HAVERHILL TOWN CENTRE QUEEN STREET SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE



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Planning and Engineering Services St Edmundsbury Borough Council July 2009

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Introduction

The Borough Council has established a major programme of investment in Haverhill Town Centre. As part of this programme Queen Street has been identified as an area for priority investment in the public realm and enhancement works to the road and pedestrian areas are underway.

In tandem with these works improvements to shopfronts in Queen Street are being encouraged. The design of shopfronts, and their associated signing and advertising, can have a significant impact on the street-scene and that impact can be positive or negative depending upon how the shop is presented. Moreover, it is important that a common approach to shopfront design is adopted if a sense of coherence and integration is to be achieved. This design guide is intended to provide a set of principals as a basis for successful shopfront design in Queen Street. It is not intended to replace the need for skilled design or architectural advice. By following the guidelines and advice contained within the guide operators should be able to achieve shopfront solutions appropriate to various settings and budgets.

The Borough Council has established a fund that may be accessed by shop owners to finance shopfront improvements. In assessing any application for grant aid the Borough Council will take into consideration the extent to which any proposals adhere to the design criteria set out in this guidance.

Shopfronts serve to display goods and encourage customers to enter the shop but they also project an image of the business that they front. It is important that the overall design, materials, workmanship, colour schemes, lighting, signing and advertising work to enhance a shop's image. Each shop will also contribute to the image of the street as a whole. A positive image for the street will act to encourage shoppers to visit that street and therefore shops can work together to improve trading for each other and to improve the town centre for all its stakeholders.

A Vision for Queen Street

Creating an attractive shopping environment is one of the key themes of the Masterplan Vision for Haverhill Town Centre and raising the profile of Queen Street would be an integral element within that overall aim. Queen Street is somewhat distinct from most of the town centre retail area. It has its own strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Queen Street sits at one end of the main shopping area and attracting shoppers is a perennial issue. It is close to one of the principal car parks (Lower Downs Slade) but it is possible for pedestrians using that car park to reach the town centre without entering Queen Street. A new superstore (Tesco) on the former railway station is currently under consideration. Such a development has been seen by some as a threat to other retailers but the prevailing view is that it can bring more shoppers to the local area for the benefit of all retailers however will be important to create good pedestrian links. As part of the development Tesco is funding public realm works to improve links between the new store and Queen Street.

Queen Street doesn't contain any large or 'anchor' stores that would in themselves serve to attract shoppers in significant numbers. Tesco's could fulfil this role but equally supermarket shoppers could avoid Queen Street and it is important that the street becomes an attraction in its own right. In this sense, the absence of an anchor store is both a weakness and a strength. Queen Street is a special place in Haverhill Town Centre. Unlike most



of the retail area it is within a Conservation Area. It has an intimate character that derives from the scale of the built environment. The width of the street varies but for a significant part of its length the front-to-front distance between buildings is less than 9 metres and most buildings are two-storey with a relatively low eaves height. The character of the buildings, together with the varying width of the street, serves to create a sense of intimacy. Added to this the majority of the shops are individual retail businesses rather than outlets for 'chain' stores.



The net effect of the intimate nature of the physical environment and the retail businesses that operate there is to create a place that is attractive to pedestrians and therefore emphasises leisure aspects of shopping. This has been reinforced by the part time pedestrianisation of the street and historic nature of the buildings themselves. The vision for Queen Street is to build on its inherent strengths and reinforce its character and sense of place. The Street itself could be the principal attraction rather than any one shop within it. At the same time every shop would have a role to play in creating an attractive street. A café with street tables has become established in recent years and this has proven to be popular and successful. It is indicative of what Queen Street could have to offer.

The design of shopfronts can have a major role to play in achieving this vision. In particular, shopfronts should be sensitive to the historic detailing of the buildings and seek to conserve or enhance their appearance. Each shop should contribute to an overall scheme that places integrity of the street as a whole above the natural tendency of businesses to compete in terms of visual assertiveness. Individuality of shopfronts is an important aspect of the character of the street and should be encouraged however it needs to be achieved in a way that contributes positively to a coherent framework for the street. This may make some materials, colour schemes or lighting designs unsuitable. A coherent design should be supported by quality paving and street furniture and a new street lighting scheme. A quality environment would attract visitors and encourage them to linger. This in turn would be a valuable asset to retail businesses particularly those that succeed where shopping is a leisure activity.

Planning Controls

Planning permission is needed for any material change in the external appearance of a shop. This includes altering the glazing, changing facing materials, installing blinds or shutters or enlarging a fascia. In assessing planning applications for a new shopfront or alterations to existing the Council will normally expect to achieve a positive contribution to the street scene. Designs should reflect the character of the building.

Signs often require express advertisement consent from the Council but some do not. The Advertisement Regulations are complex and the Council's advice should be sought.

Listed Buildings alterations affecting the historic or architectural character of a listed building requires listed building consent. This can also include re-painting in a different colour, installing a security system or extractor fan and advertisements. Alteration to the interior of a listed building will require listed building consent as well as to its exterior, where that would affect the character of the building. There are two listed buildings in Queen Street.

Conservation Area Consent is required for the proposed complete or substantial demolition of any building in a Conservation Area. This includes the removal of a shopfront or of any feature that gives character to a building. A separate procedure applies to the display of advertisements on shopfronts. It is the policy of the Council to seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area which includes Queen Street in its entirety.

Enforcement The Council's Planning Enforcement Team deals with complaints about unauthorised works to shopfronts and can be contacted on 01284 757366 or by emailing planning.helpdesk@stedsbc.gov.uk. Initially, the action taken is to seek co-operation of owners to remedy work that is unacceptable and does not have planning permission. In circumstances where the work has resulted in harm and an acceptable remedy has not been found the Council will consider if it is necessary to take formal enforcement action.





Planning Policy

Replacement St Edmundsbury Local Plan 2016

The Plan states that the Council will require well designed shop fronts that will enhance an area and add to local distinctiveness. Further, developers should have close reqard to 'Shopfronts and Advertisements in Historic Towns' published by English Historic Towns Forum in 1991. The requirements of the Plan are detailed in Policy TCR3 (see Appendix I) Policy TCR3: Shopfronts and Advertisements

Principles of Good Design

Queen Street has retained much of its historic architectural character derived from Victorian and Edwardian buildings that form the street frontages. This character can be significantly diminished by the replacement of traditional detailing with poor quality materials and designs.

Most shops will want to 'update their image from time to time and innovation in design is not to be discouraged. At the same time, however, the Council will seek to ensure that shopfronts, signs and advertising respect individual buildings and their setting in the context of the whole street. Thus, for example, internally illuminated plastic box fascia signs, sometimes with large crude lettering for optimum impact, would not be recommended for approval. Similarly, if a shop size increased to occupy the adjacent building it is not generally recommended to replace separate shopfronts with a single fully glazed frontage with a deep shop sign fascia extending continuously over the full length of the double frontage. This effect not only dramatically disrupts the character and scale of the buildings but also the vertical rhythm of the streetscape. In general, new shopfronts of an imaginative and creative design will be encouraged if they are

complementary in proportion, scale, quality of materials and detailing to the building itself. Standard and corporate shopfronts should be avoided because most often they do not take account of individual buildings; they detract from the style and character of the premises and the street as whole. Adapting corporate images in a modest manner may be considered more favourably if it can be undertaken successfully having regard to context.

It is often a less costly solution to refurbish what is already there. Traditional shopfronts used timber as a standard material and employed common features such as pilasters, fascias, cornices, and stallrisers to frame the shop window and entrance (see the section on: Shopfront Composition for descriptions of these features). Detailed elements, including architectural doors, door handles, knockers and letter boxes, would be sympathetic to the overall design and are also often worth preserving. In some instances the existing fabric of a shopfront will not be in sufficiently good condition to warrant retention. Reinstatement of traditional shopfronts should be carefully considered and should complement existing features. They should be of an accurate design and appropriate style that does not destroy or conceal any of the original features, or detrimentally affect the appearance of upper floors or adjoining buildings.

In the event that existing buildings are replaced with new then the question of reproduction shopfronts may arise. It is only likely to be appropriate if a single unit is to be inserted into a row of traditional buildings and the design would therefore relate to the street elevation as whole. In such instances very careful attention is required to ensure accuracy of design, proportion, scale and detail. Where redevelopment is more extensive, replica shopfronts should be avoided.



Well designed contemporary shopfronts can also make a positive contribution to character and would avoid confusing historical fabric with buildings of a different architectural era.

Each application for refurbishment or new installation will be assessed on its merits and in the context of its setting. Drawings should show the complete building facade and part of the adjoining frontages in order to show the overall impact of the shopfront. Permission will not be granted for incongruous or unsympathetic designs on the grounds that there are still many that are as bad or worse in the vicinity. The policy that new shopfronts should conserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area will guide any decision.



Fig 1a

Separate Buildings

Queen Street is mostly lined with shop fronts but these do not correspond with the basic building blocks that form the street. The street comprises individual buildings accommodating small groups of shops, usually 2, 3 or 4 in number. Many of the buildings have a distinctive quality deriving from their historic character and it is these buildings that are the basis of the conservation area designation. The buildings themselves therefore have an important role to play in creating a distinctive sense of place but in many cases the coherence of the individual buildings has been lost because they have not been maintained in a sensitive manner.

The design of each shop front within any individual building should contribute to the distinctive character and coherence of the building because this is the best way to conserve and enhance that character of the street. It is therefore important to strike a balance between the natural objective of each shop to assert its own individuality and the need to contribute positively to the coherence of the building of which it forms a part. (Fig 1 left) indicates the separate buildings that create the street.

1 & 1a Queen Street (Fig 2 left) retains a strength of individual identity as a building. The three different shop front designs do have some important features in common, such as the depth of fascia and the arched fenestration, however there are other aspects to their design that are not working in harmony with the building as a whole with the result that the rhythm is upset. The shop on the left has a strikingly different colour scheme and lettering design. The recessed entrance serving all three units could also be made more inviting. Separate applications within a single building should: 1. Submit a design in principle for the building as a whole. Although variety and individuality of shops is also desirable the design should emphasise a sense of unity to the building as a whole. Thus, for example, all shops within a building might use a very limited palette of colours (2 or 3) within a narrow range though the colours might be used differently in each shop front design.

2. Owners / tenants of other shop units should be consulted on the design in principle and their comments included in the submission

Should any of the other units in the building subsequently come forward with an application for a grant then any approved design in principle would be a material consideration in determining the award of a grant.

Colour schemes

Colour comprises a number of different components, most significantly hue, saturation, and brightness. 'Hue' is what is generally meant by the term colour and it describes a fixed place in the visible spectrum of light. Any hue can have a different level of saturation or strength (grey can be described as having zero saturation). 'Brightness' refers to the intensity of light that is reflected or transmitted by a colour. The terms tint, tone, and shade are also well used in colour imaging literature. A tint of a colour is obtained by mixing its hue with white. A tone of a colour is created by mixing a hue with grey. A shade of a colour is made by adding black to its hue. There is now a huge choice in the availability of 'applied colour' (paint, colour-wash, ceramics, plastics and other applied finishes). The number of dye and paint colours has increased from a few hundred in the 1960's to in excess of 3 million today,

of which more than 9,000 have been marketed. Commercial premises will use colour to differentiate themselves from others in the high street so it is not surprising that there is now 'colour chaos'. National chain stores sometimes employ bright corporate colour schemes in order to emphasise brand recognition but this is at the expense of the street scene and is therefore usually inappropriate. Individual shops will want to use colour to draw attention at the expense of neighbouring shops but the result can be strident, clashing colours that are the antithesis of harmony.

It is proposed that the background colours to shopfronts should be taken from the colour palette above. This allows for variety within a co-ordinated palette range. Background colours should comprise a minimum of 85% of the coloured area of any shopfront and a minimum of 70% of any shopfront should be of a single colour. Lettering and other highlighting could utilize contrasting colours of different hue to those found on the approved palette but these should avoid bright, strident colours. A red, green, blue chart is provided for approved background colours in Appendix II.

anthracite 134 129 108	grey 184 184 184	pale grey 234 234 234 234	vanilla 249 254 222
cognac	190ry	linen	while
239	233	230	257
156	234	224	253
159	184	180	237
ellis green	salters green	pale green	pearl grey
26	130	189	199
92	183	219	215
37	123	179	195
dark blue	blue	pale blue	yellow
3	99	162	249
59	135	211	241
109	167	212	143
black	brown	red	gourmande
39	60	198	187
37	37	240	160
31	6	206	63

BRE Green Guide to Specification

hardwood	А
softwood	В
aluminium	С
steel	В

Notes: (1) The ratings for hardwood and softwood are based upon the use of timber sourced only from sustainably managed forests (2) This rating includes assessments on the embodied energy of the product and its potential for re- use. For instance, UPVC has the lowest rating because of the lack of reuse, whilst aluminium, while reusable, has a high embodied energy.



Materials

The choice of materials and finishes is a major factor in determining attractiveness and integrity of a shop front as well as its durability in the longer term. Materials and finishes should be carefully selected on the basis of their appropriateness to the character of the area and their visual sympathy with the building in which they sit. Other considerations include their long term durability and sustainability issues.

In many areas traditional shopfront materials would have included Portland stone, marble and cast iron but in Queen Street painted softwood would have been the traditional standard material. It was readily available and could be easily machined and worked to various profiles. Properly maintained timber can be relatively durable and may not date as quickly as more modern materials. It also lends itself to refurbishment and is adaptable to new colour schemes. Use of well-seasoned timber with the right moisture content for the use will help prevent splitting and warping. Stained hardwoods are not usually appropriate on older buildings as most traditional shopfronts would have been painted timber.

More modern materials such as acrylic sheeting, perspex, plastic, standard natural finished aluminium and unpainted softwoods would not generally be appropriate in the Conservation Area. Modern shopfronts should use high quality natural materials wherever possible. Reconstituted materials, such as stone amalgams will only be accepted if of the best of their type and where considered appropriate since the use of stone in this locality would have been limited.

Glazing materials should not be mirror, or glass with highly reflective coatings as these are features which can be visually damaging to traditional townscapes. **Sustainability** The Borough Council recommends that preference be given to the more sustainable materials. The Building Research Establishment publishes a 'Green Guide to Specification' and rates the more sustainable materials as categories A or B. Less sustainable materials are rated C or D.

Shopfront Composition

Fascias The fascia is often the most assertive element of the shopfront surround and there is a tendency for it to become visually dominant to the detriment of other elements and the building as a whole. Fascias should be in proportion to the shopfront as a whole. They should not override party wall divides or project above the base of the floor above from which they would traditionally be separated by a cornice. In Queen Street they should not normally be more than 400mm deep. 'Box' fascias or those made from inappropriate materials such as plastic should not be acceptable.

Pilasters These frame and define the width and vertical strength of the shopfront. They serve to subdivide the street and lend emphasis to the individuality of shop units separating each from its neighbour. They provide physical support to the beam behind the fascia and therefore visual support to the fascia itself so that they are often integral to it. Pilasters should be retained where present and original designs should not be boxed.

Cornices The cornice marks the upper limit of the shopfront separating it from the floor above. Traditionally they would be moulded, frequently with a lead sheeting cap and they would serve to protect the fascia from rain. In modern shopfronts their design is sometimes adapted to house fascia lighting. **Consoles** The console provides a visual cap to the pilaster and thereby frames the width of the fascia creating a visual punctuation to the horizontal and vertical elements. It is important to retain them when present as part of a traditional shopfront.



Mullions and transoms are usually made of timber and serve to divide the window vertically and horizontally. Visually they add weight and rhythm to the window while reducing the scale of the single glazed shopfront that can be out of keeping with the streetscene. They are a traditional feature of shopfronts and it is considered appropriate to retain or re-introduce them in Queen Street.

Doors/Access - These should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront. They can be flush or recessed. Recessed shopfronts are preferred as they introduce visual interest and act as an invitation to the customer. If the doors are recessed, their returns should match the stallriser and normally be recessed by at least 800mm. Door furniture such as handles and letter plates, etc. are important details and their retention or introduction will be encouraged.





Canopies and Blinds Blinds protect goods on display behind glass (and sometimes on the street) from sunlight as well as providing shelter for shoppers. They are a traditional element of shopfronts and existing original or traditional canvas blinds and blind boxes should be retained and refurbished. Blinds should be retractable so that they may be pulled down only when required and so that the fascia is not permanently obscured. Normally there is no need for them on north-facing elevations although they are present in some cases on north facing shopfronts on Queen Street.

The style, colour, material, location, and number of blinds or canopies installed can affect the character of a streetscene. The use of non-traditional blinds, particularly those fabricated from reflective, plastic or stretch materials or those that are not of the straight roller or apron type, will not be supported. Blinds should also relate satisfactorily to the building when closed and thought must be given to how the blind box can best be integrated into the shopfront design. The traditional solution was either to incorporate it within the projecting fascia cornice or in a blind box between the fascia and the display window.

A canopy or blind projecting over the public highway will need a maximum vertical clearance, measured from the surface of the highway to the underside of the canopy of 2.4 metres. There is also a need to provide a minimum horizontal clearance of 0.5 metres will be required from the edge of the carriageway to the canopy and this will significantly affect the size and location of suitable blinds in Queen Street as the footpath is often relatively narrow. The display of advertising material should be avoided unless other opportunities for advertisement are limited. Separate consent may be required under the Advertising Regulations.

Signs & Advertisements

It is the function of signs and advertisements to vie for the attention of the passer-by. However it is important signs complement the shopfront and building design and do not detract from the overall character. **Fascia Signs** Fascia signage is an integral element of the shopfront and the it should be subservient to the character of the building as a whole.

Traditionally, hand-written lettering on a painted fascia was used to advertise the shop name. Such signs can have limited visibility after dark but appropriate shading, together with the careful mixture of colour tones can reduce the need for illumination.

Fixing of individual letters onto the fascia can be attractive and impart a sense of depth but it is important that suitable materials are chosen. In particular, plastic can look out of place within a traditional shopfront. This technique is also useful where there is no fascia and the letters need to be attached to the natural materials of the building. The size of the lettering looks best when it is in proportion with the fascia and does not dominate it; this type of letting will be looked upon favourably. The shop window has traditionally been used for the display of goods for sale. It is very common to see an element of advertising and signage incorporated into displays but in some cases the use of stickers, posters or internal illuminated signs can be excessive. Generally this type of advertising will detract from the overall appearance of the shopfront creating a cluttered appearance from the street. There are many other techniques that can be used to attract attention and give information and the more subtle methods are often the most successful without impacting adversely on the streetscene as a whole.



Hanging and Projecting Signs When properly designed, projecting signs can add interest and enhance the street scene as well as providing a useful form of advertising. However too many hanging signs can create visual clutter in the townscape and undermine their advertising purpose. No more than one hanging or projecting sign for each shop unit will be permitted. Hanging symbols denoting the trade carried on in the premises may be considered as an alternative to a hanging board.

Projecting signs are usually installed at fascia level at one end of the fascia panel. Signs should not be fixed to the pilasters or decorative capitals. A sign projecting over the public highway will need a minimum vertical clearance of 2.4 metres to the underside of the sign, and a minimum horizontal clearance between the sign and the carriageway of 0.9 metres. Hanging signs at first floor level are acceptable on public houses where they are to replace an existing sign at that level but they will also be considered in other circumstances if appropriate.

Hanging signs are ideally made from timber and suspended from a wrought iron bracket. A slim sign-written panel will help to minimize clutter and achieve visual separation between the main fascia and the building.







The size of a projecting sign and any frame or support should be modest and in scale with the shop front as a whole. Generally maximum dimensions of 400x500x75mm will be appropriate but repetition of standard size formats should also be avoided. Therefore, in some instances, such as for larger shop units, hanging or projecting signs may be up to 600x650x100mm.

The content of all signs should be restricted to the shop name or service and not relate to specific commercial products or services. Separate planning procedures apply to obtaining consent to display advertisements.

Illumination

Illumination can add interest to the street at night. Much can be achieved by well-considered window lighting and thought should be given to this in preference to illuminating the fascia.

Attracting passers-by and improving security should be done by internally lighting the window rather than the fascia. Careful internal lighting will enhance or highlight the detail and intricacy of window displays and interiors.

If fascia illumination is required this should be done by external lighting such as concealed top light tubes, halo lighting or spot or backlights of an appropriate design and positioned to conceal the light source. Large spots or swan necks add clutter and will not normally be acceptable.

Sign illumination may be acceptable for businesses that regularly trade in the evening (eg public houses and restaurants). Internally illuminated box signs will not be permitted in any circumstances. Similarly large spots or swan necks will add clutter and should be avoided.



Lettering

SPG 9 states that the size and style of lettering should be designed to relate well to the overall size and character of the building and to the depth and length of the fascia. The position of lettering should respect openings in the shopfront beneath.

The choice of lettering and illustration can reflect the use and character of the shop. Considerable artistic effect can be created if a competent signwriter is employed and traditional handpainted lettering on fascias is preferable to the use of raised 3- dimensional letters.

Colours are important, gilding or strong tones on a dark background reflect light, and are clearly visible at night. Rich effects can be achieved by shading and blacking of letters. Where there is no fascia individual letters may be attached directly to the building, simple solid shapes will normally be suitable and the traditional gilded lettering with a halfround section is particularly appropriate for pubs and hotels.

Advertisements above the normal fascia level on first floors and above, are rarely acceptable.



Access for the Disabled

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) there is a requirement to ensure that people are not treated less favourably because of a disability and all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure equal access to shops by wheelchair users. As a general principle, reasonably level access across thresholds should be provided and steps should be avoided. Doors should be capable of being opened by people in wheelchairs. The clear opening width of the shop door should be at least 850mm. If ramps cannot be avoided it can be helpful to provide handrails and frameless glass doors should not be used as they can prove hazardous to the partially sighted. Queen Street has a very low gradient along its length and changes in level are not envisaged.

With listed buildings and very sensitive historic areas, the needs of the disabled people should be taken into account as far as possible, commensurate with the need to preserve the special character of the building or area and a minimum of 1200mm wide. Thresholds should have non-slip surfaces, with flush weathermatting. Coir matting should not be used.





Security

Security is frequently a matter of concern for shopkeepers and it is an area where conflicts of interest can arise. Security measures can compromise attempts to create a sense of welcome both to individual shops and the street as a whole.

Solid metal shutters in particular can seriously detract from the amenity of the streetscene and they have the effect of reducing the sense of safety and security of pedestrians. Moreover they can have adverse results for shop security too. By discouraging pedestrians from using the street and by blocking casual surveillance behind the screens security can be reduced. The preferable means of reinforcing windows would be to use toughened glass or laminated film. If separate physical protection of the premises is required this should be achieved by the use of internally mounted steel grilles, although recessed doorways may be protected by external grilles.

Night lighting of the interior of shop window displays encourages pedestrian use of the street out of hours, providing passive surveillance that deters vandals and thieves.

Alarms SPG 9 states that care needs to be taken to avoid adding clutter with alarm boxes. They need to be seen but should not detract from the architectural character.

Appendix I: Local Plan Policy and SPG9 Policy TCR 3

Proposals to alter an existing shop front or ceate a new shop front, including the installation of external security measures, advertisements or canopies, must preserve or enhance the character of the building of which it forms a part of and the street scene in which the proposal is located. Within conservation areas and on listed buildings the following criteria will apply:

i) the size, format, materials and design of advertisements should not exceed the minimum necessary to identify the function of the building;
ii) well designed, high quality hanging signs will be permitted where they are complementary to the street scene and the building on which they are to be sited;
iii) illuminated signs and projecting box signs will not be permitted.

Proposals should have regard to the detailed advice provided in the local planning authority's Planning Guidance "Shopfronts and Advertisement Guide" and any subsequent replacement Supplementary Planning Document. The removal of shop fronts and advertisements of historic or architectural interest will not be permitted.

SPG 9 Shopfront and Advertisment Design Guide

This supplementary Planning Guidance is in 3 parts:

- Part 1: Introduction general background and rationale behind the guidance
- Part 2: Shopfront Design Principles describes the fundamental design principles upon which good quality design is based
- Part 3: describes the individual elements of the traditional shopfront and advertisements, stressing the importance of quality materials, detail, finish and maintenance

Appendix II: Recommended Colours





Planning and Engineering Services St Edmundsbury Borough Council July 2009

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