

Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document Shopfronts

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1 Introduction

1.1 One of the Government's key objectives is that design is important in the delivery of sustainable development and development should be appropriate to its context and improve the character and quality of an area (PPS 1). It also states that "*Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted*". The quality of design of new developments also affects their success and can have a wider impact on the quality of life of residents in the Borough and planning can play an important role in improving the built environment.

1.2 The aim of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to set out the expectations of the Council in relation to shopfronts. This guidance will provide information for all those involved in the development process about what should be considered when designing new or making changes to shopfronts that are to be submitted for planning approval.

1.3 The SPD will not have the same status as the development plan, but once adopted, will be an important material consideration in planning decisions. It is envisaged that this SPD will ultimately form part of the St Helens Local Development Framework (LDF) that will eventually supersede the Unitary Development Plan.

1.4 The key objectives of this SPD are:

- To provide clear and consistent guidance on the design of shopfronts.
- To assist in the determination of planning applications for development.
- To encourage good practice in shopfront design and redesign to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the street scene.
- To ensure that shop fronts contribute positively to the daytime and evening economy.
- To ensure shopfronts are sympathetic and appropriate to the character of the Borough's conservation areas and listed buildings.
- To enable shop fronts to be accessible to all through inclusive design.
- To improve the quality of the built environment in the Borough.

2 Policy Context

National policy

2.1 Government guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) recognises the importance of well-designed and good quality developments. It identifies the need to ensure that places are of a high standard of design that *“...contributes positively to making places better for people”*.

2.2 Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) Sustainable Economic Development (2009) promotes design as a key consideration in EC10.2 *“the importance that whether the proposal secures a high quality and inclusive design which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions”*.

2.3 Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) highlights the importance of design when considering heritage assets.

2.4 Planning Policy Guidance 19 (PPG19) Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992) highlights the importance of advertisements and signage. It recognises that poorly designed or insensitively placed advertisements, signs or illumination can spoil the appearance of the built environment.

Regional Policy

2.5 This SPD will take into account the new North West Plan (North West Regional Spatial Strategy – Proposed Changes Version – RSS), which was adopted on the 30th September 2008 and replaces the old Regional Planning Guidance (RPG). The RSS constitutes part of the Development Plan for the Borough.

2.6 The RSS details relevant policies to be considered within this SPD, including:

- DP1 Spatial Principles
- SP2 Promote Sustainable Communities

Local Policy

2.7 For the purpose of this SPD, policies referred to will be from the saved version of the St Helens’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP, adopted in 1998), until the Core Strategy of the Local Development framework replaces this.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

2.8 St Helens Unitary Development Plan (UDP) contains a number of primary strategic aims that are relevant to the SPD. These include:

- To secure urban regeneration.
- To balance the needs of new development and protection of the environment.

- To improve the quality of the environment to make St Helens a more attractive and safer place in which to live, work, play, invest and visit.
- To take account of the need of all sectors of the community in the provision of housing, employment, transport, recreation facilities and infrastructure.
- To conserve resources and work towards the principles of sustainable development.

2.9 In addition UDP Policy GEN 1 (Primacy of the Development Plan), expects that policies and proposals maintain and enhance the character and appearance of St Helens through appropriate design.

2.10 UDP Policy GEN 10 (Advertising in St Helens) sets out the main principles in the display of advertisements, ensuring that they are appropriate to the building and its surroundings.

2.11 UDP Policy (RET 6 (Alterations and Shopfronts) recognises that shopfronts are an important feature in St Helens. It outlines considerations such as existing features, security measures and disabled access.

2.12 UDP Policy ENV 24B (Development In Conservation Areas) requires a high standard of design for new buildings or alterations to ensure it harmonises with the historic environment.

2.13 The Design Guidance SPD (Adopted October 2007) provides additional advice on the design of shopfronts as well as covering other issues such as access, context, security and signage.

2.14 The Design and Crime SPD (Adopted October 2009) provides guidance on designing out crime in new developments including shopfronts and security measures.

2.15 The content of this SPD needs to be considered alongside any others adopted by the Council.

The Core Strategy

2.16 When the Core Strategy is adopted by the Council, it will replace the UDP as the Development Plan for the Borough. At this point, all reference for the SPD will be made to the Core Strategy. Draft policy CP1 in the Core Strategy provides for high quality consideration of design in all aspects of new development.

Links to Other Plans

2.17 This SPD takes into account the requirements of the Human Rights Act (1998) in that all design principles will comply with the Articles of the Convention and Protocols of this Act, unless there is a lawful justification not to.

2.18 The guidelines set out in The Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 and 2005) provides advice on the need to ensure access for disabled people in all development proposals. The Merseyside Code of Practice on Access and Mobility is an advisory document that offers guidance on best

practice in designing environments not only to meet the needs of disabled people but also those who may otherwise be restricted by the design of buildings and structures. The principles in this SPD will comply with these requirements.

2.19 For information on resources and further reading see section 12.

3 How to Apply this Guidance

3.1 Development control is key to ensuring that all proposals have due regard to their context and any special local characteristics. This SPD sets out the Council's position for what is likely to be acceptable with regards to shopfronts and also offers general design advice. Departure from the principles contained in this SPD will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances where the proposal is of outstanding quality or where it would not set a precedent for poor quality replicas.

3.2 From the earliest stages of the development process, the Council will work with applicants to ensure that their proposals have incorporated the principles contained within this document.

Pre-application stage

3.3 Developers should enter into pre-application discussions early on in their development proposals. This will be with a range of interested parties including planning officers, building control officers, urban design officer, conservation officer and highway advisors. The Council have adopted the Development Team Approach (DTA) on major schemes, to ensure a co-ordinated and seamless approach to development proposals. However, this will not normally be used for solely shopfront proposals.

Planning applications

3.4 All development proposals should have regard to the principles set out in this SPD. The Council will expect that all design and access statements (for both minor and major planning applications) should demonstrate how the design and layout of the proposal has regard to the guidelines and key principles outlined in this document.

Planning decisions

3.5 Government Guidance in PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (2005), makes it clear that design should be a material consideration in determining planning applications. Where the Council considers that a proposed development would not meet the requirements of this SPD or the Development Plan, it may refuse permission unless amendments can be made or planning conditions imposed to minimise any potential negative impact of the development on an area.

3.6 In making planning decisions, the Council will need to reach an appropriate balance between a wide range of competing planning objectives and material considerations in order to control the development in the wider public interest. A balance will need to be struck between the relevant policies and the specific circumstances of each case.

Planning conditions

3.7 The Council may consider imposing planning conditions as part of a planning permission to ensure that any development proposal does not compromise the established quality of particular areas such as conservation areas or primary shopping frontages.

3.8 In some cases, the Council may consider it necessary to include informatives on planning permissions, drawing the applicant's attention to best practice guidance or technical publications.

4 Works Requiring Consent

4.1 Works of alteration, even minor works may require one or more forms of consent. Consent is not normally required for repair works. However, it is always advisable to check with the Council's Planning Department who will be pleased to advise on whether consent will be required. In the case of listed buildings, it is recommended that no works are undertaken before contacting the Council's Conservation Officer on whether an application for Listed Building Consent will be required. If any structural alterations are required advice can be sought from the Council's Building Control Department. (For contact details please see Chapter 12).

Planning permission

4.2 This is usually required for external alteration to commercial premises including those in conservation areas. Works include for example the insertion of a new shopfront, alterations of shop windows and the addition of roller shutters.

Listed Building Consent

4.3 This will be required for most internal and external alterations to any listed building.

Advertisement Consent

4.4 This may be needed (dependent on the size and type) for the display of signs on the shopfront.

Building Regulations Approval

4.5 This is required for any structural alterations, material change of use or material alteration of the building or part of the building which may include the shopfront.

Information Required

4.6 The Council expects that with any planning application that is submitted relating to shopfronts or signage, a high standard of information should be provided with comprehensive detail and clear plans showing not only the proposal but also the shopfront in context with adjacent properties.

4.7 Planning applications for works to shopfronts and signs should include as a minimum:

- Fully detailed plans of both the existing and proposed appearance at a scale of not less than 1:50, including upper floors.
- Sections showing details and dimensions of things such as security features etc at a larger scale.
- Details of proposed materials, finishes and intended colours.
- If possible, indicative details of all signs with intended colour, materials and illumination.
- The sign and shopfront should be shown in context, with drawings showing adjacent buildings.

5 The History of Shopfronts

Origins

5.1 Historically the first “shops” could be considered to be in street markets, travelling fairs, (which were open stalls) or casually on street corners. Then in the middle ages, traders and craftsman purchased plots of land around the central market place. They built houses on this land, which had open fronts to the ground floor from which goods were sold or trades advertised.

The Seventeenth Century

5.2 By the early Seventeenth Century, especially in larger towns, shopfronts were being erected with the open area being enclosed, using a window, door and screen. This created the traditional form of the shopfront, with the stallriser beneath the projecting stall, the window covering the goods, the door to enter the shop together with a fascia (sign) above.

The Eighteenth Century

5.3 During the Eighteenth Century, the recognisable shopfronts that we see today developed. They became an integral part of the design of the building. At first the earliest form of shopfronts were simply windows that were larger than domestic proportions with some emphasis put on its surrounds through the use of pilasters and cornices. This detailing was then added to the doorway to provide further emphasis and then the two were brought under one fascia and cornice with pilasters flanking the opening.

5.4 Then, following the architectural styles of the day (mainly Classical), shopfronts became more established. During the Eighteenth Century, glass was still hand blown and therefore of limited size. Display windows as a result, often had small panes of glass and windows that were divided up by a large number of glazing bars (known as “Georgian style”). The amount of elaboration on shopfronts depended very much on the location, with more elaborate shopfronts being prevalent in established/affluent towns and/or dependent on the occupant with manual craftsman occupying simpler premises and so on.

The Nineteenth Century

5.5 This period saw the classical style that developed during the last century becoming more pronounced. Projecting bays that were previously the norm were now outlawed in most places to avoid obstructing the pavement. The recessed doorway became a standard feature particularly from the late Eighteenth Century onwards. This not only gave shelter to customers but provided a greater window display area. Advances in glass production meant that cylinder glass became available, allowing larger panes, that were divided up by vertical glazing bars and moulding on the outside.



A Nineteenth Century shopfront.

Victorian Period

5.6 The increase in development in town centres led to taller buildings and denser development. This resulted in an increase in the height and dominance of shopfronts. The invention of plate glass saw the appearance of large window-panes and this eliminated the need for timber mullions (although they continued to be used) and horizontal transoms, with coloured glass or more decorative joinery dividing off the upper part of the window.

5.7 Decoration became more exuberant and in particular later on, a variety of materials, such as bronze, cast iron and terracotta were introduced. Sometimes these were used for individual elements or sometimes the whole shopfront. Fascias were tilted to allow for greater visibility and often at the expense of the cornice. Pilasters at the outer edges of the shopfront developed. These were either part of the masonry or were elaborately decorated timber panels. A Classically derived capital or a timber console bracket that supported the fascia capped the pilasters. In the later Victorian period, these developed to provide a stop to the horizontal fascia and were often detailed to illustrate the occupant of the shop for example, fruit or scrolls.

5.8 Previously, shopfronts had blinds located within the shop. During the Victorian period these were made into a feature as canopy blinds. Canopy blinds often displayed the shop name and were housed either as part of the shopfront or fascia and this became more commonplace in the very late Victorian Period. In addition to the details contained on the fascia and windows, it was also becoming commonplace to apply lettering on the upper walls, gables or additional timber signs. Projecting icons illustrating the occupant was common, for example a fish indicating a fishmonger. The use of decorative tiles or glazes faience was used both internally and externally, on stallrisers, on the floor on entrances to the shop or above the main shop windows.

5.9 Street displays were more common, with vertical sliding sash windows being used to display the products on the street. Above windows and doors there would be grilles in iron or timber that would provide ventilation to the shop.

The Early Twentieth Century

5.10 In the Edwardian period and up to the 1920's, taller shopfronts appeared with lower stallrisers. These often featured dipped or angles fascias, with thinner pilasters, curved glass, decorative lighting and deeply recessed doorways with mosaic tiles displaying the shop name. Mullions tended to disappear and large shop windows with reduced vertical emphasis resulted. Many Edwardian shop doors were almost totally glazed with only a small panelled area at the bottom.



A Victorian shopfront.

5.11 During the 1920's and 1930's, there was a trend for the reduction in the level of embellishment. A thoughtful style emerged and the use of mahogany, chrome and polished materials such as Vitrolite glass and granite became popular.

Later Twentieth Century

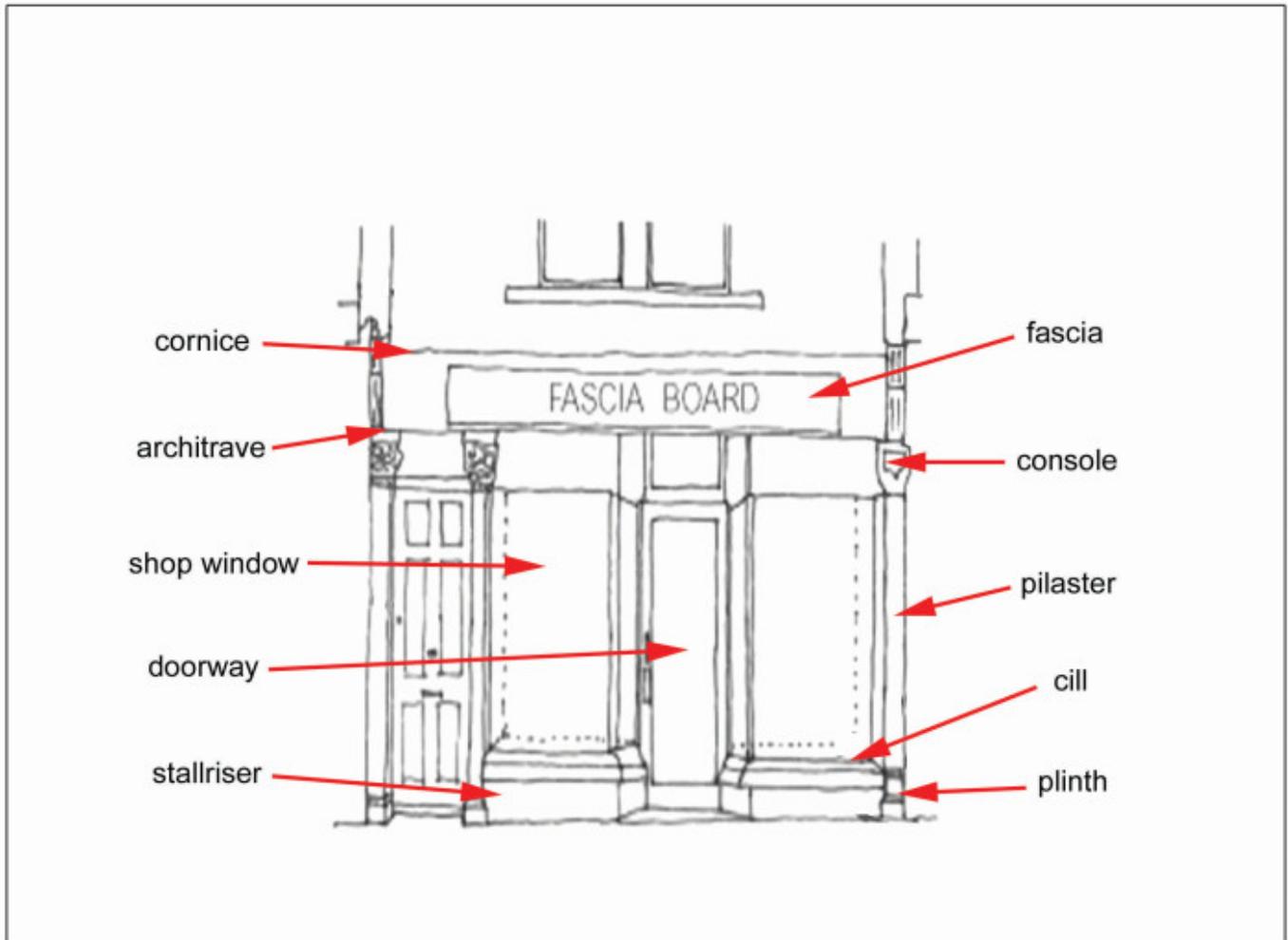
5.12 In the latter part of the twentieth century, many traditional shopfronts and shop buildings were replaced with ones that had little quality or merit. The 1960s and 70s in particular saw a radical change in design philosophy and traditional design was no longer the norm. Poorly proportioned shopfronts with overlarge windows, dominant fascias, cheap materials, clutters of cheap advertising and shutters and grilles have obliterated the character of many streets. National high street traders are too keen to project their corporate image and this has also led to shopfronts that are out of keeping with the local street scene in terms of design, scale and colour.



A Twentieth Century shopfront.

6 Main Elements of a Shopfront

6.1 Although the styles of shopfronts have changed over the years, almost all have the same basic elements.



Main elements of a shopfront.

6.2 Cornice - The cornice provides a horizontal line between the shopfront and the upper floors (in other words it defines the top of the shop). It also protects the shop fascia from weathering and from water falling from above. All fascias should have some form of cornice to cast water away from the fascia and should have a neat flashing to protect it from the weather. Cornices can include ornate mouldings, light fittings for the fascias or can incorporate traditional awning boxes.

6.3 Fascia - The fascia is between the cornice and is the area where the shop's name is located. The fascia is protected from weathering by a cornice and is terminated at each end by pilasters. Sometimes they also conceal internal roller shutters.

6.4 Architrave - The architrave runs horizontally and separates the shop window from the fascia. It is usually of a simpler form than the cornice.

6.5 Consoles, plinths and pilasters - Pilasters are located at either end of the shop and define its width and enclose the window frame. The base of the pilaster stands on a plinth block and the top terminates at a console bracket, which can be plain or decorative and supports any overhanging fascia.

6.6 Stallriser and cill - The stallriser provides a solid base for the shopfront and protects the shop front from dirt and damage whilst providing a visual base for the whole frontage. The cill sits above the stallriser between the shop window. It usually does not project forward of the pilasters or the opening of the shopfront. The cill (like the stallriser) needs to be robust to support the shopfront and withstand damage.

6.7 Shop window - A shop window allows natural light into the shop and creates an area for the display of goods. The size and style of the windows including glazing bars, mullions (vertical divisions), transoms (horizontal divisions) should be in a scale and proportion with the rest of the shopfront and the building as a whole.

6.8 Doorways - Shop entrances should be carefully integrated into the overall design and character of the building. They can be recessed (usually pre-1950s) or flush (more modern shops). They can be positioned centrally or to the side of the shop windows.

7 Retention, Repair and Replacement of Shopfronts

7.1 The decision over whether to repair or replace an existing shopfront should be carefully considered. Although this will be based on the existing building and age, quality and condition of the shopfront, and the impact on the streetscene, wherever possible the original shopfront should be retained unless they are of a poor design. It should be noted that alterations to and replacement of shopfronts will require planning permission and could also require Listed Building or Conservation Area Consents. Also, when making any alterations, Building Control should be contacted to assess if Building Regulation Approval is required.

Repair and restoration

7.2 The style, detail and decoration usually found in older shopfronts is very valuable to the street scene and their retention should always be considered.

7.3 Before an existing shopfront is replaced, consideration should be given to its quality and relevance, not just condition. Often the alterations that have taken place over the years may still be repairable and original details such as pilasters and fascias can be hidden behind fascias, cladding and panelling. Revealing these features can greatly enhance the shopfront and the character of the street. It is considered that many Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century shopfronts are of a high quality and are worthy of retention.

Replacement

7.4 Where an existing shopfront is inappropriate to the building or to the locality or is beyond repair, then St Helens Council will support a new or replacement shopfront provided it is based on the principles contained in this SPD.

7.5 If the building is listed, in a conservation area or is of general architectural or historic interest and the original shopfront is beyond repair, then replacement on a like for like basis will normally be required.

7.6 Where the shopfront is unattractive or of poorer quality than the building in which it sits, then the style of shopfront introduced should be appropriate to the age and character of the building. Old photographs can provide valuable evidence of previous frontages whilst removal of modern features can reveal remnants of the original shopfront.

7.7 The introduction of a modern shopfront should still have the traditional form and proportions even if a modern or innovative style is chosen. It should have all the features in proportion and include “modern” stallrisers etc., and should fit into its context and the streetscene.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance of shopfronts is essential if they are to remain an attractive part of the streetscene. Neglect can lead to needless expenditure on repairs and replacement and this is particularly the case with regards to wood and metalwork. This not only relates to the shopfront but also the upper floors as well as this will have an effect on their appearance.

8 Design Principles for Shopfronts

8.1 A well-designed shopfront should be seen as part of the building into which it is installed and also sit comfortably in the street scene. The following design principles will be used by the Council in determining planning applications for alterations or installations of new shopfronts.

Respecting the building

8.2 A shopfront should relate to the building it belongs to so that it complements or forms an integral part of the elevation rather than an isolated element on the ground floor. This can be achieved by taking into account the scale and architectural style of the buildings and any arrangement of windows and areas of wall on the upper floors. This is through:

- **Consideration of the building's proportions, scale and detailing.**
- **Ensuring the key elements (see Chapter 6) of the shopfront are in proportion to each other.**
- **The stallriser should generally not exceed 20% of the overall height of the shopfront and the entablature (architrave, cornice and fascia/sign) should also not exceed 20%.**
- **Respecting common features** such as bay widths, stallriser heights and fascia depths that occur in adjacent shops and along a street.
- **Ensuring there is a reasonable gap between the top of the shopfront and the cills of the first floor window.** This is to avoid the shop appearing "chopped" in half horizontally.
- **Not allowing shopfronts to extend the full width of the building.** At either end there should be a pier of materials that extend down to ground level. This helps to define the shopfront whilst also providing visual enclosure.
- **Continue the vertical emphasis of the building to ground level** to achieve a frontage that provides visual support to the building above. This can be done through window lines, pilasters and columns.

Street rhythm

8.3 When considering the installation of a new or alteration of an existing shopfront, it is important to consider how the building fits into the street and the quality of the street as a whole. It is recognised that most traditional shopping streets contain a great deal of variety and often it is the width of the buildings and their height that make its character. This could either be through a vertical or horizontal emphasis. This street rhythm should not be compromised by the extension of a shopfront across a number of different buildings.

Interest

8.4 Traditional shopfronts had a number of recesses or projecting elements which provided interest to the shop. Cornices, deep glazing bars and pilasters for example gave depth and texture to the façade. Modern shopfronts should make reference to these principles and any proposals for new inserts that have no projecting features will not be acceptable as this can result in an uninteresting appearance.

Scale

8.5 All shop fronts should be in proportion to the building. Over-large fascias are the biggest problem in new/replacement shopfronts and can often obscure important architectural features and therefore will not be acceptable.

Materials

8.6 The type of materials used in the construction of the shopfront and its finish are important in integrating the shopfront within the building's façade and the surrounding area. The following are important considerations:

- On a majority of shopfronts, timber should be used as it is the most appropriate and versatile material and can allow better quality detailing. New timber should be from sustainable sources.
- Dependent on architectural styles or contemporary designs, there may be scope for the use of other materials providing they are used with care and can be shown that they will enhance an area.
- Generally speaking glossy or reflective surfaces, aluminium or plastic shopfronts are not acceptable in conservation areas.
- The use of plastic or uPVC for any element of a shopfront is rarely appropriate in any areas.
- When aluminium is used in modern buildings, it should always have a powder coated finish.
- Materials that resist graffiti or allow easy removal should be considered in vulnerable locations. Anti-graffiti coatings may be considered in appropriate positions and locations.
- The replacement of existing materials needs to have careful consideration of the age and style of the building and its context. For example, where traditional brick stallrisers dominate the replacement with stone or granite would not be acceptable. The piers dividing shops from adjacent premises should also be constructed using the principle material of the building.

Colour

8.7 When considering the colour of new or replacement shopfronts it is important that the colour scheme complements the character and appearance of the building and the area in which it is situated. Rich colours such as dark shades of red, green, blue and black, do not detract from the window display and aide the property to sit comfortably in the street scene.

Fascias

8.8 Well designed fascia signs can contribute greatly to the character of an area and it is also essential for successful retailing. Oversized and inappropriate fascias can make a high street or shopping area unattractive. They can spoil or hide original architectural features of buildings and also have a negative effective on street frontages.



Shopfronts should be in proportion to the building.

8.9 In respect to new or replacement fascias, the Council will have regard to the following principles in assessing any proposals:

- The scale of the fascia should be appropriate to the style, character and height of the building and also its surroundings.
- New fascias should be finished along the upper edge with a cornice or capping. This will provide an architectural link between the shop front and the upper floors of the building.
- Fascias should not extend across more than one shop front even when they are in the same use/ownership.
- Fascias should not extend above the cill line of first floor windows nor obscure any architectural features.
- Fascias should not exceed 20% of the overall height of the shopfront.
- Lettering should be well spaced, be an appropriate typeface and be proportionate in scale to the fascia.
- Fascias should not obscure any architectural detailing.
- Most high street multiples, building societies and banks have their own standard signage and corporate identity. In sensitive locations and on older more articulated buildings, these standard formats can have a negative effect on the character of an area in such cases designs will be expected to be sympathetic to the area.
- Although it is accepted that modern buildings will require modern designs. They should still adhere to the basic principles of shop front design. The fascia should still respect the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings (as set out in paragraph 8.14).



Corporate identities can be successfully adapted on older buildings.



Inappropriate and excessive fascias should be avoided (1). They should be of an appropriate material and typeface (2) and fit according to the character and features of the building (3).

Advertisements and signs

8.10 It is important to consider advertisements and signage as a whole. Well designed signs can make a positive contribution to the quality of an area.

8.11 The overall number of signs displayed on a building should be limited and co-ordinated to avoid a cluttered appearance. The use of advertisements on gable ends and signs above cill level of first floor are usually not acceptable. There is limited precedent for these and any proposals will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Projecting and hanging signs

8.12 In addition to fascia signs, many shopfronts also use projecting and hanging signs. Hanging signs are an established feature of traditional streets. Especially attractive are symbols denoting the trade of the shop such as a barbers pole, a teapot or an animal for a butchers.

8.13 In assessing proposals for projecting and hanging signs, the Council will have regard to the following principles:

- One sign per frontage is deemed adequate for most premises.
- It should be located with careful regard for the architecture of the building.
- The sign should generally be no larger than 600mm x 600mm and no thicker than 80mm though on some larger frontages there will be more flexibility.
- Any projection overhanging the footway should be securely fixed and no part shall be less than 2.4 metres above the footway level and no closer than 0.5 metres from the edge of carriageway.
- Signs must not be over intrusive and must relate to others in the vicinity.
- Signs should hang from a bracket or project from a fixing which integrates well with the design and materials of the host building.
- Internally illuminated box signs will not be permitted in conservation areas, on listed buildings or on buildings which are of a traditional style. Illumination will only be acceptable if it is discrete and does not cause visual clutter. Small discrete spotlights on the building can be pointed at the sign if lighting is required.
- The use of plastic, aluminium and other non-traditional materials are not considered suitable for listed buildings and in conservation areas. In these circumstances, the use of hand painted hanging signs constructed in either wood or metal is the preferred approach.
- Well designed and modern signs are welcomed as is the innovative artistic use of traditional materials.
- Surviving features such as ornamental ironwork, historic lamps and traditional signage should be retained, especially in conservation areas.

8.14 It should be noted, that there may be instances where the character of the building or street is such that any form of projecting or hanging sign is not appropriate.

Window posters and advertisements

8.15 Shop windows can often be filled with posters, stickers and other banners which can often detract from the overall appearance of the shop and the streetscene. In the case of listed buildings, this will normally require listed building consent and will generally be resisted.

“A-Boards”

8.16 The Council does not encourage the display of “A- boards” outside shops. Any advertisements displayed on the highway, will need express advertisement consent and also the consent of the highway authority. Any application for the display of an “A- board” on the highway will be likely to be refused as they can cause clutter of the street scene and obstruct pedestrians on the footpath. They can also cause problems for the visually impaired and physically disabled. However in many instances such boards will carry deemed consent.

Illumination

8.17 The illumination of fascias needs very careful consideration. Illumination can detract from the quality of an area and the appearance of a shopfront. There are two ways of illuminating signs on shopfronts; internally and externally. In nearly all cases, illumination will require advertisement consent from the Council.

8.18 In conservation areas and on or adjacent to listed buildings, the use of internally illuminated box signs, fascia and “halo” signs (individual lettering illuminated around the edges) will not be permitted. In other areas, the application of internally illuminated box signage should not look too bulky or be visually intrusive.

8.19 Externally illuminated signs should be fitted neatly into the cornice so that the lighting can be cast down over the fascia. Preference will be given to the use of reflected light from appropriately positioned spotlights or external lighting units that are discrete and kept to a minimum. This will remove the future need to retro-fit lighting onto the shop front. On existing shopfronts, where lights cannot be accommodated within the cornice structure, external lighting fittings where appropriate, should be small and discrete, with the wiring internal and limited to the words and logos on the fascias. Trough lights and rows of swan neck lamps should be avoided as they add unwelcome bulk and clutter.

Lettering

8.20 The content of signs should not be overly busy or visually intrusive and names and logos should not be repeated excessively. The most pleasing and sympathetic approach to signage is to the use of individual letters either painted or fixed to the backdrop of the fascia or façade. The size and style of the lettering will mainly be determined by the depth of the fascia and the proportions of the building. However, the font used should be easily legible. The Council will encourage hand painted signs on certain properties where upper floor premises are being used for a different business, the Council will resist applications for new external signs other than on the ground floor fascia or façade. As an alternative, the Council will encourage the use of lettering on the glass of upper floor windows or wall plaques, constructed out of traditional materials, placed at ground floor level.

9 Canopies, Awnings & Blinds

9.1 Any proposed awnings, canopies and blinds should be carefully incorporated into the shopfront and any advertisements, words and logos on the canvas should be kept to a minimum. On traditional shops in conservation areas and on listed buildings, painted timber housing with iron braces is preferred.

9.2 If they do not carry an advertisement it requires planning permission.

9.3 Listed building consent would be required for any type of blind on a listed building and modern fixed fan and Dutch canopies will not be accepted on them nor in conservation areas and most other shopping areas.

9.4 Fixed blinds attached to traditional shopfronts result in the inability to view the shopfront as a whole. As the blind cannot be retracted, the fascia can become redundant and the blind therefore becomes the signage. Modern canopies and/or roller blinds may be acceptable where they properly relate to the building and do not obscure architectural detail and not be of an inappropriate colour. They will not be approved above first floor window cill level nor will the use of plastic or glossy materials.

9.5 Where possible, the colour of the blind/awning should match the colour of the shopfront and/or fascia board. Colours should be carefully chosen to blend in with and enhance the shopfront. The blind should be viewed as a feature. All awnings/blinds should not project to more than 0.5 metres behind the curb line and must provide a minimum clearance above the pavement (including supports) of 2.4 metres.



Awnings/blinds can often become a substitute for a fascia sign.

10 Security Measures

10.1 The Council recognises that there is a need for security measures on commercial properties. Where possible, security measures should be considered as an integral part of the design of any new shopfront. Generally, the extent of security measures should be in proportion with the level of risk in a particular location.

Shutters, screens and grilles

Roller Shutters

10.2 Solid roller shutters have a negative effect on the street and are considered unacceptable because they obliterate the shopfront, prevent natural surveillance of the retail unit and additional lighting of the street. They also create a negative image of the area as one that suffers from crime and anti-social behaviour.

10.3 External roller shutters usually require large bulky roller boxes and side runners which can have a negative impact on the street scene especially when present on more than one premises whilst they can also obscure architectural features.

10.4 Proposals for new shopping frontages, or changes to existing, should where possible use internal, lattice/perforated transparent shutters that are carefully integrated with the shopfront in terms of colour, materials and design.

10.5 External shutters may be considered, provided that they satisfy the following criteria:

- No other combination of security measures are feasible.
- The box and runner can be concealed adequately behind (recessed into) the fascia and inside pilasters.
- The shutter is of a suitable colour and open latticed/perforated/transparent.
- The shutter relates to the openings in the elevation.
- The shopfront is backlit when the shutter is down.

10.6 When installing a new shopfront, integrated shutters should be considered to avoid retro fitting at a later date. All shutters should terminate at the shop window cill rather than continue to ground level.



Concealed shutter box and runner.

Grilles and screens

10.7 Internally fitted see-through/open latticed grilles that have been attractively and imaginatively designed is a positive design solution for shopfronts. These can ensure that the shop window and the street remain attractive. They should be removed or roll up or fold back neatly when the premises are open. Planning permission will not be required for an internally fitted grille (except on listed buildings).

10.8 Where there is no alternative but to provide an external security screen, removable security grilles/ screens may be acceptable provided that they are well designed and also meet the following criteria:

- Any fixings and grilles do not damage any architectural features and mouldings and are painted to blend in with the shopfront so that they are unobtrusive.
- The grilles do not cover the pilasters and any other features but fit within individual elements an window areas of the shopfront.
- The grilles are stored out of sight when not in use.
- The grilles do not intrude into the public highway.

10.9 Some historical shopfronts had solid timber shutters for their windows and doors that were removed when the premises were open. Such a solution is not now deemed unacceptable except on listed buildings where this was a traditional feature.

Gates



10.10 In the event of the need to protect any recessed doorway, the use of a traditional gate which is well designed and fixed appropriately (or removable) may be acceptable. Good quality modern ironwork designs are welcomed and crude forms, colour and ugly fixings are deemed unacceptable.

10.11 Listed Building Consent will be required for the fixing of all external security grilles or gates.

Strengthened security glass

Gates on recessed doorways.

10.12 The use of security glass is a preferred solution as the appearance of the shopfront is unaffected. This is important in conservation areas and listed buildings. To act as a deterrent, the qualities of the glass should be advertised on the shop front.

Burglar alarms and telephone wiring

10.13 Security alarm systems are a useful deterrent and are usually a good solution or alternative to more harsher security solutions for commercial premises. Some alarm boxes can be bulky, of an inappropriate colour and material, they should therefore be positioned as carefully as possible

in relation to the shopfront. They should fit discreetly into the overall shopfront and be of a colour that fits in with its context. Listed Building Consent will be required where it is proposed on a listed building.

10.14 Telephone junction boxes should not conceal any architectural features and be located in appropriate positions. Where possible, wiring should be hidden and non-ferrous fixings should be used which avoids the problem of rust. Consent for these will be required on listed buildings.

CCTV and Lighting

10.15 CCTV and additional lighting over and above that already discussed in Chapter 8 should only be installed in response to an identified need and should not be considered a replacement for passive surveillance. Care should be taken to ensure that the fittings are unobtrusive and do not detract from the character of the building. An excessive number of such fittings can add unwanted visual clutter and be unacceptable. On listed buildings, consent will be required.

11 Accessibility

11.1 All shops should be accessible for everyone including those with a disability, prams and pushchairs, and the elderly. Entrances should comply with Part M of the Building Regulations. They should also comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005). Any steps should be avoided and ramps should be no steeper than a gradient of 1 in 12. However, this can be difficult to achieve without disrupting the internal layout of shops. In traditional shop fronts, it may not be possible to achieve these standards and a compromise will be required to balance the need to retain the particular characteristics of older shopfronts whilst also ensuring accessibility for all. Discussion with the local authority at an early stage should be made to alleviate these problems.

11.2 The design of entrance doors should reflect the design of the other elements that exist in the shopfront. Door panels should be of the same height as the stallriser and doors should be made of the same materials as the window frame. Solid unglazed panelled doors or those made out of aluminium or plastic are not appropriate on a traditionally designed shopfront. Property numbers should be displayed on the door.

11.3 Entrance doors should be of a minimum width of 900mm with a clear opening. Any handles should be at waist height and glazed doors should be clearly marked for partially sighted people.



Full glazed doors can cause problems for the partially sighted.

12 Further Information

St Helens Council

12.1 For advice on development and pre-application discussions please email contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk or contact the following:

Development Team Approach (DTA)

Dta@sthelens.gov.uk

Development Control East

(settlements of Sutton, Bold, Marshalls Cross, Billinge, Seneley Green, Garswood, Haydock, Newton-le-Willows, Parr, Sutton Manor, Broad Oak and Clock Face).

General enquiries: (01744) 676218

Development Control West

(settlements of Rainhill, Rainford, Moss Bank, Eccleston, Blackbrook, Windle, Haresfinch, Pocket Nook, Grange Park, Thatto Heath and Dentons Green).

General enquiries: (01744) 676217

Design and Conservation Team

Urban Designer: (01744) 676185

Conservation Officer: (01744) 671687

Building Control

General enquiries: 01744 676240

Further Reading

St Helens

Relevant policies - St Helens UDP (adopted 1998)

GEN 1 - Primacy of the Development Plan

GEN 10 - Advertising in St Helens

RET 6 - Alterations and New Shop Fronts

ENV 24B - Development in Conservation Areas

ENV 25 - Listed Buildings

Supplementary Planning Documents/Notes

Advertising in St Helens (Note)

Design and Crime SPD (2009)

St Helens Design Guidance SPD (2007)

National Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005)

Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) Sustainable Economic Development (2009)

Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) (2010)

Planning Policy Guidance 19 (PPG19) Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992)

Department for Communities and Local Government: Circular 01/06: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System (DCLG, 2006)

Department for the Environment: Circular 5/94: Planning Out Crime (DoE, 1994)

By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System (DTLR, 2001)

Better Places to Live: A Companion Guide to PPG3 (DTLR and CABE, 2001)

Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 and 2005)

The Human Rights Act (1998)

Good Practice Guidance

Urban Design Compendium (English Partnerships, 2007)

Police Guidance

Secured By Design www.securedbydesign.com

Websites

www.sthelens.gov.uk

www.communities.gov.uk

www.cabe.org.uk

www.buildingforlife.org

Appendix 1

Resources and Further Reading

St Helens

Relevant policies - St Helens UDP (adopted 1998)

GEN 1 - Primacy of the Development Plan

GEN 10 - Advertising in St Helens

RET 6 - Alterations and New Shop Fronts

ENV 24B - Development in Conservation Areas

Supplementary Planning Documents/Notes

Advertising in St Helens (Note)

Design and Crime SPD (2009)

St Helens Design Guidance SPD (2007)

National Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005)

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) Planning for Town Centres (ODPM, 2006)

Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15) Planning and the Historic Environment (1994)

Planning Policy Guidance 19 (PPG19) Outdoor Advertisement Control (1992)

Department for Communities and Local Government: Circular 01/06: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System (DCLG, 2006)

Department for the Environment: Circular 5/94: Planning Out Crime (DoE, 1994)

By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System (DTLR, 2001)

Better Places to Live: A Companion Guide to PPG3 (DTLR and CABE, 2001)

Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 and 2005)

The Human Rights Act (1998)

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Police Guidance

Secured By Design www.securedbydesign.com

Websites

www.sthelens.gov.uk

www.communities.gov.uk

www.cabe.org.uk

www.buildingforlife.org



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