

Heritage Statement

Amazon Locker, Littleborough Rail Station, Station Road, Littleborough, Greater Manchester, OL15 8AF

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to address comments received from the Council in relation to the validation of a retrospective planning application (Planning Portal reference: PP-13271650) for the retention of the Amazon 'Click & Collect' Locker installed at the above site.

Details of the proposals are described in the covering letter which accompanies the submitted planning application, together with the submitted drawings and photographs.

On 18 September 2024, the Case Officer (Joanne Hough) confirmed that the Locker is located within Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area and as such, a Heritage Statement should be submitted in support of the application.

Site Context

Figure 1 shows the entrance to the station bridge underpass entrance prior to the installation of the Amazon Locker, and where the Locker has since been installed.



Figure 1: Site Location Context (Google Street View, May 2016)

A close-up visual of the site (Figure 2) demonstrates that several information signs were directly affixed to the station underpass entrance wall prior to the installation of the Amazon Locker. Furthermore, a grit bin and extensive cabling were located in this area prior to the installation of the Amazon Locker.



Figure 2: Site Location Close-up (Google Street View, May 2016)

As such, it is clear that the station underpass entrance wall has historically been subject to a considerable number of alterations which arguably, detract from its appearance.

Furthermore, within the context of its wider surroundings, this particular location is highly visually screened from surrounding locations and should not therefore be considered to be a sensitive location.

Figure 3 comprises a close-up image of the Locker as it is currently located:



Figure 3: Site Location (Applicant's Photo, 2024)

As is evident, signage, cabling and a grit box are currently located on the wall surrounding the Locker. Therefore, rather than being an exception in character terms, the Locker is very much in keeping with the established precedent of functional items being bolted on to this part of the station bridge underpass wall.

When comparing the site's positioning within the context of its wider surrounds (see Figure 1), it is therefore considered appropriate for the Amazon Locker to be placed in such a location, due to its visual discreetness compared with more visually sensitive parts of the wider Station site.

Planning History

The planning history records according to Rochdale Council's website are listed below:

Application reference	Address	Description of development	Application decision
18/00871/PRA56	Littleborough Railway Station Station Road Littleborough OL15 8AF	Prior approval for extensions to platforms 1 and 2, closure of existing steps to platform 2 and construction of new access steps adjacent to existing ramp	Approved 20/09/2018
06/D46984	Littleborough Railway Station Station Road Littleborough OL15 8AF	Use Of Vacant Room As A Private Hire Booking Office - Resubmission D46513	Approved 11/07/2006
05/D46513	Littleborough Railway Station Station Road Littleborough OL15 8AF	Use Of Vacant Room As A Private Hire Booking Office	Refused 24/02/2006
88/D22719	Littleborough Railway Station Station Road Littleborough OL15 8AF	Bus Turning Area	Approved 07/02/1989

There are no applications which relate to the specific site location of the Amazon Locker, but rather, other locations across the wider Station site.

Most notably, the Officer's Report associated with permission 18/00871/PRA56, granted on 20 September 2018 for *"Prior approval for extensions to platforms 1 and 2, closure of existing steps to platform 2 and construction of new access steps adjacent to existing ramp"* details the Conservation Officer's comments in relation to matters of conservation and design:

*"I have considered this proposal for alterations to Littleborough Railway Station, an unlisted building and site which is within the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. The proposal includes the extension of platforms using materials to match existing, along with new access stairs from the car park. **I do not consider that these works will cause any harm to the character and significance of the conservation area** and therefore I have no comments on this proposal."*

The Amazon Locker is also located within Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. The implications of the Amazon's Locker's designatory status being within a Conservation Area are explored later in this Heritage Statement.

Historic England

According to Historic England's records, the site is not listed and there are no listed heritage assets within the vicinity of the site.

Planning Policy

The Development Plan for the area (as relevant to the determination of these proposals) comprises the Core Strategy (2016); Greater Manchester Joint Waste Development Plan (2012); Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Development Plan (2013); and, Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (2006).

The adopted Policies Map confirms that the site is located within Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area.

UDP Policy G/BE/9 (Conservation of the Built Heritage):

"Priority will be given to the practical conservation and enhancement of those features of the built environment which are most valuable, in particular: Conservation Areas...Such buildings, areas and features of architectural and historic merit will be protected from adverse development or demolition"

and positive measures will be taken or supported, wherever possible, to facilitate their continued upkeep and beneficial use. Particular emphasis will be placed on securing new uses for existing buildings to ensure their future, and on promoting conservation activities which provide a stimulus for the regeneration of town centres, older urban and rural areas, including historic and cultural landscapes.”

UDP Policy BE/17 (New Development Affecting Conservation Areas):

“Development proposals will be permitted that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area. In assessing a proposal, the following principles – where relevant – will be taken into account:

- a) Its relationship to existing buildings, the site and its surroundings;*
- b) Its design - including elevations, roof form, materials, finishes and detailing;*
- c) The retention, replacement and restoration of historic features and details of buildings, and - in the public realm - walls, paving and street furniture;*
- d) The retention and enhancement of landscaped areas, trees and natural features;*
- e) The design of new shop fronts (and replacements and/or alterations to those existing) should reflect the character or appearance of the conservation area, consistent with the provisions of Policy BE/5;*
- f) The design and siting of advertisements, new street furniture, paving and other highway surfaces and related structures (e.g., lighting and signs); and*
- g) The design and siting of car parking and servicing facilities.”*

Core Strategy Policy P2 (Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscaping and Heritage):

“1. We will protect and enhance the borough’s character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes...”

2. We will protect the borough's heritage by:

a. Conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and nonstatutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Key heritage assets of the borough include:

- i. Four outstanding conservation areas: Central Rochdale, Middleton and Littleborough town centres and Rock Nook / Summit...”*

Analysis

With particular regard to UDP Policy BE/17 (New Development Affecting Conservation Areas), the Amazon Locker can be considered to relate well to the existing wall upon which it has been bolted, as well as its immediate surroundings. As mentioned earlier in this Statement, there is an established precedent at this specific site of functional items being bolted on to the existing wall due to the site’s visual discreetness compared with alternative locations across the wider Station site.

Furthermore, when comparing the discreet positioning and modest scale of the Locker with the significantly larger and visually more prominent platform extensions proposed under permission 18/00871/PRA56, it is expected that the Planning Officer and Conservation Officer for this application would adopt an equally reasonable approach, thereby also concluding that the Locker would not “...cause any harm to the character and significance of the conservation area...”.

Ultimately, the Amazon Locker provides an important function in its current location and is used extensively by local people in the area (see Covering Letter).

Therefore, given the proposal’s full compliance with relevant local heritage policy listed above, the applicant respectfully contends that this retrospective application for the Amazon Locker should be approved without delay.