

## Report of the Director of Place

Planning Committee – 8 December 2015

### APPROVAL OF DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY SHOP FRONT & COMMERCIAL FRONTAGE GUIDANCE FOR CONSULTATION

<b>Purpose:</b>	This report provides an overview of the draft shop and commercial frontage Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document and seeks authorisation to undertake public and stakeholder consultation.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan (Adopted November 2008).
<b>Reason for Decision:</b>	To approve the draft SPG as a basis for public and stakeholder consultation.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	1) The draft SPG as attached at appendix A is approved as the basis for public consultation.
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<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Christopher Allingham
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#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks authority to undertake a 6 week public and stakeholder consultation exercise on the draft Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide. A copy of this guide is attached as an appendix and will be made available in the Group Rooms prior to this meeting.
- 1.2 The draft Design Guide has been prepared to help raise the quality of shop front and commercial frontage developments throughout the City & County of Swansea. The document will be used to help assess and determine planning applications, as is supplemental to the design policies of the Unitary Development Plan.
- 1.3 Once the consultation process is concluded, a schedule of comments and responses to all representations received will be reported to this Committee for consideration, along with an amended version of the SPG document.

## **2.0 Background and Policy Context**

2.1 At the national level, Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014) and Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2014) advocate the development of high quality design and development.

2.2 The design policies of the Unitary Development Plan (2008) comply with this national guidance, with policies such as EV1 setting out general design criteria for new development and Policy EV4 ensuring that development schemes provide for high quality public realm. Policy EV13 specifically addresses the quality of shop front proposals whilst a number of other UDP policies address the quality of design in particular circumstances which can affect proposals for shop fronts and commercial frontages including:

- Policy EV7 – Listed Buildings
- Policy EV9 – Conservation Areas
- Policy EV14 – Advertisements
- Policy EC6 – Local Shopping Centres & Neighbourhood Facilities
- Policy CC2 – City Centre Retail Core

2.3 In addition to the varying planning policy contexts that can affect shop front and commercial frontage proposals, the style of the host building as well as that of the wider street and area must also be considered. Therefore, it is necessary to set out clear local guidance to highlight the correct approach for each context as well as to raise design standards. This will formalise the design advice provided by the Council's officers, and provide developers with a clear understanding of what is expected of their proposals.

2.4 This design guide has a key role to play in raising standards of design in Swansea City Centre as part of the regeneration programme. Well-designed frontages create much more attractive neighbourhoods for those shopping, visiting, working and living within these areas.

2.5 In many cases good design need not cost more, but poor design can have long term negative consequences and economic and social impacts. Given that shop and commercial frontages are typically located at eye level, these provide the first and lasting impression of an area for many people and can influence whether they wish to return. Therefore day to day development control decisions in relation to these shop fronts and commercial frontages are a key part of the physical regeneration process. The need for clear local guidance to help raise design standards is therefore especially important.

## **3.0 Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide SPG**

3.1 The Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide (attached as Appendix A) is aimed at improving the character and appearance of all shop fronts and commercial frontages within the City and County of Swansea. It will be used to assess and negotiate the wide range of shops and commercial frontages present within the whole city and county area. Underpinning this SPG document are a number of key aims which include:

- Encouraging the preservation of good quality period shop fronts which contribute to the history and/or aesthetic quality of the area.
- Ensuring proposals relate satisfactorily to the shop building and the wider street as a whole.
- Ensuring the provision of access for all to ground floors.
- Ensuring that advertising is integrated with the shop front and that it respects the character of the building and the surroundings.
- Encouraging the unobtrusive integration of security features into the shop front.
- Retaining and improving access to upper floors.
- Discouraging the inappropriate imposition of national corporate image shop fronts in sensitive areas.

3.2 The guide does not prescribe a particular architectural style, rather it stresses the importance of analysing the context to find the correct approach to the development and once this has been selected then further detailed design issues can be addressed. It would therefore be used to assess and negotiate the wide range of shops and commercial frontages present within the city and county area.

3.3 The guide sets out a design approach assessment chart for the undertaking of shop front and commercial frontage works across the City and County of Swansea area. Depending on various aspects of the context of the development such as the location of the proposed shop and the character of the building proposals will fall into 1 of 5 categories:

- Heritage Approach – Retain / Repair
- Traditional Approach
- Modern Interpretation Approach
- Modern with some Traditional References
- Modern Approach

3.4 The document also provides detailed design guidance for a comprehensive approach to the aspects of the character and appearance of the frontage as well as access, signage, lighting, security measures as well as other features such as canopies, outdoor seating areas, ATMs etc.

3.5 The guide is therefore about more than just how shop and commercial frontages look and seeks to provide guidance for an integrated approach to all of the various considerations of shop and commercial frontage design.

## **4.0 Consultation**

4.1 The SPG document will be subject to a 6 week period of consultation, which is an integral part of the process towards adoption as SPG. The consultation will allow Councillors, members of the public, stakeholders and other interested parties to contribute to the guidance. The aim is to ensure that there is a broad consensus of support for the objectives of the guidance.

4.2 The public and stakeholder consultation process will make use of a variety of consultation methods to raise awareness and maximise the involvement of the community, including: publication of press notice, articles/adverts in the

local media, and targeted consultation of local planning agents and specific local organisations.

- 4.3 The consultation will be publicised via the Council's dedicated consultation email database of over 8000 contacts and web page where comment forms will be available for those who wish to comment. During the consultation period a free event for stakeholders such as agents, designers, developers, amenity societies etc will be held to explain the draft document and invite their feedback. All information will also be readily available at the Civic Centre and libraries throughout the County. Summary details and promotional materials will be provided in a bi-lingual format.
- 4.4 All comments received will be recorded, evaluated and incorporated into the draft document where considered appropriate. A summary of the consultation will be incorporated into the final SPG document once adopted and a full detailed schedule of representations will be made available on request.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the publication of this SPG, as the cost of the public consultation process can be accommodated within existing budgets and staff resources. The consultation will, as far as possible, utilise electronic means of distributing the documents and seeking the engagement of interested parties.
- 5.2 The final adopted document will be made available electronically, so there will be no printing costs.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Shop Front and Commercial Frontage guidance document will provide supplementary planning guidance to the adopted City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan (2008) and will be a material consideration in evaluating future planning applications. This SPG has been produced in order to inform the provisions of the UDP however should its context and content align with the principles established within the forthcoming LDP then it will be updated at the appropriate point.

## **7.0 Equality & Engagement Implications**

- 7.1 Section 4 of this report outlines equalities considerations in respect of consultation activity. Summary material will be available in Welsh. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been carried out and this indicates that a full EIA is not necessary.

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Draft Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide