

Appendix 4

Shop front and advertisement design guide

Consultation Draft



*Draft Sandbach Town Centre
Conservation Area and Management Plan*

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Introduction

“The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people” (NPPF para. 56, p 14)

Put simply, design management is not just about making an area look ‘nice’ or conserving our built heritage; just as importantly it is about supporting economic and social objectives. Maintaining and improving the appearance and quality of shopping streets helps to reinforce economic and cultural activity and will contribute toward ensuring the long term wellbeing of the Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area.

Providing design guidance and controlling quality is important for the following reasons:

- Attractive places attract people. This means more spending power, more custom for local retailers and potentially higher rents and property values
- National retailers have corporate branding and security policies. If left unchecked, this erodes the character and distinctiveness of places and leads to poor quality design not tailored to the needs or character of Sandbach.
- Many local retailers seek to over advertise to draw custom in and may undertake inappropriate alterations due to cost. Cumulatively this erodes the character damaging the town’s image
- It is important that the historic significance of the conservation area is considered and protected through high quality design.



Purpose of the guide

Shop fronts are an important element in the character of the street scene of Sandbach conservation area and high standards of design and the use of quality materials will be expected in any new shop front and/or replacement signage. Each building within the conservation area has a unique character which the shop front design should reflect and this should be in harmony with the wider character of the conservation area.

This guidance aims to expand on existing Local Plan policies (and its successor, the forthcoming Cheshire East Local Plan) and to support the proposals set out in the Character Appraisal and Management Plan for the Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area.

Its purpose is to set out the basic principles of good shop front and advertisement design necessary to reverse the general erosion that has occurred in the conservation area. It is envisaged that the guide will set the standards required for future new shop front design and advertising, so that they are clearly understood by those involved in development, including those advising upon and assessing such proposals.

These guidelines can be applied to traditional and modern shop fronts but the focus is upon traditionally designed shop fronts given its focus on the town centre conservation area.

This document should be the starting point in developing shop front or advertising proposals and it is strongly advised that a conservation architect or designer, or one with experience of designing in conservation areas be employed to undertake such design work in the conservation area.



An example of an unsympathetic shop frontage

Policy

This Design Guide has been drafted at a time of transition from the Saved Congleton Local Plan to the proposed Cheshire East Local Plan. It also forms a key part of the draft Management Plan for the Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area.

Key Local Plan policies

GR1 Design policies for new development
GR2 Design
BH3 Change of use or conversion of listed buildings
BH4 The effect of development on listed buildings and their setting
BH5 The effect of development on historic environment assets
BH9 Proposals for development affecting conservations areas

S11 New shop fronts and alterations to existing shop fronts
S12 Installation of solid lath security shutters
S13 Installation of lattice/mesh grille security shutters
S14 Advertisement policies in general
S15 Advertisements in conservation areas
S17 Access for the disabled

It sets out the requirements of national and local planning policy to assist people who are seeking planning consent for changes to shop fronts and for advertising proposals and aims to expand on policy by setting out the basic principles of good shop front and advertisement design.

This design guidance will be subject to community consultation as part of the consultation upon the draft Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan.



The draft Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area and Management Plan

This document should be carefully considered as guidance in any proposals to change shop fronts and/or advertisements in the Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area. It is also available to assist in proposals located outside of the conservation area.

Planning process

Planning permission - is needed for any material change to external appearance of a shop including installing blinds or security shutters, enlarging the size of fascia, or the removal/replacement of original elements of an historic shop front where it materially affects its appearance.

Advertisement Consent - is required for the display of most signs in conservation areas. Within a conservation area, all illuminated signs need consent.

For further information please refer to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) publication **Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers (2007)**

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11499/326679.pdf

For full details see the [The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) and [Circular 03/07: Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#).

Listed Building Consent - is required for any alteration affecting the character or special interest of a listed building. This can include re-painting a shop front in a different colour, or painting the shop front itself if previously not painted, installing a security alarm or extractor fan, altering the shop interior or installing shutters, grilles, blinds and advertisements inside or outside.

In all instances it is strongly advised that you seek preliminary advice by contacting the Development Management Team prior to undertaking any work to a shop premises in the conservation area. Please note that the Planning Department operates a pre-application service that can be accessed via the Cheshire East website.

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/view_a_planning_application/pre-application_advice.aspx

It is also recommended that you seek the specialist design advice from an architect.

Shop Front Development

The town centre as we know it today first began to emerge in the late Seventeenth century, when commerce became a key part of the functioning of towns, requiring purpose designed shop premises. Prior to that, shops were essentially dwellings with part of the ground floor adapted to sell and display goods, often specifically tailored to the type of goods being sold.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth century shop front design became much more sophisticated, evolving as a consequence of the advancement in materials and processes, in particular glass manufacture. It also became more refined and ornate due to a change in architectural tastes/inspiration. Underpinning this however, the founding classical principles remained, achieving a balanced relationship between the shop front and the building as a whole. These elements were based on classical architectural principles and still hold good today - architectural detailing, proportion and quality of materials. These are described in more detail in the following pages.

During the 20th century shop front design began to depart radically from the traditional character that had typified shop fronts for the preceding 100 years. The modernist architectural movement led to art nouveau and deco inspired shop fronts characterised by a palette of new materials and a departure in form, from the vertical to the horizontal. Whilst uncommon in Sandbach town centre, the former Co-op premises in Bold Street and the building accommodating WH Smiths in High Street are examples of buildings from this period.



Victorian corner shop front, corner of Bradwell Road and Chapel Street



Early 20th century Art Deco shop fronts in Bold Street

General Principles of Shop Front Design

A shop front is not the sole element of a building. It sits within a wider architectural structure and it is important that the shop front works positively within the host building. Consequently, the shop front should not be designed in isolation, but should be considered as part of the overall architectural composition of the property, respecting the period and style of the host building.

If a traditional shop front is to be fitted, it must be architecturally and historically accurate. Research is essential: old photographs and records from the library or archives can sometimes be very useful in providing authenticity to the design of the shop front, otherwise there is a danger that a Pastiche design will result.

If remnants of the original shop front are in place then these should be refurbished if at all possible. They can also give clues as to the design of the wider shop front. The

In the conservation area, the majority of shop premises do not stand in isolation and work as part of a grouping. Consequently, the design of the shop front should also take into account the adjacent building styles and shop fronts in the street, the vertical and horizontal elements, the variety and also any recurring characteristics, patterns or details (i.e. is there variety or consistency within the grouping).

Where stand alone landmark or focal buildings do exist, it places added emphasis on securing a quality of design commensurate with the prominence and status of the host building.



Maintaining proportion, rhythm and scale of the traditional street is critical in protecting the character and appearance of the conservation area



A cluttered shop front, with excessive signage and lighting

Components

A quality shop front is made up of various elements and all have a particular function. They form a robust frame to set off the goods inside and provide protection. It is also important that this frame visually supports the upper part of the building. The illustration opposite identifies the components within an overall shop front.

- 1 Pilaster** - these uprights emphasise vertical divisions between the shop fronts but also form the main vertical 'support' in visual terms (acting like 'visual columns')
- 2 Fascia** - this is the area above the glazing between the provides space for advertising;
- 3 Cornice** - the cornice provides protection from the weather and definition to the top of the shop front
- 4 Stall riser** - this gives protection at ground level and provides a solid base for the shop front and building as a whole. It could be in timber, brick, render or in ceramic tile

Together, these constituent elements provide physical and visual support to the building above. Getting any of these elements wrong in detailed design terms, can have serious consequences on the success of the finished design.

Other constituent elements of the shop front are:

- 5 Console/Corbel bracket** - frames the Fascia panel
- 6 Mullion/Transom** - vertical and horizontal glazing bars
- 7 Plinth/base** - the base of the pilaster giving added strength
- 9 Fanlight/ transom light** - glazing above door or Transom
- 10 Cill** -timber ledge that tops the stall riser sits under the glazing

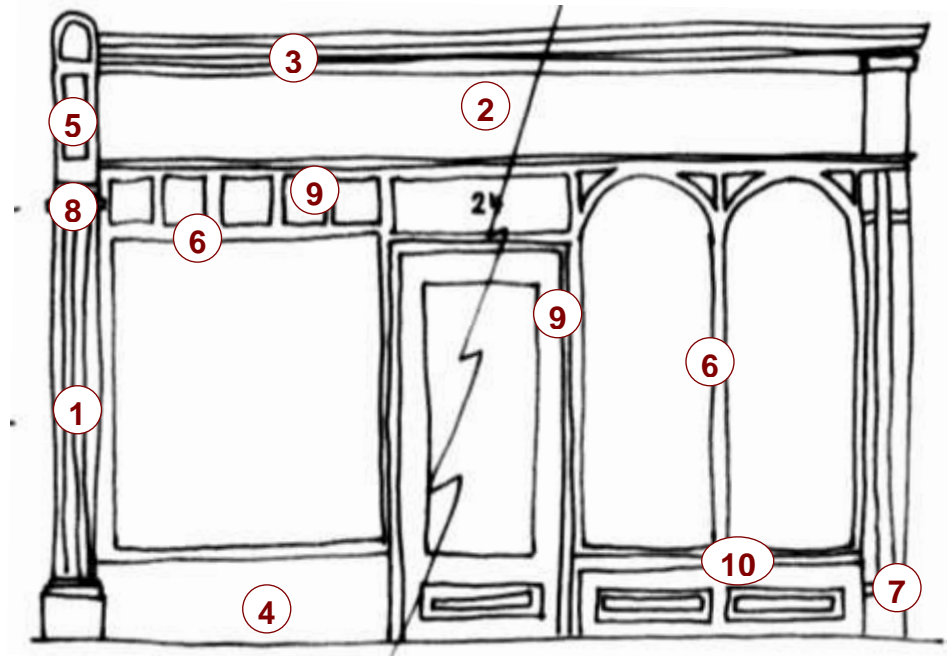


Illustration of a shop front with constituent elements identified



Traditional shop *front* components – stallriser and corbel brackets

Retention as opposed to replacement

Relatively few early shop fronts survive, but where they do, special care is needed to ensure that they are protected and restored sensitively with careful attention to detail. Where the existing shop front contributes to the character of the building or area, or is listed, it should be retained and restored rather than replaced.

More recent shop fronts can also be of interest – designs incorporating Art Noveau or Art Deco detailing are often of high design quality and materials, sometimes forming part of the design of an entire façade and should therefore be retained and reinstated wherever possible.

In instances where, for example, an original Victorian shop front exists in a Georgian building, it does not mean that it is out of keeping and should be replaced with a Georgian replica or a modern shop front. This change has significance in heritage terms, as it shows how the building has evolved over time, with often sympathetic, thoughtful and well considered alteration. It may also demonstrate the change in use of the building or how retail practices have evolved, evidenced in the adaptation



Rexstoration of the original shop front at Godfrey Williams and Sons, Market Place.

Materials and colour

Traditional materials such as painted timber, glass, render, stone, glazed tiles are still the most commonly used materials for good shop fronts and will appear in most better-quality designs.

In the conservation area, painted timber, combined with other traditional materials is the most appropriate material usually matching the features of the upper floors. Traditional shop fronts should not normally have a natural or varnished timber finish and exposed tropical hardwoods are especially unsuitable.

Modern materials such as aluminium, which comes in a variety of powder-coated finishes may be acceptable as a cheap alternative to steel where a contemporary design is appropriate. Natural or anodised aluminium weathers badly and is not acceptable for shopfront frames, doors or windows.

uPVC is wholly inappropriate in the conservation area. Its properties make it unsuitable for use in a conservation area and from a wider sustainability perspective it

Colour can be used to emphasise important elements of the design and to pick up details, such as mouldings, lettering etc. Traditional timber shops were often painted more elaborately than is normal today.

It is helpful to emphasise the location of shop entrances for people with a visual impairment. This can be done through use of colour and textural contrast, on the vertical plane between entrance and the rest of the shop front and underfoot, by emphasising the change from pavement to shop floor.



A modern timber shop front, traditionally designed with ceramic brick stall riser.



A traditional colour has been used on this Victorian shop front, with detailing accented.

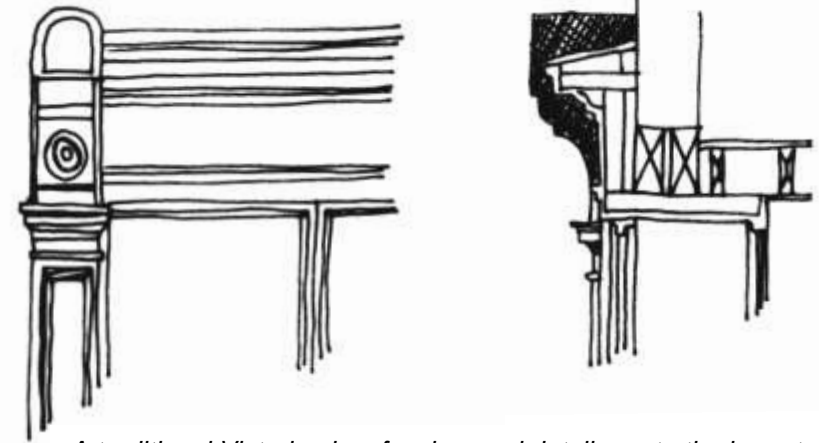


A discordant variety of materials, colours and signage, Welles Street

Advertising: Fascias

Fascias are perhaps the most prominent feature of the shop front. They communicate the business of the shop but also fulfil an important design element in the 'framework' of the shop front. Shop signs are similarly important; depending on their position, design and numbers they can either create clutter or add richness and variety to the street scene. Key issues are:-

- a) **Scale** - it should be in harmony with the other elements of the building. A general rule is it should not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ the height from pavement level to the underside of the fascia.
- b) **Depth** – it should not extend below the head of the pilaster nor above the perceived floor level below or the height of the console/corbel bracket
- c) **Obscuring details** - existing windows and architectural details should not be obscured, altered or defaced by fascias or adverts
- d) **Fascia materials** - acrylic or other shiny materials should be avoided. In most instances a painted timber fascia is the most appropriate with either painted lettering or individual letters of another material.
- e) **Box Fascias** - should generally be avoided.
- f) **Letters** - Individually illuminated letters are preferred and in some cases may not need Advertisement Consent. Highly reflective materials should be avoided.
- g) **Simplicity** - Good contrast and simple lettering will make signage more legible.



A traditional Victorian box fascia panel detail – note the importance of the cornice and mouldings to the overall design quality



The intersection of Cornice, Fascia and Pilaster on a shop front without Console/Corbel bracket

Advertising: Lettering

Lettering should be an integral part of the shop front design and should respect the character of the building and the street within which it is located.

Lettering that is overly dominant amounts to visual 'shouting' within the street

Size - lettering size should be determined by the need to be reasonably legible to shoppers, but not be too large to swamp the fascia or the shop front.

Style This can help to convey the image of the shop but should not conflict with the other elements of the building.

Each shop must have its street number clearly displayed in the shop front. Numbers can be positioned on the fascia, on glazing above doors or on the door.

When separate businesses occupy upper floors, the display of advertisements should be limited to lettering applied to windows. A suitable size and style need not spoil the elevation.



An historic Victorian shop front adapted for a recent new use with timber fascia and hand painted signage.



A Victorian shop front with individually cut and mounted lettering and subtle fascia lighting

Advertising: Projecting signs

Projecting or hanging signs should provide at least 2.4m clearance from ground level to avoid collisions and provide clearance above the pavement. They should be located preferably at fascia level and should not obscure architectural details of the building or the shop front. The signs should be simple and limited to the relevant information relating to the shop and the services provided. In the conservation area and on listed buildings, projecting box signs are generally considered unsuitable. Non-internally illuminated hanging signs are preferred for their traditional appearance and simplicity.

There may be exceptions in instances where building are modern but in such circumstances box type signs should be discouraged in favour of a design of higher quality but executed in a contemporary rather than traditional way.

In most instances, the hanging sign should be located below the level of first floor window cill, and in such a position as not to damage or obscure architectural detail. Higher mounted signs may be considered in exceptional instances dependent upon the circumstances of the building in question



A modern interpretation of a traditional, non-illuminated projecting sign in High Street, with individually mounted lettering and logo

Advertising: Lighting

Illuminated adverts can be beneficial to the night time character of shopping areas and can help to promote feelings of safety within the conservation area, supplementing street lighting and giving the impression of activity. However, inappropriate forms of signage such as internally illuminated box signs and large unit spot lights and trough lights can undermine the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Consequently, the design of illumination of fascias and signage needs very careful consideration. Key principles are:-

- Internally illuminated box signs will not be approved on listed buildings or in conservation areas.
- The use of halo lighting behind individual letters, small spot lights or a compact strip light to illuminate the fascia will result in a better visual appearance.
- The use of individual internally illuminated letters might be considered less intrusive than a box sign in some locations but care is need in the conservation area in terms of size and materials

Lighting within shops can help to enliven the night time character of the conservation area. Where new shop front proposals and the use and design permit, sensitive internal lighting should be considered.

Photo to be added prior to consultation

Advertising: Managing Corporate identity

National High Street businesses tend to produce “manuals” of standard details which, whilst well suited to modern shopping malls and retail parks, are very rigid and unsympathetic in a historic context.

Company logos, signs and standard shop front designs are unlikely to be suitable either to individual buildings or in the context of the conservation area. The character and appearance of the conservation area and indeed of the individual building is more important than uniformity of design to promote a ‘corporate identity’. This is particularly the case in respect to national chains who have little affinity for one particular place and which are ‘fluid’ in terms of their operation, but uncompromising on their house branding.

Care should be taken to adapt the design and incorporate the company logo in the overall design, but do so with positive and respectful approach to the building and conservation area.

High Street brands should be encouraged to co-operate in modifying their standard ‘corporate’ designs to achieve a better quality environment within the conservation area



Corporate signage in the conservation area employing a standardised approach

Security

Many retail streets have been blighted by long stretches of solid aluminium shutters. At night these shut off light from within the shops creating an intimidating atmosphere and encourage graffiti. During the day, their appearance is also harmful to the character and appearance of buildings and streets. The 2012 riots also demonstrated that they are not fail safe against substantial force.

So far, Sandbach has largely been unaffected by pressure in respect to security shutters save for one or two examples and it is important to the character of the conservation area that this situation is maintained. There are alternatives to solid external security grilles:

Security Glass - no detrimental effect on the appearance of the shop. Nowadays toughened and laminated glass can give very high levels of security

Internal Grilles - Internal shutters have no external impact. When they are the open link grille type they allow interaction and light spill onto the street

Other security measures – CCTV and other technology based systems could be used to avoid or compliment physical measures to protect potential entry points. The type and positioning of equipment needs careful consideration

Removable/purpose designed external shutters – these can be acceptable if they are appropriate to the shop and designed to suit its character

External 'transparent' roller shutters - In exceptional circumstances external roller shutters may be acceptable but this must be seen as a last resort and integral to the design of the shop front



External architectural protective screen – Macclesfield Market Place



Internal lattice shutters still enable visual interaction with the street, Bellisima, High Town

As a general principle, proposals that include solid external shutters shall be resisted because of their detrimental impact upon the character of conservation area both during the day and night time.

Canopies and blinds

Historically canvas blinds were an everyday part of most shopping streets and became an integral part of the design of Victorian shop fronts.

Within Sandbach there are a few surviving examples of historic canopies, or evidence within shop fronts of their past existence.

The original purpose was to protect goods from deterioration by sunlight and to protect window shoppers from the elements. They helped to keep the interior of the shop cool, and protected customers from the rain and sun.

The traditional canvas roller blind came into use in the late 18th century, the roller box usually mounted on top of the cornice. However, in the mid-19th century the boxes became integrated into the shop front, above the sign but beneath the cornice. The canvas blind was supported by a frame and metal arms that would retract into the shop front when the blind was not in use.

More recently, from the 1960s, rigid or folding Dutch canopies have become common. The material, usually plastic, is stretched over a metal frame in a curved form and usually permanently fixed in place, obscuring part of the shop front. These are considered inappropriate in a conservation area.

As a consequence of the changing climate, with more extreme weather predicted, the inclusion of appropriate blinds and canopies within shop front design will be increasingly desirable, subject to them meeting the design requirements expressed here.



Fixed blinds detract from both the property and the Conservation Area



A positive and negative example of a shop blind within the same parade of shops – Bold Street

Accessibility

Wherever it is practicable, alterations should ensure access for all through the main entrance by creating a clearly defined, well lit, unobstructed and level approach. Where this is not possible, a secondary accessible entrance should be considered. Only in exceptional circumstances should people with disability be expected to ring a bell or wait to be escorted onto the premises.

New shop fronts or alterations to existing shops should be designed with the following points in mind

Gradient - the entrance to the shop should be level with the pavement. If this is not possible, a non-slip ramp (maximum gradient 1:12) should be provided

Doors - should have a clear opening width of 900mm, with a clear 300mm space adjacent to the opening side of the door. Requirements for double doors are different. Where space is limited, automatic doors are helpful. Traditional shops may choose power-assisted doors, or automatic doors operated via a push plate.

Steps - Where there are unavoidable steps, these should be easy going, have a handrail on both sides and should be visible by including contrasting step edgings.

Recesses - on many traditional shop fronts the entrance is recessed. These recesses create variety and rhythm in the shopping street. However, if open at night, they should be adequately lit to ensure safety. The recess can also help to

Photo to be inserted prior to consultation

Example of an accessible threshold within a traditional shop front. This may be difficult to achieve on many traditional frontages with steps, where alternative measures may need to be proposed