Supplementary Planning Document

Heritage SPD: Appendix E

Shopfronts and signage in historic buildings and places

October 2018
Contents

1.0 Introduction  3
  1.1 Overview  3
  1.2 Traditional shopfronts and signage within the borough  3
  1.3 Shopfronts and signage and the historic environment  4

2.0 Planning controls over works relating to shopfronts and signage affecting heritage assets  4
  2.1 The need for planning permission and/or listed building consent  4

3.0 Works to shopfronts and signage affecting heritage assets  6
  3.1 Key documents  6
  3.2 Principles  8
1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 **Overview**

1.1.1 The council’s Design and Sustainability SPD 2018 includes general guidance on shopfronts and signage. This Appendix to the Heritage SPD main document provides additional guidance relating to shopfronts and signage specifically in relation to heritage assets, and should be read in conjunction with the main document of the Heritage SPD, with the Design and Sustainability SPD, and with other relevant documents (see paragraph 3.1 below).

1.2 **Traditional shopfronts and signage within the borough**

1.2.1 Shopfronts of interest, many examples of which date from the 19th and 20th century, can be found in various locations within Basingstoke and Deane, notably in the centres of larger villages and small towns.

1.2.2 Examples of traditional signs may be found in both urban and rural contexts, notably associated with pubs and hotels as well as shops and other uses.

1.2.3 Examples of traditional shopfronts and signs in the borough are illustrated at Figure E1.

Insert Figure E1 examples of traditional shopfronts and signage within the borough full A4 page montage: include 2 Wote Street, 15 Church Street, 20 Winchester Street, 28 London Street, Basingstoke and Overton highlights, pub signs etc.

1.2.4 Figure E2 explains terminology used in descriptions of traditional shopfronts. The term ‘shopfront’ is used here to describe the frontage, at street level, of premises having a display window (often with a fascia over): such premises may be in use by a business such as a shop, bank, hairdresser, restaurant, or estate agent etc.

![Figure E2. Elements of a traditional shopfront](image-url)
1.2.5 In Basingstoke, as noted in the Conservation Area Management Plan, the character of the Top of Town has been eroded by the loss of traditional shopfronts and by other unsympathetic interventions to commercial premises, making features of interest which remain of particular importance. The management plan notes that: ‘A number of historic buildings have been compromised by poorly designed shopfronts, including inappropriately sized and detailed fascias, and use of poor materials and colours. Some modern shop buildings include overly large fascias which have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.’

1.3 Shopfronts and signage and the historic environment

1.3.1 Conservation areas are discussed at Section 4.0 of the main document of this SPD. Many conservation areas include commercial premises such as shops, restaurants, offices and pubs which have shopfronts and/or signs which make a positive contribution to the character and/or appearance of a conservation area and/or to its special architectural or historic interest. Individual buildings in commercial use, within or outside conservation areas, may also be heritage assets in their own right. The shopfronts and/or signage of such buildings may contribute to their significance or to an appreciation of that significance.

1.3.2 Business success and preservation and enhancement of the historic environment are closely allied. Attractive and effective shopfronts and signage can make a positive contribution to commercial performance as well as to the historic environment¹.

2.0 Planning controls over works relating to shopfronts and signage affecting heritage assets

2.1 The need for planning permission and/or listed building consent

2.1.1 An application for full planning permission and/or for advertisement consent may be required in many instances where development which relates to shopfronts and/or signage which would affect a heritage asset or assets is proposed.

2.1.2 Where works are proposed which relate to a shopfront and/or signage forming part of a listed building, listed building consent will normally be required (see Section 3.0 of the main document of this SPD). An application for full planning permission and/or for advertisement consent may also be required. It is noteworthy that changing the colour of a shopfront and a range

¹ https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy/
of works to a listed building relating to improving security or access are likely to need listed building consent.

2.1.3 It is important to obtain up to date advice regarding the need for planning permission and/or listed building consent specific to the site and proposed development: advice may be obtained from the council as to whether planning permission and/or listed building consent is required and whether proposals are likely to be acceptable. Contact details for enquiries are at the front of the main document of this SPD.

2.1.4 Permitted development rights\(^2\) for commercial premises are limited and vary dependent upon the Use Class\(^3\) of the building. Permitted development rights for commercial premises which are listed buildings and/or which are in conservation areas are even more limited (see paragraphs 3.3.2 and 4.4.2 of the main document of this SPD).

2.1.5 Advertisements are governed by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. The advertisement control system covers a very wide range of advertisements and signs including, but not limited to: banners, posters and notices; placards and boards; fascia signs and projecting signs; pole signs; and lettering on canopies and blinds. Thus many proposals for changes to shopfronts and/or signage are considered to relate to advertisements. Such advertisements may require an application for advertisement consent, which is a specific type of planning application.

2.1.6 Sometimes an application is not required, because an advertisement has ‘deemed consent.’ If an advertisement has deemed consent, a local planning authority can, however, serve a Discontinuance Notice requiring the removal of the advertisement if the sign is harmful to the amenity of the locality or poses a risk to public safety.

2.1.7 Rules regarding deemed consent which apply in conservation areas are different from those which apply elsewhere: an application for advertisement consent may therefore need to be made because a building is within a conservation area, when otherwise it would not.


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\(^2\) under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

\(^3\) as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987
2.1.9 Examples of work to a shopfront to a building in a conservation area which would normally require planning permission include:

- altering the building line of the shopfront;
- replacing a shop window or windows (but not for repairs such as replacing a pane of glass on a like for like basis);
- removing/adding window framing members and/or glazing bars;
- replacing a door with one of a different design;
- altering the position of an entrance;
- installing a security shutter or a grille external to a building;
- altering the size of a shop window;
- altering the size of a fascia;
- cladding any part of the shop front in artificial stone, timber, plastic or tile;
- removing or adding a ramp or steps;
- adding a projecting canopy or blind;
- installing an ATM (automatic teller machine).

3.0 Works to shopfronts and signage affecting heritage assets

3.1 Key documents

3.1.1 Proposals relating to work to shopfronts and/or signage which affect a heritage asset or assets requiring planning permission (including those which require advertisement consent\(^4\)) and/or listed building consent will be assessed in relation to, *inter alia*:

a) The council’s Design and Sustainability SPD. Particular attention is drawn to paragraphs 8.90 – 8.101 of the SPD.

b) Relevant legislation, policies, principles and supporting text as referenced or set out in the main document of this SPD and in this Appendix. Particular attention is drawn to principles and supporting text, set out in the main document of this SPD: LB01, LB02 and LB04 (which relate to listed buildings); CA01 CA02 and CA03 (which relate to conservation areas); and LLB01 and LLB03 (which relate to locally-listed buildings);

c) Conservation Area Appraisals Management Plans published for specific conservation areas within the borough.

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\(^4\) Amenity and public safety are the key considerations when applications for advertisement consent are determined: the impact that an advertisement would have on the historic environment relates to the former of these considerations.
3.1.2 Principles set out in the main document of this SPD make it clear that features such as shopfronts and signage which contribute to the significance of a heritage asset and/or to an understanding of that significance and/or to the character and appearance of a conservation area should be retained, and repaired as necessary.

3.1.3 Reference is made at paragraph 4.9 of the main document of this SPD to the council’s duties with regard to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of a conservation area. It is stated in Principle CA01 of the main document of this SPD that where change is proposed, the council will encourage opportunities for enhancement to be taken where the appearance of a site presently has a negative impact on a conservation area. Thus, where a shopfront, a part of a shopfront, or a sign which has a negative impact on the character or appearance of a conservation area is to be replaced or altered, the council will seek to ensure that such replacement or alteration constitutes an improvement in terms of its impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

3.1.4 It is also made clear in principles within the main document of this SPD that for new works or works of alteration which affect a heritage asset, the design of proposals should be developed in response to an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset(s) affected by proposals, and that a design which incorporates incongruous features is unlikely to be acceptable.

3.1.5 Those principles also state that materials, finishes and construction details employed in works which affect a heritage asset should be of a high quality and should complement those of the host building and/or those used in buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area.

3.1.6 The Conservation Area Management Plan for the Basingstoke Town conservation area includes a number of principles specific to shopfronts and signage within that area. The principles which follow within this Appendix have been adapted and developed from those within that management plan and within other SPD. Efforts have been made to avoid repetition, although in some instances this is unavoidable.
3.2 Works to shopfronts and signage affecting heritage assets: principles

**Principle SF01 - Shopfronts: general**

In respect of works to shopfronts in conservation areas and/or which are part of listed buildings and/or locally-listed buildings which are subject to planning controls:

a) Traditional shopfronts should be retained and repaired/restored rather than replaced;

b) Features* which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area and/or to the significance of a heritage asset or assets should be retained, and should not be covered over;

c) Where modern fascias cover earlier timber fascias, the council will encourage opportunities to be taken to expose and restore those earlier fascias. Where historic features or finishes such as tiling are covered over, it will also encourage opportunities to be taken to expose and restore such features;

d) Where the three-dimensional form of an existing shopfront makes a positive contribution to the streetscene e.g. by virtue of bays or recesses, that form should be retained;

e) The design of a new or altered shopfront or of part of a shopfront should respect the building or buildings to which the shopfront relates, and the wider locality;

f) The size, proportions and scale of elements within a shopfront in an historic context is of particular importance: large areas of glass and large fascias will not normally be acceptable;

g) Proposals for new or altered shopfronts should not adversely impact on the provision of independent and separate access of upper floors, in order to encourage their use and continued maintenance;

h) Active frontages should generally be preserved, with views allowed into the building from the public domain;

i) A building should generally only have one main fascia sign on each elevation. This should normally state only the name and/or trade of the business and should not carry additional advertisements.

*such as doors, mullions, transoms, glazing, fascias, cornices, pilasters, capitals, blind boxes, stall risers, floor and wall finishes, ventilation grilles, light fittings, brackets etc.*
3.2.1 Traditional shopping streets generally, with some notable exceptions, contain narrow-fronted buildings which have a vertical emphasis.

3.2.2 Proposals relating to shopfronts which affect a heritage asset or assets should respect the design of the remainder of the elevation of the building which accommodates the shopfront, and that of nearby properties. A shopfront should be seen as part of a building rather than as a separate entity. Where a shopfront is part of a group of buildings, which have a common identity, as at Downsland Parade, Basingstoke, that identity should be maintained.

3.2.3 Standard signs and other elements which have been developed to suit the corporate identity of a company may conflict with the character of an individual building or its surroundings: where a proposal affects a heritage asset or heritage assets, standard solutions may need to be modified in order to take account of that context (paragraph 8.95 of the Design and Sustainability SPD refers).

3.2.4 Windows should generally be divided by mullions (vertical framing members) and transoms (horizontal framing members), as illustrated at Figure E3. These framing members may be profiled to add interest.

![Figure E3. Subdivision of shopfronts](image.png)

3.2.5 The fascia is usually the most prominent feature of a shopfront, as it displays the name of the business. The appearance of a building will be significantly affected by the width, length, height, projection, materials, colour and detailed design of any shopfront fascia.
3.2.6 Where a large fascia is to be replaced, and proposals affect a heritage asset or assets, it should be replaced by a fascia of a scale and proportions which are appropriate to the elevation of the building of which it forms part and to the streetscene more generally. In many cases the height of the new fascia should be less than that of the fascia which it replaces. New fascia boards should not normally be applied over the top of existing ones, and signwriting should be applied directly to the fascia board.

3.2.7 Fascias should not extend above the level of cills of first floor windows, and should not obscure architectural features such as decorative brickwork.

3.2.8 A fascia should be designed as an integral part of a building, and be contained within the shopfront, protected from rain and visually separated from the upper floors of a building by a **cornice**, and, generally from adjacent fascias by **pilasters** or **piers**. The cornice traditionally housed roller blinds, and was capped with lead.

3.2.9 If a business occupies the ground floor of two or more buildings, a continuous fascia running across the facades of all the buildings, disregarding architectural detailing and decoration should not be employed. Figure E3 illustrates this point (and relates to paragraph 8.93 of the Design and Sustainability SPD).

![Figure E3. Examples of good and bad practice in the design of fascias where two or more buildings are in the same business use](image-url)
3.2.10 In a large building, or in a group of buildings which has a common identity, fascia position, projection and height should generally be consistent.

3.2.11 **Pilasters** and piers are vertical elements which frame and divide shopfronts, whilst providing a visual link between upper floors and the pavement. Some shopfronts, for example in the Top of the Town area of Basingstoke, incorporate cast iron columns which fulfil a similar function. Such elements give a vertical emphasis to the shopfronts and add interest and a three-dimensional quality to an elevation. Pilasters and columns may be topped by **capitals**.

3.2.12 Where a single shop unit covers the width of two or more different buildings, the design of the shopfront should respond to the individual identity of each building. This can be achieved through the sub-division of the shopfront by pilasters, piers or columns (and by a break at fascia level) so that individual buildings, rather than the whole shop unit, are emphasised.

3.2.13 Where several businesses occupy a single large building, shopfronts should not create separate architectural identities within the building.

3.2.14 **Stallrisers** provide a solid visual base to a building. As shown at Figure E4, they raise the height of a display and also provide a protective area between a shop window and street level. Where stallrisers exist, they should be retained. Where they have been removed from older shopfronts, replacements should be installed. Stallrisers should be separated from glazing by a cill, which protects the stallriser from rainwater. Stallrisers may consist of plain, raised or fielded panels, be tiled, rendered or finished in brick or stone, and may incorporate grilles for ventilation.

![Figure E4](image-url)  
**Figure E4. Examples of good and bad practice in the design of the base of a shopfront, illustrating the importance of stallrisers**
3.2.15 The design of doors and doorways should be in keeping with the other elements of a shopfront. Doors within traditional shopfronts are often part-glazed, with a timber panel or panels at low level, the height of which relates to that of the stallriser. Many traditional shopfronts have recessed entrances, with floor surfaces of decorative mosaic or tiles. These are features which add variety and interest, and which should be retained.

3.2.16 As noted at paragraph 8.96 of the Design and Sustainability SPD, blinds and canopies should be retractable. At their lowest point, blinds and canopies should be at least 2.1m above pavement level. Canopies should be designed to fit between pilasters and capitals and should not extend across the frontage of the shopfront of more than one building.

3.2.17 Where such proposals affect a heritage asset or assets, proposals to improve security measures involving the addition of lighting, alarms, cameras and/or shutters or grilles should respond to their context. Where required, shutter boxes should normally be installed within or behind fascias rather than surface-mounted. Removable grilles affixed in or outside of a shop window, which allow views into the shop, may be preferable to shutters requiring the addition of shutter boxes. Solid shutters should be avoided, as when the premises are closed the shutters have an undesirable impact on the appearance of the streetscene, and may attract graffiti and fly posting.

3.2.18 Where proposals affecting a heritage asset or assets include the insertion of an automatic teller machine (ATM), the position of the ATM should be well-located in relation to other architectural features and to the overall composition of the elevation of the host building. The ATM and any associated signage should not dominate the principal elevation of a building. Fabric affected by the installation or removal of an ATM should be carefully restored to its previous condition. See also Principles SS02 and SS04, below, which are relevant to ATMs.

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**Principle SF02 - Shopfronts and signage: materials and finishes**

In respect of works to shopfronts and signage in conservation areas and/or which are part of listed buildings and/or locally-listed buildings which are subject to planning controls:

a) Traditional materials and finishes should normally be employed.

b) Materials and finishes used should respond to context, complementing each other, the building to which the shopfront relates, and the wider locality.

c) Materials should be of a high quality and durable.
3.2.19 In proposals which affect a heritage asset or assets, fascias and doors forming part of shopfronts should normally be of painted timber, and window and door frames of painted timber. It may be appropriate for hardwood elements to be stained and/or varnished. Dark, muted paint colours were used traditionally in shopfronts, and it may therefore be appropriate for such colours, rather than bright colours, to be employed in proposals. The use of paints which have the appearance of traditional oil-based paints and pigments is desirable.

3.2.20 Glass should predominantly be colourless plain glass. Coloured, etched or sandblasted glass may be used selectively.

3.2.21 Blinds and canopies should be of woven fabric which is similar in appearance to canvas, which was traditionally employed. Designs should normally employ wooden frames and battens.

3.2.22 Timber, metal and paint should generally be used for signage which affects a heritage asset or assets.

3.2.23 Brass, bronze and cast or wrought iron may be appropriate materials for metalwork which is not painted.

3.2.24 Plastics (including vinyls, acrylics, polycarbonates and upvc), laminates, aluminium and other modern materials will not normally be acceptable in proposals for shopfronts and/or signage which affect a heritage asset or assets. Highly-reflective materials and finishes will also not normally be acceptable, apart from the selective use of gold or silver lettering as used in traditional signs. Bright non-traditional colours should not be used.

Principle SF03 - Signage

In respect of proposals relating to signage in a conservation area, and/or which is part of a listed building, and/or which is part of a locally-listed building, which are subject to planning controls, in respect of projecting and hanging signs, signage incorporated into fascias or signboards, and other signage:

a) Signs should respect the character of the individual building to which the signage relates and that of adjoining properties. Businesses should adapt their corporate style to preserve and enhance the integrity of the shopfront and the wider streetscape;

b) Projecting and hanging signs on historic buildings should generally be of timber with hand-painted signage. Where modern technologies are employed, the finished sign should closely resemble signage produced by
Heritage SPD Appendix 5 – EPH Draft

3.2.25 In many successful schemes signage is well-located in relation to architectural features such as on gable ends, in areas of brickwork between windows, or in blocked up windows: examples are shown at Figure E5.

3.2.26 Traditional metal brackets for hanging signs on buildings, and freestanding structures (e.g. for hanging pub signs) may make a positive contribution to the appearance of a building or place and should be retained: examples are shown at Figure E6.

3.2.27 Legibility is important to effective signage. Good colour contrast will assist legibility.

3.2.28 Lettering may be affixed to or painted directly onto a building, as illustrated at Figure E7, rather than applied to a signboard or fascia. In some locations, the addition of a signboard would be inappropriate. For works affecting a heritage asset or assets, where applied to a signboard or fascia, lettering should be affixed, painted or engraved.

3.2.29 The size and font of lettering and its extent should be appropriate to its context and to the space available: the height of lettering within a fascia should generally not exceed 60% of the height of the fascia.

3.2.30 The name and/or trade of a business should be indicated not more than once on each elevation of a building.

3.2.31 Where a business exists at the upper level(s) of a building, any signage should be...
should be directly applied to window glazing at upper floor level. Such signage may be complemented by a plaque e.g. of brass, of modest size at ground floor level.

3.2.32 Traditionally-designed and detailed pavement signs (A frames) may make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a place in some instances, although visual clutter should be avoided and they may not always be appropriate for reasons of highways safety.

**Principle SF04 - Lighting**

In respect of lighting related to shopfronts and signage in conservation areas and/or which are part of listed buildings and/or locally-listed buildings which are subject to planning controls:

a) Lighting should respect the character of the individual building and adjoining properties and should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area;

b) It should provide low levels of illumination, appropriate to context, be discreet and designed to minimise light pollution and glare.

3.2.33 In proposals affecting a heritage asset or assets, internally-illuminated signs, halo lighting, spotlights and floodlights should not generally be used. Flashing, intermittent, neon or fluorescent lighting is unlikely to be acceptable. Trough lights or spotlights may be appropriate in many instances. It will not normally be appropriate to illuminate projecting signs. Where such signs are to be illuminated, lighting should be by means of spot lights which focus on the script. Lighting brackets should be of traditional or unobtrusive modern design: projecting swan neck brackets should generally be avoided. It will generally be appropriate for illumination levels to be lower in rural locations than in urban locations.

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