

Leading in Design: Shopfronts & Signs

Supplementary Planning Document

January 2006





Leading in Design:
Shopfronts & Signs

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Prepared by the Conservation & Design Team
CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
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Foreword

A rich diversity of shops has led to attractive streets that have created a unique historic character. This image and quality must be maintained to continue to attract visitors and shoppers, especially at a time of increasing competition from other town centres.

The design of shopfronts and signs is crucial to this character. They should enhance the character of the street as well as serving the needs of the trader and customer.

Chamwood Borough Council is dedicated to improving the quality of the environment. The Council is conscious of changing patterns in retail activity, the commercial need to advertise and increasing pressure for corporate signage. This Guide seeks to reconcile these pressures with maintaining and enhancing the character of our towns and villages.

The document sets out the principles of good shop sign and shopfront design. It acknowledges the investment made by companies in promoting their own brand and image. It asks those companies in turn to recognise the investment made by the Council in conserving and restoring the character of places. This character plays a significant part in their commercial vitality and viability.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Vincent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cllr Jill Vincent,
Council Design Champion

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Planning Policy Background
 - 2.1 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
 - 2.2 Regional
 - 2.3 Charnwood
3. Characteristics of Charnwood
4. **General considerations**
5. **Design principles**
6. **Style and design**
7. Details of a shopfront
8. **Signs**
9. **Shopfront security**
 - 9.1 Shutters & grilles
 - 9.2 Internal grilles
 - 9.3 Demountable grilles
 - 9.4 Ram raiding
 - 9.5 Alarm boxes
 - 9.6 New shopfronts
10. **Over the shop**
11. **Access for all**
12. Canopies & blinds
13. Cash dispensers
14. **Lighting**
15. Estate Agents boards
16. Garages & car sales sites
17. Retail warehousing & industrial estates
18. Advanced warning signs
19. Submitting an application
20. Charnwood Design Awards
21. Additional sources of information

Appendix I. Local Plan Policies.

I. Introduction

This guidance sets out the general principles that should be followed in order to achieve good shop sign and shopfront design. The Council recognises that companies make an investment in promoting their business and image. In turn we ask those companies to realise that the Council and other public bodies make an investment in conserving and restoring the character of our streets. This character makes a significant contribution to the commercial vitality and viability of an area. It outlines criteria to be followed in recognising and respecting the essential character of our streets in order to achieve a balance between the extremes of too much control, which can result in a stifling affect, and too much commercial freedom which results in the visual chaos which devalues many places.

Streets are made up of individual buildings, each with their own character and place, within an overall townscape, whose collective characteristics are greater than the sum of its parts. This is due to the effect of topography, light, weather, landscape and buildings, which often have a strong impact on their design. These differences will require distinct and responsive design solutions from the applicant.

This document outlines the Council's aim for improving the standard of shopfront design and advertisement display throughout the Borough. The objectives of this design guidance are not to introduce additional control beyond the current provisions but to assist applicants in the preparation of plans for shopfront works and advertisement proposals in the Borough's towns and villages, and to assist the Local Planning Authority in carrying out its duty to control development in accordance with relevant policies and government guidance.

2. Planning Policy Background

The following briefly sets out the planning policy background within which this guidance is written.

2.1 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Draft PPS1

This guidance emphasises that high quality development through good design makes a vital contribution to the creation of safe, sustainable and livable communities. Development proposals should not be conceived as short term and should be judged by their long-term impact.

By Design

Advocates the use of design guides to steer development proposals and identifies shopfronts as a good example. The use of guidelines enables the Council to communicate its commitment to all in the development process.

PPG6 Town Centres and Retail Development

Along with its companion guide "Going to Town", PPG6 stresses the important contribution that good design, in terms of appearance and function, makes to the vitality of not only the main shopping streets but also those streets leading to the town centre.

PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment

Promotes the retention of shopfronts of historic or architectural merit and states that early 20th century examples, in particular Art Deco designs are of equal importance as earlier examples from the 18th and 19th centuries.

2.2 Regional

Planning Guidance for the East Midlands advocates the use of 'design led' approaches to development, which take account of historic character. It also stresses the need for architectural design to be functional and to support vitality, yet respect local building character.

2.3 Charnwood

Community Strategy

The Community Strategy identifies that the quality of the built environment makes an important contribution to the economy of the Borough. The improved design of shopfronts, entrances and forecourts will contribute to the facilities and activities on the high street being more accessible. Well designed shopfronts will contribute to visually rich high streets in the Borough's towns and villages.

Corporate Plan

This document identifies the aims and objectives of the Council to improve the built environment for everyone. As a priority the Council seeks to protect the look and feel of our towns and villages, of which shopfronts make up a significant part.

Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out the basis on which the Council will view and determine planning applications. Policy ST/1 ii and iii state the Council's aim to protect and improve the quality of the built environment of Charnwood and is allied with policy ST/1 xiv and xv to maintain the viability and vitality of shops and services. In the majority of cases the following policies may need to be considered before the design of any shopfront is undertaken.

- EV/1 Design
- EV/4 Alteration or extensions to listed buildings
- EV/10 Development in conservation areas
- EV/11 to 15 Advertisements

- EV/16 Access for people with disabilities
- CA/11 Use of upper floors
- CA/12 and 13 Shopfront design and security

Appendix I sets out these policies in full.

Leading in Design (draft)

This document builds on the design policies set out in the Chamwood Local Plan and will contribute to the development of more effective approaches to securing good design in the emerging Local Development Framework. The guide is also intended to support the implementation of the community strategy, Chamwood Together, by providing a set of principles that will inform the physical development implicit in the initiatives and actions of all partners in the local strategic partnership.

3. Characteristics of the Borough

From the eighteenth century onwards, high street buildings were often designed with the shopfront as an integral part of the building and shopfront design was generally based on classical orders of architecture, with great emphasis placed on balancing proportion and harmony in the design. The best of these show a wealth of imaginative detail applied to all parts of the shopfront. Fascias and cornices in particular are richly decorated and modeled. The towns and villages of Chamwood have some excellent examples of this kind.

Many of the shopfronts found in the Borough are the product of late nineteenth century insertions into older buildings. In most cases these are designed in harmony with the architecture of the existing building, and make a significant and distinctive contribution to the character of the street scene. As an approach to shopfront design, the use of standard details to create a corporate image is alien to the European tradition of individuality and concerns for order, proportion and harmony.

Loughborough has a considerable number of 1920's and 1930's buildings with commercial ground floors in the town centre. Although inter-war shopfront design tended to avoid embellishment it nevertheless managed to create pattern and interest. They were often constructed of mahogany, chrome, bronze and marble, but still formed part of the design of the entire facade. Loughborough town centre has a significant number of these, but very few of examples of this once popular style have survived elsewhere.

4. General considerations

Existing resources in the form of shopfronts which are appropriate to their location, of historic or architectural value, or which contribute to the character of the building or area should be retained and restored. Proposals for their alteration or replacement will only be considered appropriate where such proposals in the view of the Local Planning Authority represent an improvement of the building or street scene.

The streets of the borough have a huge variety of building styles and each proposal will require an individual approach, considering the overall architectural composition of the building and take account of the rhythm and scale of upper floor windows and features as well as any elements which are common throughout the building

It is desirable in environmental terms to protect the best resources from unnecessary loss. Material resources should not be discarded just to reflect changing fashion or corporate image.

5. Design principles

Successful shopfront design will require the following principles to be considered:

- Proposals for shopfronts and associated advertising material should not be an exercise undertaken in isolation. The context of the site must be understood first.
- A design, which is suitable for one building, may be totally out of place on another, and uniformity of design should be avoided. This is of particular concern where a business occupies adjacent buildings of differing design.
- The shopfront should always be considered as part of the whole building design and should be sympathetic to the existing architecture and materials. The character, scale, proportion and detailing above the shopfront must therefore be respected
- Shopfronts should also respect the character of adjacent properties but should not aim to unite buildings of different architectural styles.
- The detailing, modeling and decoration of older shopfronts is particularly valuable in the street scene and should be retained. It is important to repair and maintain these shopfronts using the appropriate detailing and materials.
- New shopfronts should provide visual interest and be well designed. They should add quality and vitality to the street scene.
- There is no need to remove existing shopfronts, which are of historic or architectural value, changing fashions can be expressed through displays and dressings.

6. Style and Design

Traditional shopfronts are generally more appropriate in an historic building or historic street. This does not necessarily mean that alternative approaches to design will be refused, but the introduction of large areas of featureless plate glass should be avoided, as it will give rise to the building above appearing to have little visual support and the scale of the street being disrupted.

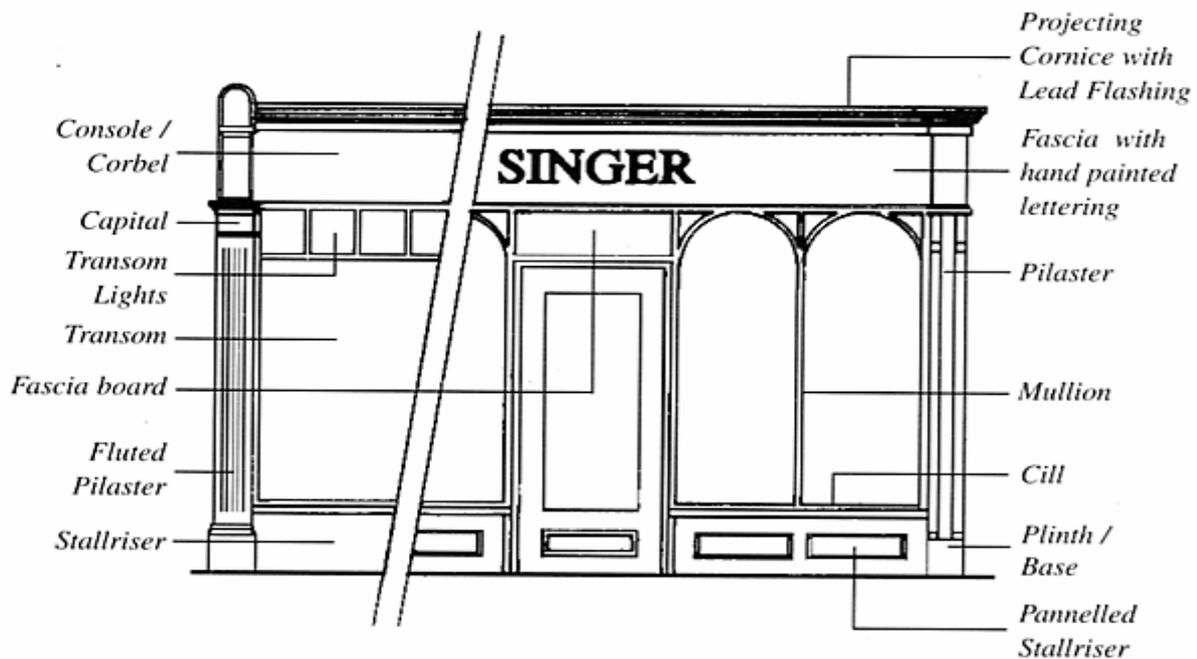
Attractive shopfronts can be designed using the full potential of glass to create modeled surfaces but the design needs to be considered in relation to the structure of the whole building.

Displays The internal design and layout of shops should ensure that the interior does not turn its back on the shop window and consequently deaden the street scene. Displays and window dressing can be used to express changing fashions, rather than altering a shopfront.

Forecourts The display of goods or signs on forecourts gives the street a cluttered appearance, can cause problems to disabled people using the premises and may contravene highway regulations. The use of forecourts for advertisement signs or displays will be discouraged.

7. Details of a Shopfront

It is also important to consider the details of the individual component parts that make up a shopfront. The following notes set out the general design principles for these.



Fascia

Depending on the buildings character a fascia should have a height of between 250 – 450mm. It needs to be incorporated as a design feature and where a traditional design approach is taken stop ends or console brackets need to be introduced. This will help to emphasise the shop name and information displayed on the fascia.

Excessively high fascias, that look “stuck on” should be avoided. Where an internal ceiling would be visible and needs to be disguised, the introduction of glazing bars and coloured glass maybe a better solution rather than creating a high fascia.

Cornice

A bold cornice is required to separate the comparatively large area of glass from the building above. A strong definitive line that projects from the face of the building will help to provide weather protection. A cornice will often need to project further than initially envisaged to provide the required visual break.

Pilasters

Together with the cornice and fascia, pilasters provide visual support for the upper part of the building and act as a frame for the display and entrance.

Console/corbels

These provide a head to the pilasters, an end to the fascia and cantilevered support for the cornice. Sometimes they are elaborate in design, employing classical scroll or ‘S’ shape that is tighter at the bottom and more open at the top. When viewed in side elevation they have a tapered appearance to provide a visual bracket of support.

Stallriser	Incorporating a stallriser will provide a solid base and dictate the vertical proportions of the shop window. It will also provide display space at a suitable level and a degree of built in security. Normally they should be constructed using a material related to the building or the design of the shopfront itself.
Windows and doors.	Using mullions and glazing bars of a sufficient depth will help to create the right scale and allow a relationship between the display window and the smaller windows on the upper floors to be obtained. Setting back entrances will add visual interest but any recess should be minimal (max 600mm) have splayed and glazed reveals and be well lit. Any recess greater than 600mm should be closed off at night by a metal gate/grill of transparent design, to allow for vision into the recess and for light from the shop to illuminate the adjacent footway.
Materials & finishes	Wood is normally the most appropriate material for traditional shopfronts, because of its versatility in making attractive shapes and ability to receive a painted finish, which can freshen up or change the image without detriment to the character of the whole building. Properly protected and maintained softwoods will perform quite adequately, provided that the correct techniques are used in construction. For certain shopfronts such as Loughborough's 1930's buildings, metal may be an appropriate material. In most instances the use of plain aluminum or UPVC will be unacceptable.
Colour	The use of colour needs to be considered as part of the design process as it can have an important bearing on the character of the building. If the property is 'listed' then repainting may require Listed Building Consent. In general a single colour should be used for all the major elements of the shopfront, to avoid an over fussy or disjointed weakening of its appearance and to emphasise its function of supporting the upper floors.

8. Signs

In certain locations a compromise on the design of new signs may need to be made and an innovative individual approach required so that corporate images suit the characteristics of a particular place.

Signs have a significant effect on the appearance of a building and they should be considered as an integral part of the design of the shopfront and the building overall. Good signage can improve individual buildings and may enhance the appearance of the street, by adding variety.

Whilst use of corporate images with standard details may suit modern shopping malls it may be rigid and unsympathetic elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, this approach may be appropriate for posters, vehicles and TV adverts, but is alien to the European tradition of individuality and concerns for order, proportion and harmony. In certain locations modifications to these ideals may need to be made.

Projecting signs that have a silhouette will add visual interest to the street as well as provide information. Window signs may be appropriate where upper floors are occupied by a separate business.

Lettering should contribute to the character of the street by being designed to relate to the space on the fascia. Lettering that overcrowds the fascia with too much information should be avoided and should not be excessive in relation to the width and height of the fascia.

9. Shopfront Security

Where security is known to be a problem, arrangements should be made to incorporate necessary security measures within the design of the shopfront. These installations should not detract from the shopfront, the building or the character of the street.

The Borough Council aims to protect and enhance the character of the shopping streets by requiring high standards of shopfront design. At the same time it is recognised that there is a need for shop security and the following section gives guidance on acceptable ways of achieving this. Security is all too often an after thought, which ultimately leads to a “tacked on” effect of various items. This needs to be avoided.

9.1 Shutters and Grilles

The installation of roller shutters requires planning permission. Whilst the need for security is recognised, the obtrusiveness of poorly designed and located shutters and grilles and their visual impact on the street scene, causes concern. It is important that the installation of security shutters or grilles should not detract from the design of the shopfront and building or be visually detrimental to the character of the street.

The location of shutter boxes is particularly important and they need to be incorporated within the existing shopfront. Either recess the shutter box behind the fascia, allowing the shutter to be rolled down the inside or outside of the shop window, or, as an alternative, hide the box behind a blacked out top light.

Where buildings are listed, sited within a conservation area, or included on the local interest list, then special consideration must be given to the impact of shutters and their effect on the building. The Borough Council will not approve security fittings, which would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of these buildings and their locations. In some cases, external shutters of any kind may not be acceptable.

On other buildings, planning permission for the fitting of roller shutters and security grilles will be granted provided that all the fittings are colour-coated to match the shopfront, designed to be unobtrusive during hours of business and allow visibility into the shop when in place. Shutters often involve the siting of a permanent bulky housing high up on the fascia. These are unsightly and their incorporation into the design of the shopfront needs to be carefully considered, respecting existing architectural details. Solid shutters, which totally obscure shopfronts during closing hours are not desirable as they tend to have a deadening effect on the character and vitality of the street, cutting out light and interest. They also allow thieves who have entered from the rear of the premises to remain undetected.

9.2 Internal Grilles:

Where security is a problem, more visually satisfactory ways of safe-guarding the contents of a shop are the use of laminated glass, specialist safety/security adhesive films or internal open lattice grilles.

To minimise the visual impact of grilles, locating them inside the shop is preferable. Open lattice shutters will permit a view of the shop display and interior, which is a significant deterrent to thieves. The individual shutters can then be made to fit the subdivisions of the existing shop window.

Internal grilles do not require planning permission. However if the shop is part of a Listed Building, listed building consent may be required.

9.3 Demountable Grilles

An alternative to a roller shutter is the use of individual steel framed screens, hung and locked in position on the shopfront. These can be designed to complement the shopfront through the use of existing details and colours. An individually designed grille, if done well, may make a positive contribution to the visual character of the area.

The guidance channels should either be concealed or painted to match the shop frame or be removable during the day. It is important that the grilles are designed in such a way that the architectural detail of the shopfront is not obscured. A disadvantage of this type of grille is that they need to be stored when not in use.

Where a recessed doorway is an integral part of the design and needs to be retained, it can be closed off at night, by use of a metal gate.

9.4 Ram-raiding

Ram-raiding may be a problem, but can be overcome by incorporating steel or reinforced concrete into the construction of the stallriser. The face of the stallriser could then be covered with timber, masonry or tiles in an appropriate manner.

9.5 Alarm Boxes

A brightly coloured box poorly located on the face of the building can be obtrusive. They can be quite easily be incorporated into the design of the shopfront, but still be maintained as a visual deterrent. This can be achieved by recessing the box behind a panel in the fascia with alarm details still visible.

9.6 New Shopfronts

When designing new shopfronts many of the above aspects can be incorporated. Traditional shopfronts with smaller panes of glass, transoms, mullions and stallrisers can be more difficult to break into than large areas of unrelieved glazing. Smaller panes of glass are cheaper and easier to replace. Opening up spaces behind the window will allow a better view of what is going on inside. This approach is now being widely adopted by high street banks and building societies.

10. Over the shop

Unless utilised by the ground floor business then the upper floors should be considered for alternative independent use for residential purposes or by another business. To enable this, an independent access may need to be considered as part of the design of a new shopfront.

Much of the floorspace above shops is seriously underused. Evidence of this is often plain to see in poor decoration and lack of routine maintenance. Such neglect may lead to undetected deterioration of the building and subsequently expensive repairs. The alteration or replacement of a shopfront presents the owners or occupiers the opportunity to consider the future of the whole building, particularly access to the upper floors.

11. Access for all

The Council will require all applicants to consider improvements for access as part of proposals for alterations or improvements.

A wide entrance with a panel at the side of the door will allow easier access to the handle for those in wheelchairs. Clear opening width of a doorway to be a minimum of 850mm. The use of a kick plate will protect the base of the door from wheels

Doorways with a recess will allow for a ramped access for people with pushchairs, in wheelchairs or with walking difficulties. An ideal gradient would be 1:20 but up to 1:12 is acceptable.

Projections such as signs and canopies need to be at least 2.1m above the pavement. A stallriser will clearly define the shop window. In most places frontages will need to be kept clear of obstructions such as 'A' boards and displays. Highway regulations need to be considered when determining the location of a projecting sign.

Further information on how to improve access is set out in the Council's guidance document 'Making it Easy'

12. Canopies & Blinds

Traditional retractable blinds installed to protect the shop goods and designed as an integral part of the shopfront will be acceptable.

Blinds are often seen as an additional advertising device rather than to protect goods in which case advertising consent may be required. Dutch blinds or balloon canopies tend to be less retractable, often obscuring the fascia and introducing a dominant shape which maybe out of character with the street. The use of blinds as additional advertising will generally be unacceptable.

13. Cash Dispensers.

Cash dispensers can be particularly detrimental to the appearance of a shopfront, due to their garish surrounds. Wherever possible they should be accommodated within a lobby arrangement in order to avoid a dominant impact on the character of the building.

14. Lighting

Using spot lights for individual signs should be avoided as far as possible. The use of architectural lighting to illuminate the whole building will be encouraged, particularly where they contribute a positive character to the street. This will help to increase the town centre's attractiveness at night and in the winter months.

The most appropriate form of lighting is that which gives the elevation a subtle visual identity. This is often best achieved by placing low intensity lights beneath the eaves, which wash the whole elevation. It is particularly important that the lights are mounted so that glare is avoided, and that the fittings and wiring themselves do not impinge on the appearance of the building.

Display lighting within the shop window will contribute vitality and character to the street by adding human scale and a degree of intimacy after dark.

Where the need for signs to be individually illuminated is necessary, it will be acceptable in some instances to use trough lights.

15. Estate Agents Boards.

It is recognised that it is desirable to see properties sold or let as soon as possible and that advertising is needed to achieve this, but one of the most visually intrusive elements in the street can be the clutter of Estate Agents Boards which often dominate the view above ground level.

The display of large 'V' boards fixed to first floor windows can detract considerably from the appearance of individual buildings and the character of the street. In conservation areas the Council wishes to see a more sympathetic approach and discourage the use of 'V' boards and seeks agents co-operation to constrain the size of boards in relation to the scale of the building.

16. Garages and Car Sales Sites.

Petrol filling station forecourts and car sales site can be particularly intrusive and the approach to advertising may need to be tempered to the circumstances of the location.

Canopies by their form and scale are intrusive which can be further exacerbated by advertising, lighting and facilities signs. Proposals for advertising at these locations will be expected to respect the character of the area in which it is situated.

17. Retail Warehousing and Industrial Estates.

Advertising in connection with this type of development is often gross in terms of its size, design, materials and illumination. Particular care should be taken to avoid an over dominant impact.

Signing needs should be considered as a complementary part of the building design and limited to the necessary identification of the business and its services. Signs on the rear and side of units which face the public highway or open space should be avoided.

18. Advanced Warning Signs.

Advanced warning signs add to the visual clutter within the street scene and have little justification other than to attract additional trade. Such advertising is generally unacceptable and is unlikely to be approved.

It is recognised that street traders in secondary side street may have problems in drawing attention to their premises and in certain circumstances a single unified well-designed sign may be acceptable, but generally these should be avoided.

19. Submitting an application

In order that the Local Planning Authority may process applications as expeditiously as possible it is essential that clear and accurate information to explain how the finished scheme will look in context of the existing façade and adjoining premises, is submitted in support of applications. The design of a shopfront needs to take account of the whole building of which it is a part and this may put constraints on the design, for example on the acceptable position of the entrance. In the majority of instances the Planning Authority will require:

- A drawing of the whole building, existing and proposed, accurately recording the position of features such as cornices, fascias, pilasters and console brackets on the building itself and the adjoining premises so that the overall relative effect to the adjacent buildings can be readily understood.
- A section drawing of the shopfront showing its profile and position relative to the upper part of the building.

- Plans, elevations and sections at a scale of 1/20, which are the best way of showing architectural details and features such as pilasters, cornices and windows.
- That minor elements such as alarm boxes and letterboxes that are often an afterthought, are indicated on the drawings.
- Samples of colours or confirmation of BS colour numbers, including one coloured copy of the proposals.
- For advertisement consent, drawings showing the whole shopfront elevation with the size and design of all letters and symbols accurately shown, together with details of the colour scheme, should be submitted.

20. Charmwood Design Awards

The Charmwood Design Awards Scheme recognises excellence in design. If you would like to enter your shopfront for an award or would like more information please contact the Conservation & Design Team.

Sources of additional information

Shopfronts and Advertisements in Historic Towns	English Historic Towns Forum 1991
Book of Details & Good Practice in Shopfront Design.	English Historic Towns Forum 1993
Charnwood Local Plan	Charnwood Borough Council 2004
PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment	Department of the Environment 1994
PPS1 – Creating Sustainable Communities	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Forthcoming
By Design- Urban Design in the Planning System	DETR 2000
PPG6 Town Centres and Retail Development	Department of the Environment 1996
Going to town – Improving town center access	DTLR 2002
Urban Design for Retail Environments	British Council for Shopping Centres 2002
Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands.	Government Office for the East Midlands 2004
Care and Maintenance of Shopfronts	National Association of Shopfitters
Charnwood - Leading in Design (draft SPD)	Charnwood Borough Council 2004
Making it Easy (draft SPD)	Charnwood Borough Council 2004

Appendix I - Local Plan Policies

Design

POLICY EV/I

The Borough Council will seek to ensure a high standard of design in all new developments. Planning permission will be granted for new development which:

- respects and enhances the local environment including the scale, location, character, form and function of existing settlements and the open and undeveloped nature of the countryside;
- is of a design, layout, scale and mass compatible with the locality and any neighbouring buildings and spaces;
- utilises materials appropriate to the locality;
- provides positive and attractive built frontages to existing or proposed public spaces including roads, footpaths, waterways and areas of public open space;
- safeguards important viewpoints, landmarks and skylines;
- uses the landform and existing features in and around the site, such as woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, important buildings and structures imaginatively as the focus around which the new development is designed;
- safeguards the amenities of adjoining properties, particularly the privacy and light enjoyed by adjoining residential areas;
- meets the needs of all groups, including the disabled; and
- minimises the opportunity for crime to create a safe and secure environment.

PPG1 confirms that the appearance of proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are material considerations in the determination of planning applications. Good design of buildings and the public spaces they define can make a positive contribution to the environment. The Borough Council will seek to ensure a high standard of design in all new developments. Within areas of distinctive or attractive character, such as Conservation Areas and Areas of Particularly Attractive Countryside, new development will be expected to respect and enhance the established urban form or the special character of the surrounding landscape. Where the traditional character of an area has been lost or diminished through inappropriate development or a key landmark site is involved, encouragement will be given to experiment, originality and initiative in the formulation of a design solution capable of achieving positive improvements to the locality. Specific guidance concerning matters of design is contained where appropriate within the relevant chapters. The Borough Council intends to produce local design guides to outline the key defining local characteristics for various parts of the Borough. These will be published as Supplementary Planning Guidance and will provide advice and guidance for applicants on design issues.

Alterations or Extensions to Listed Buildings

POLICY EV/4

Planning permission for alterations or extensions to listed buildings, where required, will only be approved where the work is in keeping with the special architectural or historic interest of the building or its character or setting.

Where proposed alterations to a listed building require planning permission it is important to ensure that they are undertaken sensitively and do not harm the special character of the building or its setting.

Development in Conservation Areas

POLICY EV/10

In determining planning applications for development in designated conservation areas the Council will preserve or enhance their special character or appearance by:

- refusing permission for development involving the demolition of buildings unless it can be demonstrated that their condition is such that their repair, renovation or adaptation would be impracticable or that their removal or replacement would enhance the appearance or character of the area;
- requiring, where development would involve demolition, sufficient details of how the site will be treated, and of any scheme for redevelopment of the site, so that the effect of the proposal on the character of the conservation area can be properly assessed. Conditions may be imposed to ensure redevelopment commences as soon as practicable following demolition;
- requiring the retention of materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which contribute to the character of the conservation area;
- requiring the height, size, design, roofscape, plot width, visual appearance and materials used in any new development (including alterations and extensions to existing buildings) to respect the character of the surrounding area and make a positive contribution to the general character of the conservation area;
- requiring sufficient details of any proposal, including changes of use, so that the effect of the proposal on the character of the conservation area, both visually and in terms of any potential noise or other environmental intrusion, can be properly assessed. Detailed proposals may also be required on sensitive sites adjoining a conservation area. Alternatively design briefs will be prepared to guide development in the most sensitive locations;
- retaining the historic street pattern, traditional buildings lines, open spaces of special character (including gardens), other spaces of public value, important trees and water features, footways, footpaths and kerblines which contribute to the character of a conservation area; and
- encouraging the redesign or replacement of buildings, structures and features which are visually detrimental to the character of a conservation area.

Within Chamwood there are currently 36 designated conservation areas covering the majority of the historic centres of the main settlements. This policy establishes detailed criteria against which proposals for development within conservation areas can be fully assessed.

The Borough Council will liaise with the responsible agencies for the provision, retention and reinstatement of traditional paving materials, street furniture, lamp standards, brackets, bollards, railings, boundary walls, and telephone kiosks which help to form the character of a conservation area and extending their use where appropriate.

Advertisements

POLICY EV/11

Express consent for the display of advertisements and signs will be approved unless the proposal would be either:

- damaging to local amenities by reason of clutter, scale, siting, design or illumination; or
- dangerous to public safety through the introduction of signs likely to create a hazard by distracting or confusing road users.

Without proper control, advertisements may damage the character of the environment through the introduction of an unsightly clutter of signs unsympathetic to the scale, character and architecture of the locality. In some instances poorly designed and located signs may potentially cause a hazard to public safety by distracting or confusing road users. However, properly located and well designed advertising can add to the colour, interest and vitality of the street scene.

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992, all advertisements, other than certain excepted categories, require "express consent" before they can be lawfully displayed. The above policy seeks to ensure that advertisements requiring the express consent of the local planning authority are compatible with interests of local amenity and public safety.

The Borough Council will have particular regard to the need to protect and enhance the appearance of the main road entrances to settlements and will use its powers to control existing and proposed advertisements in these locations. Main approaches to settlements by road can play an important part in defining the image of a settlement. In particular unsightly and inappropriate advertising in these locations can have a substantial detrimental effect. Consent to display advertisements along the main road entrances to settlements in the Borough will be restricted to:

single signs of traditional construction denoting the location of public houses, petrol filling stations and other facilities convenient to travellers;

advance warning signs (including signs for tourist features) only where they would not be detrimental to public safety and would not result in a proliferation of signs

Advertisements Above First Floor Level

POLICY EV/12

Express consent will not be granted for the display of advertisements above the level of first floor window sills where they would be poorly related to the building or surrounding buildings by reason of their scale or design.

Advertisements should wherever possible be restricted to areas at or below first floor level. Signs located above this level can often appear unsightly and incongruous in relation to both the particular building and the surrounding street scene.

Advertisements on Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas

POLICY EV/13

Express consent to display advertisements and signs within conservation areas or on or close to a listed building will only be granted where:

- the design, scale and siting of the sign would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area; and/or
- the proposal would not adversely effect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building or its character or setting.

The Borough Council has a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and will apply more rigorous standards over the control of advertisements in these areas. An unnecessary proliferation of poorly designed and inappropriate signs can have a significant detrimental impact on the appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas.

In particular, internally illuminated box fascia signs can often have a damaging effect on the character of conservation areas and will normally be inappropriate on listed buildings. The Borough Council will pay special attention to the likely impact of proposals for illuminated signage within conservation areas or on or close to listed buildings.

Areas of Special Control for Advertisements

Environmentally sensitive areas of the Borough are designated Areas of Special Control for Advertisements; these include most Conservation Areas and rural areas outside the main settlements. In these areas more stringent standards apply in respect of the size of advertisements limiting the scope for deemed consent. In determining applications for express consent in these areas the Council will be particularly concerned to ensure that advertisements remain compatible with the character and quality of the surrounding rural, or historic environment.

Advertisement Hoardings

POLICY EV/14

Express consent for the display of advertisement hoardings or posters will not be approved outside the limits to development, within smaller villages or in primarily residential areas.

In commercial and industrial areas, proposals for advertisement hoardings will be approved where the hoarding:

- is in keeping with the scale, form and character of the building onto which it will be placed or surrounding buildings, and
- would not, by virtue of its size or siting, be seen as an overdominant feature in the streetscene.

Advertisement hoardings, because of their size and character, can have a significant impact on the character of an area. They will only be approved where they do not harm the character or appearance of the area or where as an interim measure they would be the only practical means of screening an unsightly building or area of land. Such advertising will usually be out of place in the countryside and many of the smaller villages in Charnwood.

Projecting Signs

POLICY EV/15

Express consent for projecting box signs will only be approved where the sign:

- by reason of its size, bulk and method of illumination (if any) is in keeping with the character and appearance of the frontage onto which it would be placed and the wider streetscene;
- would not result in an impression of clutter in the streetscene bearing in mind the presence of existing projecting signs in the locality.

By their nature projecting signs can be particularly obtrusive in the street scene, especially where they are too large or bulky for the frontage onto which they are placed. Too many projecting signs in one location can also make the street scene appear cluttered. In considering proposals for projecting signs the Borough Council will take particular care to ensure that they are visually in keeping with the locality and do not give the impression of clutter.

Access for People with Disabilities

POLICY EV/16

Planning permission will not be granted for new buildings intended to be open to the public or to be used for employment or education unless the design and layout provides suitable access to and into the building for people with disabilities. Proposals for the change of use, alteration or extension of existing buildings for these purposes will also be required to provide for access by people with disabilities where reasonable and practical.

(See also in particular Policy TR/21)

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the relevant sections of the Disabled Persons Act 1981 incorporated into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, require developers of specified types of buildings to provide suitable means of access, parking and toilet facilities to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The types of buildings to which the Act applies are buildings open to the public, places of employment and educational establishments.

The provisions of the Acts are largely enforced through Part M of the Building Regulations in so far as new development is concerned. PPG1 indicates that local planning authorities should take into account access issues in development plans and in determining planning applications. For new developments, or changes of use or alteration of existing buildings where there will be public access, the Borough Council will seek to ensure that through the design and layout, easy access to the building is provided for people with disabilities. The Borough Council will be flexible in its approach to access issues taking into account the circumstances of each case. Measures designed to assist people with disabilities will improve access for everyone, not least the elderly and infirm and people with young children.

Use of Upper Floors

POLICY CA/11

Within Loughborough Town Centre and its associated service areas, district centres and local centres planning permission will be granted for the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) of upper floors, subject to the retention of residential amenities where adjacent property continues to be occupied:

- shops (Class A1);
- financial and professional services (Class A2);
- food and drink uses (Class A3);
- offices (Class B1(a));
- dwellings (Class C3);
- non residential institutions (Class D1); and
- assembly and leisure uses (Class D2).

Planning permission for new built development within the centres listed above will be granted provided that the development is of a scale appropriate to the centre it seeks to serve, and subject to the provisions set out above and to the inclusion of positive proposals for the use of premises at first floor and above which will contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre. In particular elements of housing should be provided wherever possible.

Within many commercial centres space above the ground floor is often vacant or underused, especially in shops which have formerly been dwellings. This property represents an underused resource and the neglect of upper storeys is often evident in the deterioration of the fabric of buildings above the fascia level to the detriment of the overall townscape quality.

The positive use of upper floors has economic, environmental, social and financial benefits since it can supplement the income from ground floor uses to permit investment in the property overall and thereby promote urban regeneration.

The use of upper floors for residential purposes in particular offers a source of affordable housing for the repopulation of central areas returning life and activity outside normal business hours and encourages the natural surveillance of property. The Borough Council has sought to actively pursue the reoccupation of vacant upper floors in partnership with property owners and local Housing Associations under the "Living over the Shop" campaign. However in pursuing the policy the Borough Council will be mindful of the need to avoid conflict with security and servicing of ground floor businesses. In particular it is recognised that in some circumstances the provision of housing above banks, buildings societies and other financial services would be unsuitable where adequate security measures cannot be incorporated into the overall design and construction.

New housing provision above ground floor uses will be specifically sought in the development of the Opportunity Sites identified in Loughborough Town Centre in compliance with Structure Plan policies to make provision for residential development in central areas.

Shop Front Design

POLICY CA/12

In granting planning permission for shop fronts in new buildings the Borough Council will require that they be designed as an integral part of the overall frontage having regard in particular to the style, materials and proportions of the building and to the overall character of the area.

Replacement shop fronts will be permitted provided they maintain or improve the appearance of the frontage into which they will be placed and relate well to surrounding buildings and the wider street scene. Shop fronts will be required to reflect the architectural composition of the existing frontage, particularly where a commercial ground floor user crosses several facades of differing character.

(See also in particular Policy EV/16)

Poorly designed and unsympathetic shop fronts can substantially damage the character and appearance of shopping areas. In other policies of this plan the Borough Council is seeking to improve, through pedestrian preference and other measures, the visual attractiveness of the Borough's shopping areas. These policies aim to ensure that the design of new and replacement shop fronts does not detract from these wider initiatives. Where older shop fronts, designed as an integral part of the building, survive intact in a good condition, they should normally be retained.

Shop Front Security

POLICY CA/13

Planning permission for the fitting of roller shutters and security grills will be granted provided that all the fittings are colour coated to match the shop front, designed to be unobtrusive during hours of business and allow visibility into the shop when in place.

Proposals for security fittings which would have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area will normally be refused.

Whilst the need for security is recognised, the Borough Council is concerned about the visual impact of externally fitted shutters and grills on the streetscene. Poorly designed, they can be particularly obtrusive and can have a deadening effect on the character and vitality of shopping areas.