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Executive Summary

This document sets out the Wyre Forest District Council's guidance on design and appearance of shop-fronts within the Historic Environment, with the purpose of helping to improve the general appearance of the street-scene. It recognises that high quality design plays an important part in the viability and vitality of shopping areas, and the importance of new and modern design, where appropriate. The architectural principles of shop-front design are described in detail, as are the requirements for gaining appropriate permissions.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Government policy, as laid down in PPG12 (Development Plans), acknowledges the valuable role that supplementary planning guidance (SPG) can play in supplementing the policies and proposals of the Development Plan. Government advice also indicates that SPG may be taken into account as a material consideration in the assessment of development proposals. The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains policies (Section 3 of this document) that set out the requirements that will be necessary to consider when developing, repairing or replacing buildings or details within the Historic Environment.
- 1.2 In response to Government guidance, and in line with the Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004), this Supplementary Planning Guidance has been produced by Wyre Forest District Council to provide additional information to assist with the design and construction of new shopfronts within historic areas, expanding on the Local Plan policies, and complementing the *Design and Quality SPG*. The Council is strongly committed to encouraging sensitive and high quality design.



Shopping is the essence of any town, attracting people and prosperity. There is a general concern to maintain the economic variety of the town-centres, as well as their individual visual and architectural characters. With the recognition of both Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn as Market Towns, together with a nation-wide renaissance in urban design, and the

continual development of our towns and villages, this is a time where more consideration should be given to the general appearance of the street-scene, to improve the environmental quality of the traditional shopping streets. Poor visual character is a disincentive to both visitors and prospective investors, and lowers the District's economic prosperity.

- 1.3 The Council will reject designs that fail to demonstrate quality, in particular where supported by clear plan policies or relevant supplementary planning guidance, in line with advice given in PPG1 and Policy AD.1 of the Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004).
- 1.4 For the purpose of this document, the *historic environment* is taken to include Statutory Listed Buildings, Locally Listed buildings, Conservation Areas, and other Areas of Special Character or Appearance.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 The aims of this SPG are to set out the principles of good shopfront design and advertisements, to help improve the general street-scene. It recognises that companies invest considerable sums to promote their corporate image, and that investment in the quality of the environment is being made by other public bodies concerned with improving the image of the towns and other local shopping areas.

This is not intended to inhibit imaginative, sensitive or contemporary designs, but to encourage design that is compatible with both the building in which it is situated, and the general street-scene. These guidelines will help save time, and avoid misunderstanding with regards to shopfront design.

- 2.2 Where an historic shopfront survives intact, or at least the major elements of the shopfront survive, then these should be retained and refurbished. High quality design will not always justify the removal of historic fabric, especially where this is repairable, and in reasonable condition.
- 2.3 For the most part, the document is not aimed at the design of new buildings, but at the repair and replacement of shopfronts within older buildings. Guidance on the design of new buildings and associated shopfronts can be found in the *Design and Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance (WFDC 2004)*.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 1 – General Policy and Principle

PPG1 discusses sustainable development, mixed use, and design, as well as setting out the operational principles to be observed in the planning system. With particular relevance to this SPG, the document encourages high quality design that has regard to relevant development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance. It also encourages local planning authorities to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, and advises on how they should handle issues of design.

3.2 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 6 – Town Centres and Retail Developments

The key features of this guidance note are on planning for town centres and retailing, including the promotion of good quality design and town centre management. Paragraph 2.36 of this PPG states that local planning authorities should consider drawing up policies and supplementary planning guidance on shopfront design, in consultation with developers, retailers and the local community.

3.3 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment

PPG15 provides a full statement on the Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment, and the role that the planning system plays in this.

3.3 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 19 – Outdoor Advertisement Control

Government guidance in the form of PPG 19, covering advertisement control was published in 1992, examining the importance of appropriate consideration to be given to design, location and materials of advertisements.

3.4 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands : RPG 11

This came into effect in June 2004. Policies within the RPG that relate and support this supplementary planning guidance include the following:

- QE.2 (Restoring deprived areas and managing and creating high quality environments);
- QE.3 (Creating a high quality built environment for all);
- QE.4 (Protection and enhancement of the historic environment) and;
- UR.2 (Enhancing the role of the city, town and local centres).

3.5 Worcestershire County Structure Plan 1996-2011

The Worcestershire County Structure Plan establishes a strategic policy framework for development and land-use planning in the County of Worcestershire. It contains policies relating to the protection and enhancement of the retail sectors of the County, as well as relating to the conservation and protection of the built environment, in particular Policy CTC.20 (Conservation Areas).

3.6 Adopted Wyre Forest Local Plan (January 2004)

The Local Plan sets out the land use policies to guide development within the administrative area of the Wyre Forest District, and contains policies on Design (Policy D.1 and D.3), whereby the Council seeks to ensure that any new development, or alteration to a building, is of high quality, and sympathetic to local distinctiveness. Further policies (AD.1 and AD.2) seek to ensure that advertising, including fascia and projecting signs, are compatible with the area, and the building in which they are situated. Other relevant policies include Policies LB.1, LB.2, LB.3, CA.1, CA.3, and CA.6, aiming to ensure the preservation of Listed Buildings and their setting, and to encourage the vitality of Conservation Areas and other areas of special character or appearance. Furthermore, the appropriate key aims with regards to this SPG are:

- Design* - *Objectives 13, 14, 19 and 20;*
- Heritage* - *Objectives 32, 33 and 34;*
- Town Centres* - *Objectives 67 and 68.*

3.7 This SPG takes full account of, and is consistent with, Government guidance on Supplementary Planning Guidance, in particular with the guidance given in PPG1, PPG6, PPG15 and PPG19. It is based on, and provides supplementary information to existing plan policies in the Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004).

4. THE NEED FOR PERMISSION

4.1 For the purpose of this document, a shopfront is defined as the street-level presence for the following uses, usually having a fascia sign. The uses include:

- retail premises
- non-retail premises:
- betting offices;
- restaurants;
- take-aways;
- other businesses in a shopping area.
- amusement centres;
- estate agents;
- buildings societies;
- banks;



- 4.2 Any alteration to the design, or the erection of a new shopfront requires Planning Permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended. Routine maintenance works, such as redecoration or straightforward repairs do not require planning permission. Signage often forms part of the shopfront, and requires a separate application for consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. You can find out whether your sign requires Advertisement Consent by contacting us (see **Council Contacts**)
- 4.3 Alterations to a Statutory Listed Building requires Listed Building Consent under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Any such alterations, including quite minor ones, will need to be consistent with the age and the style of the building.
- 4.4 The Council will take Enforcement Action against alterations or work carried out without permission, where such permission is needed, and where works are harmful to the appearance of an area, or harm the character or appearance of a building. This may require the removal of the new works undertaken, and the subsequent re-instatement of the original fabric, at the owner's expense.
- 4.5 You are strongly advised to carry out early consultation and discussion with Wyre Forest District Council's Development Control Section, prior to the submission of any application.
- 4.6 Planning Permission

When submitting a planning application for a shopfront and/or sign, the following should be included:

- Fully detailed existing and proposed scaled (normally 1:50 or 1:100) plans and front elevations of the full height of the property, also usefully showing adjoining buildings. Sections of the windows and other details may also be needed.
- Full details of all materials and colours to be used in the proposed shopfronts and/or signage, and those of the adjoining shopfronts and buildings.

4.7 Building Regulations

For the installation, modification or alteration of any shopfront, a Building Regulations Application is required. Advice on these can be obtained from the Building Control Section of the Planning, Health & Environment Division, Wyre Forest District Council.

4.8 As of January 2004, all new designs will also need to meet the requirements set out by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

4.9 The DDA also states that where a particular feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled persons to make use of the service being offered, the service provider must take such steps as is reasonable to make this service available to disabled persons. In most cases, this can be designed into the shopfront, incorporating wider entrances, and suitable access ramps. There may be some instances where this may not be possible, such as the repair of shopfronts in Listed Buildings: in these instances, other methods must be considered, to allow that service to be used by people with disabilities. Such methods may include offering additional services to assist in using the service available, or alternative access.

5. DESIGN DETAILS

5.1 Purpose of the shopfront

5.1.1 The main purpose of the shopfront is to display goods for sale, and increase advertising space, projecting an image of the shop to potential customers. Poorly constructed, run-down shopfronts can hinder trade, by making the shop unattractive. This hindrance can also be projected to the whole of the street - if the shops have the image of being run-down, or poorly designed, then trade will not be as forthcoming, as when the street is well designed, and thought is given to the presentation of goods.

5.1.2 Many of the historic buildings within the District's shopping centres originally contained shopfronts which were, and still are, very effective in achieving a good relationship between the shop and the building: they provided large areas of display for the shop, as well as ideal opportunities for security, and often provided a balanced perspective of the building.



5.2 Elements of the shopfront

- 5.2.1 There are two main elements of the shopfront, namely the window and the entrance. From this, a further four components can be identified, each having both a practical and a visual function:
- the pilasters
 - the fascia
 - the cornice
 - the stallriser.
- 5.2.2 The **pilasters** are designed to give some vertical perspective, whilst also separating the adjacent shopfronts from each other. The purpose of the **fascia** is to give an area for advertising, keeping a balanced and even area throughout the ground floor elevation.
- 5.2.3 The **cornice** gives the fascia protection from the weather, and identified the division between the ground floor and the first floor. The **stallriser** also forms protection for the shop, at ground level, providing an aesthetic base for the shopfront. Diagram 1 shows the different elements of traditional shopfronts.
- 5.2.4 Although these elements have origins in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they still have their place in today's designs, but are too often either misunderstood, or ignored, to the cost of the buildings, and subsequently to the townscape. The accurate detailing of the shopfront is essential for the achievement of good design, and when this is ignored, the result is often ugly, and out of place.
- 5.2.5 Where there are proposals for the replacement of an unsympathetic shopfront, its replacement will be required to respect the character, scale and design of the building, as well as the general appearance of the street-scape, with special reference to the details mentioned above.

5.3 Appropriate Design

Not all buildings should have identical shopfronts, but appropriate design should be applied to every building. For example, a modern building would not often suit a Victorian style shopfront, and the reverse is also true. This also applies to the materials to be used: aluminium window frames are not usually suitable materials for a street where the majority of the buildings are of Georgian design, and the majority of the material used is timber (not including plywood, which delaminates rapidly when used for external purposes). Consideration must be given, not only to the general design of the building and the shop-front, but also to the materials to be used, and how this will reflect on the



general streetscape. Bricks, where used, should use an appropriate bond, such as English or Flemish

5.4 Pilasters

In recent years there has been a trend to remove these from historic buildings, where opportunities arise, due consideration should be given to reinstatement, together with other details associated with them. If they are still present, they should not under any circumstances be removed.

5.4.1 In more modern buildings, these details may not be present, but they can be successfully incorporated in the façade of the building, often giving a more balanced view of the street, and providing dividing lines between adjacent properties.

5.4.2 It is also advisable that some form of weather protection be given to the base of the pilasters. These areas tend to suffer greatly from general wear and tear, and as such need some form of protection. Blending in with the design and materials of the stall-riser can achieve high quality results.

5.5 The Fascia

5.5.1 The fascia is the main source of advertising for the shop. In more modern years, the size of the fascia has increased, often taking over a large proportion of either the main shop-window, or of the first floor. This can have destructive qualities, making the building look unsightly, and ruining the proportions of the building.

5.5.2 Common problems identified with fascias are oversized fascia-boards, oversized writing and unsuitable construction materials. Thought should be given to the proportions of these within their relative contexts. As a rule of thumb, historic fascias usually take up about 10% of the shopfront area, with the writing generally sitting centrally within the fascia, and this should be followed. Typical unsuitable materials can include reflective, acrylic and plastic.



5.6 The Stallriser

- 5.6.1 Again, this element of the shopfront has gradually disappeared during recent years, and many of the original ones have been replaced with different styles. There are two reasons for the stallriser. Firstly it gives the main window a bottom frame, and secondly gives the ground floor some protection from the street, whether from general and unavoidable damage, such as water damage or general wear from the street. For this reason, the construction of the stallriser is important. The material should be a hardwearing material, such as thick timber panelling. Other materials such as glass and plywood are not suitable as they offer very limited protection from vandals and ram-raiders, and are often unsightly.
- 5.6.2 The size of the stallriser again affects the general appearance of the shopfront. Too large an area and the shopfront appears to be swamped by the stallriser, and too small an area, and detail is lost. The proper height, depending on other shops in the area, and on the building itself, should be between 300 to 700 mm high, and should run the width of the shop. The top should have a moulded projecting cill to provide a strong junction with the glass window.
- 5.6.3 Security aspects of stallrisers are covered in this guidance under ‘**Security**’.

5.7 The Cornice

- 5.7.1 The cornice is a projection above the fascia, giving protection from the weather to the fascia, and giving a finish to the frame of the shopfront. It is often in stone, moulded brick or terracotta. Many modern shopfronts do not have the need for cornices, but the shop-front should include one, for the overall appearance of the front and of the street.
- 5.7.2 Again, if this has been removed from an historic building, either in part or in its entirety, then consideration should be given to its re-introduction during refurbishment.

5.8 The Shop Window

- 5.8.1 There are many different designs of shop window, not only ranging from the historic to the modern. Within a single street, there are often numerous identifiable types of designs, giving visual variation within the street-scene. Dealing with historic designs, consideration should be given to adjacent shops, especially if within the same building.
- 5.8.2 Transoms and mullions can be used where appropriate, and when of a design suitable to the building, but an emphasis on horizontal planes of glass should be avoided.
- 5.8.3 Frames, mullions and transoms should usually be made of timber, especially within historic buildings. Aluminium frames will have a negative visual effect on the overall character of the shopfront and the streetscape.
- 5.8.4 Late nineteenth and early twentieth century shop windows often incorporated stained or coloured glass, or acid-etched glass, especially for upper lights. This practice will be encouraged, where the style of the proposed shop-window can incorporate such detail.

5.9 The Entrance

- 5.9.1 The entrance of older shops often consisted of a recess, increasing the window size, hence increasing the display area, leading through to a single door, mostly glazed, and often with a fan-light above. This has the effect of inviting the shoppers in to the shop, helping to modulate the scale of the shopfront, and increasing the security (see **Security**). Other considerations can also be dealt with, through a recessed doorway, such as wheel-chair access.
- 5.9.2 Common problems associated with recessed entrances are litter and the reduction of the shop floor-space. If properly secured, such as with a security gate, the former problem can be reduced, if not removed.
- 5.9.3 Many shopfronts have had this recess removed, and a reinstatement of this detail in Conservation Areas is desirable when submitting a new design for an older shopfront, and should strongly be considered within Listed Buildings. Features such as fanlights can also be useful for further advertising, or for street numbering. However, strong, high quality design can overcome this loss, and may be considered
- 5.9.4 The original door should be retained where possible, and if this has already disappeared, then replicas should be sought. This should be of hard timber, with a kick plate or timber panel to match the height of the stallriser.
- 5.9.5 Where access is gained to the upper floor, from a separate doorway, this should be retained, and the design should be kept, as an integral part of the design of the building façade. This will ensure continued opportunity for increased upper-floor activity.
- 5.9.6 Many historic shop-fronts still retain decorative steps, with the name of the company laid in mosaic tiles. If these are still present, then they should be repaired, to retain the historic character of the shop-front.

5.10 Colours

- 5.10.1 The colour of a shopfront is one of the most important details, especially when within an historic area. Bold and bright colours can detract from the shop-front, and from the street-scene.
- 5.10.2 It is strongly advised that sympathetic and appropriate colours should be considered. Whilst there are some paint manufacturers who specialise in historic paints and colours, the main brand names often have similar ranges of paints.

6. SIGNAGE

- 6.1 The purpose of the shop sign is to advertise the name, and often the wares, of the shop or business, again projecting an image to potential customers. It therefore follows that a badly designed shop sign will hinder the shop, and adversely influence trade in the area. There are several points to consider in the sign: the fascia, the lettering, and the possibility of other types of signs. Each of these has to be considered with some sensitivity, if a balanced view is to be given of the shop, and its surroundings.



6.2 Fascias

- 6.2.1 As described above, the fascia is the main place for a shop to be advertising itself: it provides an instant recognition of the name of the retailer, and often the type of retail available. However, there is a tendency for this part of the shopfront to expand in size, to make the shop-name more prominent. This has an adverse effect, in making the shop, and the area, unbalanced and often unattractive. Other factors have also been added to the fascia, such as advertising for products and brand names. Again, this over-complicates the appearance of the fascia sign, and detracts from the general appearance of the shop-front.
- 6.2.2 The section above describes the correct size of the fascia as being between the top of the main window, and the corbel (usually about 10% of the total size of the shopfront). This should then contain the name of the shop, or the retailer, and, if required, the street-number. Size of the board is very important, as the dominance of one sign will affect the whole of the street-scene. Only one sign should be contained within the fascia, and the original should always be kept, or replaced like for like, with no other boards or signs placed over. The use of extra signage, above the cornice, or projecting down over the main window is not an acceptable practice.

6.3 Lettering

- 6.3.1 The lettering of the shop can be an aid in projecting an image, and often provide decoration for the shopfront. The usual place for lettering is on the fascia, but there are some instances where lettering can be incorporated on to the main window, but careful choice of style, colour and size should be made in this instance.
- 6.3.2 In order to ensure that signs are legible to all sections of the community, consideration should be given to the advice contained in JMU Partnership's *Sign Design Guide* with regards to the style of lettering contrasting with the background colour. However, a balance should be achieved between ensuring that the signage is legible to all, and is sensitive to the design, character and appearance of the historic environment.

6.3.3 There are four main types of fascia-lettering:

- Painted letters
- Blocked letters
- Internally-lit fascias
- Externally lit fascias

6.4 Lighting

6.41 Lighting is often used to make shops more readily identifiable from the street. In some instances this can be acceptable: however, unsympathetic and excess lighting can detract from the street-scene, and careful thought should be given to illumination of shop-fronts and fascias within historic areas.

6.42 Within Conservation Areas, and on Listed Buildings, internally lit fascias will not be acceptable (Policy CA.3 of the Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004)). Appropriate lighting should also be considered within these areas: certain types of halo illumination may be acceptable, as may certain styles of external illumination.

6.43 Lighting such as swan neck lights, or internally illuminated lettering will not be acceptable. It is considered that these seriously detract from the appearance of both the shop-front and the street-scene.

6.44 Other lighting that may be acceptable includes types of strip-lighting, but this should be concealed within the cornice, to minimise the impact of the light-fittings.

6.5 Hanging Signs

6.5.1 Hanging signs are often used as an advertisement for the shop. If designed with sympathy for the streetscape and the shopfront, then they can enhance the area.

6.5.2 The original fittings and brackets, if still present, should be re-used when re-instating this type of sign, if they are still usable. Suitable materials should be used for replacement, such as timber, wrought iron hinges, or steel. The size and design of the sign should relate to the building façade, as well as the surrounding area.

6.5.3 No more than one hanging sign should be erected for a shop, and this should reflect the trade of the shop. No advertisements for other trades or businesses should be included on the sign, without prior written agreement.

6.5.4 Lighting of hanging signs should be appropriate in size and design for the area, position and sign. Ideally, spotlights, bar/strip-lighting, or similar designs, are considered the most apt – however, other methods of lighting can be considered, and you should consult the Planning, Health & Environment Division prior to erection of any lighting, to ensure its suitability.

7. OTHER FEATURES

7.1 Cable Runs

When cables and wiring are to be run on the outside of the building, for purposes such as alarms and illumination, consideration should be given to disguising the wiring. They should preferably be hidden as much as possible, or where this is not possible, they should be as unintrusive as possible. Often, simple methods such as painting or tucking behind fascias are the most effective method of disguise.

7.2 Canopies

The use of Dutch blinds, balloon canopies and plastic canopies will be strongly discouraged within a Conservation Area. All canopies should be retractable, and again the colour, size, material and storage should all take the building in to consideration, together with the general street-scene and character of the area.

8. SECURITY SHUTTERS

- 8.1 It is accepted that roller-shutters are necessary within certain areas, and with certain types of shops. However, consideration should be given to their use, design and appearance, and to alternative security measures.
- 8.2 Solid roller-shutters will not be supported. They create a deadening effect on the street-scene, and give rise to anti-social and illegal activities such as vandalism and graffiti. They prevent views in to the shop during closing-hours, reducing the possibility of identifying theft from the shop or other illegal activities. Where roller-shutters are deemed as being necessary, the preferred option would be for a perforated style, with a minimum visibility of 70%. This has two main benefits: firstly, the display of the shop can be seen during closing hours, potentially increasing the viability of the individual shop and the shopping area as a whole, and secondly, increasing the security, as visibility of the “shop floor” will act as a deterrent to would-be thieves. Internal roller-shutters should always be considered as the first option, if this form of security is needed.
- 8.3 Other methods of security measures should also be considered as alternatives. West Mercia Constabulary recommends that other such measures could include laminated glass, and/ or security films on the window. If it is intended to use these on Listed Buildings, then it is likely that they will require Listed Building Consent.
- 8.4 Security shutters of any type will not be supported on the outside of any Listed Building – the only exception to this would be to protect a recessed doorway. In this instance, the extent of the shutter should be kept to the doorway. Where it is proposed that the use of other shutters is required on such buildings, they should be internal. A full justification for their erection will be required as part of the Listed Building Consent application.
- 8.5 Planning permission will always be required for external security shutters, but not necessarily for internal shutters. Where the property is a Listed Building, Listed Building Consent will always be required.
- 8.6 Any planning application for security shutters will require a justification for their installation. This should include full details on the design, materials and finishes,

support from the police and from the insurance companies, evidence of need, with especial reference to the locality of the premises, and evidence that alternate security measures will not / are not suitable or sufficient.

9. CONSULTATION STATEMENT

9.1 Introduction

This statement describes the consultation undertaken by Wyre Forest District Council for the preparation of the Shop-front Design Guidance within Historic Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance.

9.2 Consultation

9.2.1 Public consultation began on 25th March and ran for six weeks until 7th May 2004. A press release was published to raise awareness of the consultation

9.2.2 Notification letters were sent to architects, design consultants and interest groups. The document and response form were also available to view and download off the council's website.

9.3 Exhibitions

Three staffed exhibitions were held at Bewdley Library on 29th March 2004, at Kidderminster Corn Exchange on 31st March 2004 and at Stourport Civic Hall on 5th April 2004. During the six-week consultation period small displays were also mounted at the libraries in the three towns.

9.4 Responses

A total of 9 responses were received from 4 respondents. Copies of the responses were made available at Duke House in Kidderminster and at the Civic Centre in Stourport-on-Severn. All of the comments were carefully scrutinised and assessed by the Conservation Officer and formally considered by Council on 30th June 2004. More detailed information on the consultation is available from the District Council.

10. COUNCIL CONTACTS

- 10.1 *Development Control Section*
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