

Part H:

Shopfront Design, Signage, Security

Contents

- H1. General design considerations
- H2. Shopfront design
- H3. Signs and advertisements
- H4. Hot Food Takeaways
- H5. Shopfront Security

This part of the Development Requirements SPD provides further detailed guidance on the interpretation of the following Core Strategy policies, as appropriate:

CS.9 Design and Distinctiveness
CS.23 Retail Development and Main Centres

This section of the SPD provides information and advice on how applicants can ensure that issues of shopfront design, signage, shopfront security and Hot Food Takeaways are achieved in new development.

It will be used by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to help reach decisions on whether to approve or refuse planning applications. Making sure that applications comply with the guidance contained within SPD will make it easier for the Council to grant planning permission. The Council's Planning Policies are set out in the Core Strategy, available at www.stratford.gov.uk/corestrategy

Key words or terms which appear throughout the document, are included in the Glossary.

H1. General design considerations

The character and appearance of buildings and streets can be affected to a surprising degree by shopfront design, signs and advertisements. Ill-considered and overly intrusive designs can have a very detrimental effect. Unfortunately, changes in retail methods which have favoured larger shop units and widespread use of relatively cheaper materials and standardisation of shopfront design have led to a gradual decline in shopfront design. For example, the introduction of plate glass into simple buildings that originally had small windows and pitched roofs has significantly detracted from the character of the townscape.

In addition, national multiples' desire to standardise style through a corporate image does not always benefit the overall shopping environment. The District Council will expect corporate advertising to be adapted to fit buildings and townscape, particularly on listed buildings and in conservation areas.

Poorly designed and positioned signage can also have a detrimental effect on the character of the townscape. For example, where too many signs and shopfronts rival for the attention of a limited number of passers-by, the situation can lead to an escalation in the desire to grab attention. The next new sign has to be bigger and brighter than the last in order to stand out. The escalation tends to create a kind of visual noise that drowns out of all the signs. This leads to an over-intensive and often visually disruptive environment. Such an environment is generally at odds with the overall character of most settlements in the District. The result can also be degradation in the quality and attractiveness of the street as a place for trading and commercial activity. The aim should therefore be for new shopfronts and signage to enhance buildings and townscapes and improve on the previous shopfront or signage that it is replacing.

The overriding principle for the design of shopfronts and the design and placement of advertisements should be restraint.

Signs and shopfronts should work within the overall form and structure of a building and be subservient to it. Well-designed shopfronts and signage in the right place can make a very positive contribution to the quality of townscape.

H2. Shopfront design

There is considerable variation in the design of shopfronts across the District. The starting point for any design should, therefore, be the shop building itself and other shops in the immediate surroundings. Information submitted with an application should show the entire building both as existing and proposed. Supporting information showing examples of other shops in the area of the proposal can also be helpful but should not be used to justify a continuation of poor quality designs. Figures H1, 2 and 4 below illustrate examples of well-designed traditional and modern shopfront design.



Fig.H1 - A good example of traditional shopfront design in Stratford-upon-Avon.

If, for example, the building is symmetrical, the design of the shopfront should maintain the overall symmetry. If the building is in a Classical or Georgian style, for example, some of the characteristic features that define the style should be carried forward into the new design such as proportions of openings, patterns of glazing or moulding profiles.

If a traditional style replacement is to be used, it should be appropriate to the building and locality. It must never appear to be of earlier date than the rest of the building.

Good design does not necessarily need to be traditional and there are many locations where a well-designed modern shopfront (See Fig 2) below will be acceptable but it must be sympathetic to the building above and street scene.



Fig H2. shows a well-designed modern shopfront.

It should be remembered that the shopfront creates a solid visual base to the building above and therefore total removal of a shopfront to open up the frontage will be unacceptable.

The purpose of the shopfront is to display goods for sale and project an image of the retailer. Traditionally, shopfronts include the elements shown in Fig H.3 below.

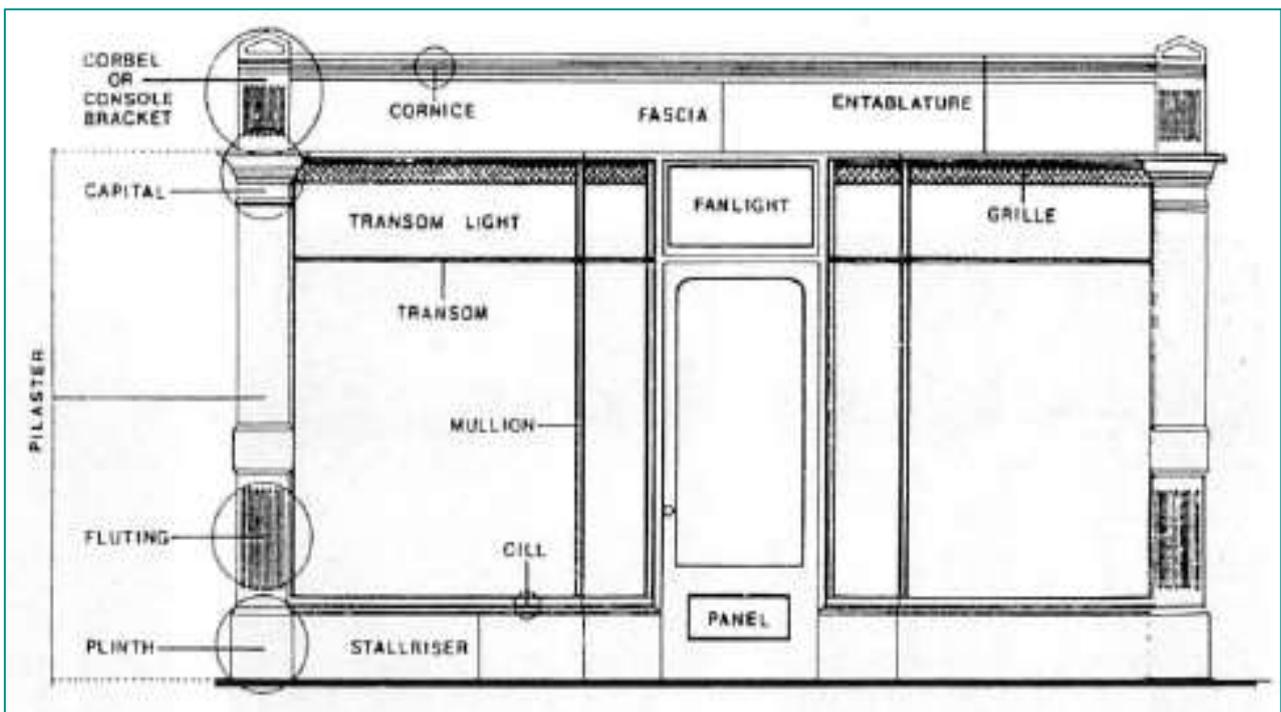


Fig H3 shows elements of a traditional shop front.

Shop front terminology

The various elements of a shopfront have a visual and practical function. The pilasters identify the vertical division between the shopfronts. The fascia provides space for advertising and the cornice gives a strong line at the top of the shopfront and protection from the weather. The stall riser offers protection at ground level and provides a solid base.

Windows

New shop windows should reflect the vertical emphasis of the building above and window subdivisions, mullions and piers should be used for this purpose. Horizontal emphasis leaves upper storeys apparently floating in mid-air and it should be avoided.

A well-lit and well-designed window display provides the best form of advertisement, tells the shopper far more about the goods on sale than an overhead sign, whilst contributing to a lively shopping street. Doorways and recesses make a significant impact on the overall appearance of a building by adding relief to the frontage.

Extensive glazing should be avoided so that a shopfront looks structurally supported whilst also framing the display window. A design with strong vertical lines will hold the customers' eyes for a longer period than those with horizontal emphasis.

Illumination

The highlighting of buildings and pedestrian spaces makes for a lively and safe night-time environment. Shop signs do not need special illumination if the level of street lighting and light from shop windows is adequate. External illumination of buildings and signs will normally be resisted. Careful flood-lighting of key buildings of particular architectural quality may, however, be permitted and in some cases encouraged.

Limited lighting of hanging signs and fascias may be allowed in the case of businesses open in the evening such as restaurants, pubs, theatres and clubs but not in addition to floodlighting. In such cases, the principal purpose of the external lighting should be to make signs legible at night. The lighting should not be a feature in itself and the fittings should be as small and unobtrusive as possible.

Swan necks are large lamps often brass, angled to illuminate the fascia. Although reminiscent of Victorian and early 20th century lamps they often lack the quality of traditional lighting and obscure the fascia signage itself. Swan necks are generally unacceptable.

Stallrisers

A stallriser gives protection to a shop window and creates a solid visual base to a building. Stallrisers often consist of panelled timber or brick forming a deep moulded skirting which is painted. Occasionally glazed tiles or marble are used. The depth of stallriser must be in sympathy with the overall design of the shopfront and the inclusion of a stallriser in the door may also be appropriate. The inclusion of stallrisers has the additional benefit of providing some protection against 'ram raiders'.

Hanging Signs

Depending on the height of the building, brackets for hanging signs should be fixed so that the sign hangs at a level between the ground and first floor windows. In some cases a hanging sign may be positioned between the cill and head of the first floor window. It is very unlikely that a hanging sign positioned above the head of a first floor window will be acceptable.

Hanging signs should be restricted to one per shop or business. The size of hanging signs should be proportionate to the building.

It should not dominate the facade or obscure architectural details or adjacent buildings. Lettering and symbols should be proportionate to the size of the sign. Painted or low relief boards should be used as opposed to 'box' signs.

In the interest of contributing to the liveliness and quality of the street scene, pictorial, iconic or 'object' signs are encouraged, together with well-designed decorative brackets.

Blinds

Where a blind is proposed it should be retractable and designed to be integral with the shopfront and retracts into the fascia. Fixed blinds of the curved plastic type are seldom compatible with the buildings in most commercial areas and will normally be resisted. It should be noted that any non-retractable blind on the front face of a building requires Planning Permission. Also, blinds that include advertisements may require (Express) Advertisement Consent as discussed below.

In all cases the shopfront should remain subservient to the building and appear as a component part of it.

Flags

Flags for purposes of advertisement are not normally acceptable on business premises.

H3. Signs and advertisements

The display of advertisements is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. The following sets out the guidance which the District Council will take account of when determining applications for advertisements.

There are three categories of advertisement consent:

- Permitted adverts (which do not require 'Express' consent from the local planning authority, but which are governed by certain criteria and conditions);
- Deemed Consent adverts (which also do not require consent from the local planning authority as long as they comply with certain restrictions);
- Express Consent adverts which will need the consent of the local planning authority to be displayed via an application for Advertisement Consent (and which might be the subject of other conditions laid down by the authority).

If signage is on a listed building then Listed Building Consent is likely to be needed in addition to any Advertisement Consent that might be required. To help you determine which regulations apply in a particular instance the following link will assist.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advertisements>

The following guidance applies generally to proposed signs and advertisements within the District and especially those that require Express Consent or Listed Building Consent.

The overall principle for the design and placement of advertisements should be restraint.

The aim should be to create an environment in which the buildings and activities themselves are the principal attraction and visual interest, not the signs.

In general, signs and advertisements should be kept within the commercial, 'shopfront' area. This tends to be limited to the ground floor, street frontage of the building.

- Signs should remain secondary to any individual building and help to maintain the character and rhythm of the building and the street frontage;
- Signs should not clutter or dominate the facade of a building nor, by extension, the entire street frontage;
- The colour, material and illumination of signs should be subdued and not harsh or aggressive.

Position and size of signs and advertisement

Signs should be positioned to work within the structure of the shopfront or building.

Signs and advertisements should be positioned below the level of the first floor window cill.

No signs should be displayed on an elevation that does not contain a shop window or main customer entrance. Where no proper frontage or fascia exists, signs are best made up of individual letters fixed to the external wall.

Fascias or signs should not run continuously across two or more adjacent buildings.



Fig.H4 – Traditional shopfront and signage in Shipston-on-Stour.

The lettering and symbols of signs, particularly on fascias, should not exceed 40cm. in height.

For free standing signage within the curtilage of buildings to be acceptable it should be visually harmonious in the street scene and appropriate to the character of the area and not harm highway safety, for example by blocking visibility, causing obstruction or causing undue distraction. Justification for such signage will also be necessary from those applying for it.

Content

As a general rule, the content of all signs should be limited to the name, nature and services of the shop or business. Advertising for particular brands or products should be avoided.

Materials

The materials and construction of signs and advertisements should be robust and of high quality. The signs should appear solid and permanent as opposed to flimsy and temporary. Harsh and shiny or reflective surfaces such as many acrylics and plastics and chrome should be avoided as should bright and garish colours.

It should be noted that where there are examples of in existing poorly designed shop fronts; they will not be used as the rationale to allow further poor design quality. Instead, they should be used as opportunities either to restore traditional shopfront design or enhance and protect the character of the local area.

H4. Hot Food takeaways

With our busy, modern lifestyles, hot food takeaways (Use Class A5) represent a popular, cheap and convenient service. They provide an important complementary use in our local centres and can attract trade and provide local jobs. They can also have a part to play in creating a lively night-time economy. However, it is recognised that hot food takeaways have a greater potential than other retail uses to create disturbance and detract from residential amenity and local character through increased litter, odours, noise, parking and traffic issues. Where there are high concentrations of hot food takeaway shops, this can also have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of a local retail centre by reducing the range of services available to local communities, as other retailers will find the area less attractive as there will be less active frontages, since units will remain closed during daytime resulting in less footfall during the day. The over dominance of hot food takeaways can also negatively impact health and wellbeing by providing easy access to largely unhealthy food. National Planning Policy Guidance considers that "Local Planning Authorities can have a role in enabling a healthier environment by supporting opportunities for communities to access a wide range of healthier food production and consumption choices." (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 53-006-20170728)

Consequently, there is a need to ensure that the District's local retail centres (Stratford Town and the Main Rural Centres) contain a diverse range of facilities and services that meet local needs and are appropriate to the location, retail function and local character. In order to encourage and maintain this diversity, it is important that the concentration of hot food takeaways is managed so that the primary purpose and diversity of our local retail centres are not undermined.

The table below shows the current concentration of Hot Food takeaways within the Town and Main Rural Centres (MRCs) and currently shows a higher concentration of A5 uses in Bidford-on-Avon and Studley than the other MRCs.

Name of settlement	Number of hot food takeaways as at January 2019	Total number of commercial units (including vacant units)	Percentage of total units in use as takeaways
Alcester	6	92	6.52%
Bidford-on-Avon	4	32	12.5%
Henley in Arden	3	83	3.61%
Kineton	TBC		
Shipston-on-Stour	3	75	4.0%
Southam	TBC		
Stratford-upon-Avon	4 + 65 restaurants and cafes	432	0.9%
Studley	14	74	18.92%
Wellesbourne	1	36	2.78%

The NPPF states that, LPAs should prepare planning policies and take decisions to achieve places that promote "strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity".

Within the District Council's adopted Core Strategy Policy CS.23 Retail Development and Main Centres states "Retail (Class A1) should remain the predominant activity at ground floor level on the primary shopping streets in Stratford -upon-Avon town centre as defined in the Policies Map. At least 60% of the total gross floor space at ground floor level on each

primary street should be retained in this use. Some centres are currently not meeting this policy target, for example, there are currently 39 A1 units within Studley village centre, which equates to 52% of the total number of units.

Policy CS.1 Sustainable Development state that "Development should be located and designed so that it contributes towards the maintenance of sustainable communities within the District".

Policy CS.23 requires that retail development and other commercial uses are provided in a manner that helps to strengthen the function and character of the District's centres for the benefits of residents, businesses and visitors. Concentrations of A5 hot food takeaway uses can lead to the loss of vibrancy in a local centre, inhibit the ability of that local centre to meet the everyday shopping and service needs of the community it serves and also ultimately be detrimental to the health of communities in the District. As an example of this the Studley Parish Plan 2017-2020 states that:

"40% of respondents consider the range of shops in Studley to be fairly poor or very poor and many respondents would like to see greengrocers, cafes and restaurants with a decrease in the level of take away restaurants and hairdressers".

When considering whether a proposed hot food takeaway would result in an over-concentration of such uses to the detriment of the vitality and viability of Stratford Town and the Main Rural Centres regard will be had to:

- The number of existing hot food takeaway establishments in the immediate area and their proximity to each other;
- The prevalent local character and distinctiveness of an area;
- The type and characteristics of other uses, such as housing, shops and public houses;
- The size and scale of the proposed unit
- The importance of the location for local shopping, and the number, function and location of shops that would remain to serve the local community;
- The potential benefits of the proposal for the wider community; and
- Hours of operation
- Parking provision and measures to control illegal parking
- Management of odours and fumes
- Management of noise
- Storage of waste and control of litter
- Any other known unresolved amenity, traffic or safety issues arising from existing uses in the area.

Therefore, within Stratford or a Main Rural Centre in order to address these adverse impacts consideration should be given in proposals for hot food takeaways as what proportion of A5 use to other A uses would be appropriate. Consideration should be given to whether more than two A5 units located adjacent to each other would have an adverse impact on the character and vitality of the area (by creating inactive frontages and deterring footfall and hence vitality and also whether there would be any benefits in maintaining at least two non A5 units between individual and/or groups of hot food takeaways. This should be considered on a case by case basis as no two centres are identical in their makeup and character.

For locations outside of Stratford town and the Main Rural Centres such uses will only be appropriate where they do not create or exacerbate the concentration of A5 uses to the detriment of the character and/or amenity of that area.

H5. Shopfront security

The importance of security for business premises is recognised by the Council, but the need for security should not detract from the attractiveness of a streetscape. This is particularly important where retail premises are situated within Conservation Areas or comprise listed buildings.

Security measures may be introduced to a shopfront to combat theft, vandalism and ram raiding. The need for and level of security measures will also depend on many different factors including type of business and location. A shopping area that is well lit and lively in the evening with a mix of businesses is more likely to deter crime than streets that are deserted due to inappropriate security measures installed in retail premises.

Security measures should be considered at the design stage when designing a new shopfront or altering an existing shopfront. The use of smaller paned glass set in mullions and transoms make premises more difficult to break into and enter than large areas of glass. The cost of replacing smaller paned glass can be considerably less.

Glass Type

Building Regulations often requires the use of safety glass in shopfronts, especially where large panes are used. Whilst 'toughened' glass is much stronger than ordinary glass, it can still shatter allowing access into a building. 'Laminated' glass on the other hand will crack, but will still stay intact ensuring that the window remains as a barrier to access. The use of polycarbonate materials is not usually considered an appropriate alternative to glass.

Reinforced stallriser

The stallriser provides protection from ram raiding. If constructed from stone, brick, brick and render or brick with a timber panelled front the stallriser shall be reinforced considerably. The use of recessed doorways provides further protection against ram raiding.

Internal layout

The internal layout of a business can also help to prevent crime. By ensuring that the area behind the window allows for open views into the premises from outside, coupled with sensor controlled lighting, will mean that any activity inside will be on clear display to passers-by.

External roller shutters and grilles

External roller shutters are often proposed to provide security by preventing access to the shopfront itself, thereby protecting the glass. These are usually a pull down shutter that are housed in a surface mounted box that forms part of the fascia or set above or below it. To ensure that the shutter cannot be pulled away from the shopfront the shutter is set into runners that are affixed to the sides of the shopfront. Roller shutters create a blank, unappealing appearance to a shopfront and streetscape. They often invite graffiti or flyposting which gives an area a run down, uncared for appearance. This can invite more crime and leads to fewer people wanting to shop in the area. Solid roller shutters prevent views into the business thus hiding any undesirable activity inside from passers-by. This type of security measures are only acceptable in exceptional circumstances, where their use has been fully justified.

Some external roller shutters are perforated or appear as a lattice grille (sometimes combined with clear polycarbonate panels). These allow for views into the premises and are less likely to be subject to graffiti or fly posters. They are preferable over solid roller shutters but can still appear cumbersome with their large shutter boxes and side rails. Where deemed acceptable, in a high risk area, the shutter box shall need to be internal or be incorporated entirely behind the fascia of the shopfront.

The use of external roller shutters or grilles on listed buildings or within conservation areas will not be acceptable.

Internal grilles

Where there is no alternative to a security screen, an open lattice grille, painted black, fixed internally is preferred. These allow the shopfront in its entirety to be seen as well as views into the premises. Allowing vision into the shop allows for window shopping after closing and offers some security in itself by encouraging people into an area. Planning permission is not required for internal grilles. Listed Building Consent is likely to be required where proposed inside a listed building.

Alarms and cameras

Alarm boxes can act as a deterrent but are often unsightly and bulky items and become an undesirable feature of a streetscape. They need to be positioned as carefully as possible, be small and where possible coloured to match the shopfront or fascia when affixed to the shopfront itself. Where an alarm box is positioned on the face of the building it should be positioned as discretely as possible.

Many parts of the town centres are covered by CCTV cameras avoiding the need for additional CCTV. Where it is essential for a business to have a CCTV camera on its shopfront, they should be positioned as discretely as possible. Cameras come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The smallest practicable camera should be chosen, it is however advisable to seek further advice from a CCTV specialist.