significant alteration to the building.

10. Local Planning Policy

The proposal has also been considered against the relevant Manchester planning policies concerning heritage and design.

Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN3 – Heritage seeks to ensure that development complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of Manchester and supports the preservation or enhancement of the historic environment, including conservation areas.

The proposal accords with this objective by retaining the existing building and its principal architectural form while limiting external alterations to the existing shopfront.

The proposal also accords with the Council's approach to the conservation of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area by maintaining an active commercial frontage and avoiding alterations that would obscure significant architectural features.

The Manchester conservation area guidance has been specifically considered in the design of the proposed security shutter.

11. Conclusion

The proposal represents the appropriate re-use of an existing vacant ground-floor commercial premises within the Stevenson Square Conservation Area.

The proposed convenience store use is compatible with the established commercial character of Oldham Street and would contribute to the continued vitality and active use of the street.

The physical works are limited. There is no extension, increase in floorspace, demolition or alteration to the upper-floor residential accommodation.

The principal heritage consideration is the proposed security shutter. This has been designed to minimise its visual impact through the use of a black perforated/open-type shutter, with the shutter box concealed within the existing fascia. The shutter will be raised during trading hours, allowing the existing glazed shopfront to remain visually open and active.

The proposal therefore represents a proportionate and sensitive approach to the continued use of the premises. It is considered that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and would not result in material harm to its heritage significance.

The proposal is accordingly considered to accord with the relevant national and local heritage policies and the Council's conservation-area and shop-security guidance.