

# Interim Planning Guidance

Shop Front Design  
within the Town Centre

## **INTERIM PLANNING GUIDANCE**

As part of the Local Plan process, supplementary planning guidance was prepared to supplement policies and proposals in the Local Plan. The Borough Council consulted the public on the guidance at the draft deposit and revised draft deposit stages of the Local Plan preparation process. Some of the comments on the Draft Deposit Guidance were taken into account in formulating the Revised Draft Guidance.

It was not appropriate for the Borough Council to adopt the guidance as supplementary planning guidance because this can only supplement an adopted local plan and the Tamworth Local Plan 2001-2011 will not be adopted until 2006. Furthermore, under the new development plan system, supplementary planning guidance has been replaced with supplementary planning documents.

This guidance was approved as interim planning guidance by the Borough Council's Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Appropriate guidance will be replaced with supplementary planning documents in due course. This is in accordance with the Council's Local Development Scheme that came into effect in March 2005.

August 2005

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tamworth town centre has a unique style and character and the shop fronts play an important role in creating this, since they are at the human scale and are nearly always designed to attract attention. It therefore follows that badly designed shop fronts will have the opposite effect.

## **RETENTION OR REPLACEMENT**

Where an existing shop front contributes to the character of a building or area, it should normally be kept rather than replaced. Since very few historically important shop fronts survive within the town centre, special care is needed to ensure that they are preserved and restored in a sensitive manner with careful attention to detail.

Where historic shop fronts have been altered, sufficient evidence may remain to allow an accurate reconstruction. Even where the shop front is not contemporary with the building, it may add to its character and illustrate how the building has evolved over time.

In certain cases, the retention of existing shop fronts may not be possible, in others may be desirable to encourage the replacement of what is already there. Many modern shop fronts do not incorporate traditional features of shop front design. Shop fronts which have large plate glass windows, excessively deep fascias, crude joinery details or suitable materials such as UPVC or aluminium will detract from the character of the building and their replacement with a more appropriate design should be considered. Good quality modern designs do, however, exist and should be valued especially where they occur on modern buildings.

## **GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

The design of a new shop front should take account of the age and design of the building. It should try not to divorce the ground floor from the rest of the building, or over emphasise the fascia, but rather treat the building as a whole. If a shop front is to be designed in a traditional style, it must be historically accurate and appropriate to the building and the locality. It is vital that details are correctly designed. The application of 'stick on' mouldings to flat plywood or incorrect attention to detail can ruin the final result.

The Borough Council acknowledges the wish of many retailers to trade on the basis of house colours and style. With co-operation and flexibility and an emphasis on quality and traditional detailing, a

corporate image can be adapted to fit into the historic environment without compromising the principles of good design. Indeed, careful attention to detail and design will give the shop a unique quality that will help promote its image. The promotion of good shop front design is essential if the character of the historic shopping area is to be conserved and enhanced.

## **DETAILS OF GOOD SHOP FRONT DESIGN**

### **Fascia Design**

Most traditional fascias do not exceed 40cm in depth, and are usually incorporated into the shop front design, normally in the form of a moulded cornice. Where required traditional roller blinds can be incorporated within the cornice. The existence of unsuitable fascias should not be allowed to influence the design of the replacement. Where a false ceiling is being inserted within the shop, it is not appropriate to increase the fascia depth in conjunction with it.

Hand painted timber fascias with glass covering are a feature of late 19<sup>th</sup> century shop fronts common in Tamworth. The shop name alone normally has the most effect, with additional advertising forming a detraction. If further signage is needed, it can be painted onto the shop window.

Modern projecting boxed fascias appear clumsy and should be avoided. Fascias must be integrated into the design of the

shop front with lettering either sign written or applied as individual letters.

### **Stallrisers**

These give protection to the shop window and act as a deterrent to ramraiders. They are usually panelled in timber but can be finished in glazed tiles, granite, or other stone. Doors should be part glazed with a timber panel reflecting the height of the stall riser.

### **Materials**

Timber was traditionally the standard material for shop front construction. It is durable and repainting can tidy up or change the appearance at minimum cost. Generally a painted finish is preferred to stained hardwood, although polished mahogany or oak can be appropriate. Non-sustainable hardwoods are strongly discouraged.

### **Canopies and Blinds**

Blinds should always be retractable and pulled down only when required, so that the fascia is not permanently obscured. Dutch blinds and balloon canopies are generally used to increase advertising space, serving no other function and their use is strongly discouraged.

### **Windows**

Large areas of glass should be avoided, but any method of subdivision should suit the character of the shop front. Smaller panes are generally traditional to early 19<sup>th</sup> century styles, while larger plate glass

is more appropriate to late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

### **Advertisements**

Advertisements can make a significant contribution to the character of both the building and conservation area. Original fascias should always be retained as they form part of the original shop front, and new fascia signs, projecting and hanging signs should compliment the design of the building and shop front.

### **Illumination**

Illumination is equally important and must be treated as an integral part of the overall design. Any form of illumination should be discrete with projecting and swan neck spot lights, internally illuminated box signs and flourescent tube lighting generally unacceptable.

### **Security Shutters**

Where security is a problem, it is important to remember that there are several ways to safeguard the contents of the shop. Any security measures should be incorporated as an integral part of the shop fronts.

Separate guidance notes provide the Council's policies on advertisements, illumination and security measures within the Town Centre.