



HERITAGE STATEMENT

Site Address: High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1JN

Proposal: Alterations to the existing shopfront frontage, replacement of rear extraction equipment and provision of an outdoor seating area within the site boundary.

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed alterations to the existing commercial premises at High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1JN.

The proposal seeks to improve the appearance, functionality and accessibility of the existing commercial unit through the creation of a new opening within the shopfront frontage. The development also includes the removal of the existing external extraction equipment at the rear of the property and its replacement with a modern enclosed light-duct extraction system. In addition, an outdoor seating area is proposed entirely within the boundary of the property.

The purpose of this statement is to identify the relevant heritage context, assess the significance of any affected heritage assets, and consider the impact of the proposed works on the character and appearance of the building, the wider High Street streetscene and the surrounding conservation area.

2. Site and Heritage Context

The application site is located on High Street, Uxbridge, within an established commercial town centre environment. The surrounding area is characterised by a varied mix of retail, café, restaurant and service uses, with active commercial frontages forming an important part of the town centre's character and vitality.

The site lies within a sensitive historic town centre setting, where the character and appearance of the wider streetscene is influenced by a combination of traditional commercial buildings, modern shopfronts, listed buildings and active pedestrian activity. The wider High Street includes a number of heritage assets and forms part of the historic commercial core of Uxbridge.

The significance of the conservation area is derived principally from its historic town centre layout, active commercial frontage, architectural variety, traditional building forms, landmark buildings and the relationship between shopfronts, upper floor elevations and the public realm. The special interest of the area is therefore not only architectural, but also townscape-based, reflecting the continuing commercial function of Uxbridge High Street.

The application building contributes to the commercial character of the High Street by maintaining an active frontage at ground floor level. The existing frontage is commercial in appearance and the proposed works relate to the continued operation and improvement of the existing business use.

3. Description of the Proposal

The proposed development comprises the following elements:

1. Creation of a new opening within the existing shopfront frontage to improve the appearance, functionality and accessibility of the commercial unit.
2. Removal of the existing external extraction equipment located to the rear of the property.
3. Installation of a modern enclosed light-duct extraction system, designed to reduce visual impact and minimise noise and disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.
4. Provision of an outdoor seating area wholly within the boundary of the property.

The seating arrangement has been designed to complement the commercial character of the High Street and reflects the established café-style seating already found at neighbouring and nearby commercial premises, including the café opposite the site and the adjacent flower shop. The proposed seating would support the vitality of the local shopping parade while maintaining pedestrian movement and visual amenity.

4. Assessment of Significance

The heritage significance of the surrounding area is primarily associated with its historic role as a commercial town centre, its active street frontage, its mix of historic and later commercial buildings, and the presence of listed buildings and traditional shopfront elements within the wider High Street.

The application premises itself is understood to be a commercial unit forming part of an established shopping frontage. Its contribution to the conservation area is therefore mainly through its ground floor commercial activity, its relationship with the public realm and the appearance of its shopfront within the wider street composition.

The rear of the property is less prominent in public heritage terms and has a more functional service character. Existing external extraction equipment is not considered to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the building or the wider conservation area.

The proposed outdoor seating area is modest in scale, contained within the site boundary, and consistent with the established commercial and café-style character of the immediate area.

5. Heritage Impact Assessment

Shopfront Alteration and New Opening

The creation of a new opening within the existing shopfront frontage is considered acceptable in heritage terms. The alteration would support the continued active commercial use of the premises and improve the functionality and accessibility of the unit.

The works would be contained at ground floor level and would not result in the loss of any identified historic fabric or traditional shopfront feature. The proposal would maintain an active frontage and would improve the relationship between the premises and the street.

The proposed design is intended to sit comfortably within the established commercial character of the High Street. Subject to the use of appropriate materials, detailing and finishes, the shopfront alteration would preserve the character and appearance of the wider conservation area.

Replacement Extraction System

The proposal includes the removal of the existing external extraction equipment at the rear of the property and its replacement with a modern enclosed light-duct extraction system.

This element of the scheme is considered to provide a heritage and visual improvement. The existing rear extraction equipment has a functional and utilitarian appearance and does not contribute positively to the character of the building. Its removal and replacement with a more discreet enclosed system would reduce visual clutter and provide a cleaner, more integrated rear elevation.

The enclosed system has been designed to minimise visual impact, noise and disturbance. It is therefore considered to represent a more sympathetic and appropriate solution than the existing external equipment.

Outdoor Seating Area

The proposed outdoor seating area would be located wholly within the boundary of the property. It would not project beyond the site boundary and would not obstruct the wider public highway or pedestrian movement.

Outdoor seating is already a recognised feature of the surrounding commercial environment, including nearby café-style uses and neighbouring commercial premises. The proposal would therefore not appear alien or out of keeping within the context of the High Street.

The seating area would help animate the frontage, support the vitality of the shopping parade and provide an attractive commercial environment. Its modest scale and contained layout would ensure that it preserves the character and appearance of the area.

The proposed seating should be managed so that tables, chairs and any associated barriers remain orderly, lightweight and visually unobtrusive. No excessive signage, permanent enclosure or visually dominant furniture is proposed.

6. Design, Materials and Appearance

The proposed works have been designed to be sympathetic to the character of the existing building and the wider commercial streetscape.

The shopfront alterations should use high-quality materials and finishes appropriate to the building and its town centre setting. The design should avoid unnecessary visual clutter and should respect the proportions, rhythm and appearance of the existing frontage and neighbouring commercial units.

The outdoor seating should remain simple, coordinated and visually restrained. Any furniture should be of a suitable commercial quality and should avoid bright, discordant or overly dominant colours. The seating arrangement should maintain a tidy and controlled appearance at all times.

The replacement extraction system should be finished in a discreet colour and enclosed so far as practicable to reduce its visibility from surrounding views.

7. Public Benefits

The proposal would deliver a number of public and heritage-related benefits, including:

- improvement to the appearance and functionality of the existing commercial unit;
- removal of visually unattractive external extraction equipment;
- replacement with a more discreet and enclosed extraction system;
- support for the continued viable commercial use of the premises;
- enhancement of the active frontage and vitality of the High Street;
- provision of an attractive outdoor seating area consistent with nearby café-style activity;
- improvement to accessibility and customer movement within the premises;
- preservation of the character and appearance of the wider conservation area.

The proposal therefore supports the continued commercial vitality of the town centre while managing change in a manner that is sensitive to the historic environment.

8. Heritage Balance

The proposed works are modest in scale and relate to the continued use and improvement of an existing commercial premises. The scheme would not result in the demolition of any heritage asset, the loss of any identified historic shopfront, or harm to the significance of nearby listed buildings.

The works would preserve the commercial character of the High Street and would provide a visual improvement through the removal of existing external extraction equipment. The outdoor seating would be compatible with the established commercial character of the area and would not undermine the appreciation of the conservation area.

Overall, the proposal is considered to result in no harm to the significance of the conservation area or nearby heritage assets. The scheme would preserve, and in some respects enhance, the character and appearance of the surrounding town centre environment.

9. Conclusion

The proposed development represents a sympathetic and proportionate set of alterations to an existing commercial premises on High Street, Uxbridge.

The creation of a new shopfront opening would improve accessibility, appearance and functionality while maintaining an active commercial frontage. The replacement of the existing external extraction equipment with an enclosed light-duct system would reduce visual clutter and provide a more discreet and appropriate arrangement. The proposed outdoor seating area would be contained within the site boundary and would complement the established café-style character of the surrounding commercial environment.

The proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and would not result in harm to the significance of any nearby listed building or heritage asset. The scheme would support the continued viable use of the premises, enhance the vitality of the shopping parade and provide a positive contribution to the local streetscene.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered acceptable in heritage terms and compliant with the relevant national and local planning policy objectives relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.