

Report of the Director of Place

Planning Committee – 10 January 2017

ADOPTION OF SHOP FRONT & COMMERCIAL FRONTAGE DESIGN GUIDE AS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Purpose: To inform Members of the representations received during the recent consultation on the Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide and to agree the proposed amendments to the draft guide and adopt it as supplementary planning guidance (SPG).

Policy Framework: City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan (Adopted November 2008).

Reason for Decision: To approve the final version of Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide and adopt this as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Consultation: Legal, Finance, Access to Services.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) Agree the proposed amendments to the Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide as set out in appendix B,
- 2) Approve the SPG, as amended,
- 3) Agree to adopt the Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Shop Front & Commercial Frontage Design Guide has been prepared to help raise the quality of shop fronts and other types of commercial frontage throughout the City & County of Swansea. The document will be used to help assess and determine planning applications and supplements the design policies of the Unitary Development Plan. It is intended that the document will be adopted as SPG to the forthcoming Swansea Local Development Plan 2010 – 2025: Deposit Plan (June 2016) in due course.
- 1.2 This design guide will supersede previous outdated guidance provided in the form of short leaflets and will provide more comprehensive guidance on a range of issues affecting the design of shop fronts including the different character approaches based on analysis of the existing context, detailed guidance on the various components of the shop fronts as well as lighting and security measures.
- 1.3 This report outlines the 6 week public consultation process which was undertaken on the document (22nd August – 3rd October 2016), and summarises the range of comments received from residents and stakeholders. The report also responds to those views and comments, and recommends amendments which will help to clarify and refine the proposals contained in the public consultation draft 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 costs. 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 B) is aimed at improving the character and appearance of all shop fronts and commercial frontages within the City and County of Swansea. It would therefore be used to assess and negotiate the wide range of shops and commercial frontages present within the whole city and county area. Underpinning this guidance 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 Public Consultation

4.1 On the 3rd September 2015 the draft Shop Front & Commercial Frontages Design Guide was presented to Planning Committee. Members resolved to endorse the draft document to be issued for public and stakeholder consultation.

4.2 The draft Shop Front & Commercial Frontages Design Guide was subject to a 6 week consultation exercise which ran from the 22nd August 2016 until the 3rd October 2016.

4.3 The following consultation methods were used:

- Notification emails highlighting the consultation on the draft document were sent to Councillors, Community Councils and specific and local consultation bodies.
- A dedicated webpage was established to explain the consultation and allow the electronic document to be downloaded in pdf format.
- Bilingual posters were sent to all libraries for display.
- A bilingual summary leaflet was also made available which distilled the guidance down to two sides of A3 paper.
- A Press Release was issued and featured within the South Wales Evening Post website on the 22nd August 2016.
- The consultation was featured in the 'Have your Say' section of the Council home page on the web site.
- An accessible version of the document (text only version with written descriptions of photos and graphics for visually impaired people) was produced in liaison with the Disability Liaison Group and SAFE and made available for visually impaired people on the website.

4.4 A presentation to Designers, Developers, Agents, Housing Associations and the Disability Liaison Group to publicise the draft guide and gain feedback was proposed however this was cancelled due to lack of booking responses.

4.5 In total, comments from 15 individual respondents were received. These respondents covered a wide range of organisations and interests including planning agents, access representatives, external consultees, and members of the public. The full list of respondents can be found in Appendix A. The relevant comments received can be summarised as:

- The need to include information on obstructions on the pavement and further reference to the Swansea 'Pavements for People' policy;
- A suggestion to include information on approaches to improving the appearance of vacant shop fronts;
- The need to include security rating information for various shop front components (doors, windows, glazing, lighting, grilles and shutters);

- A suggestion to allow for the use of existing solid roller shutters to be painted by artists;
- A suggestion about providing hanging baskets to improve the public realm.

4.6 All of the above comments have been included within the document as appropriate additions to the text.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The amendments proposed to the SPG have no additional cost implications for staff time and resources.

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 draft Guide has been subject to extensive consultation as required by the Welsh Government guidance on the preparation of supplementary planning guidance.

6.2 The Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide once adopted 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 planning applications.

6.3 It should be noted that SPG can still be adopted by the Council after the Unitary Development Plan expires. The status any such SPG will be more as stand-alone guidance in determining applications until the Local Development Plan is adopted but it will still have to be considered. The Council will still be using the UDP as the extant plan until the LDP is adopted but guidance can still be adopted by the Council in the meantime. It is guidance rather than statute and so should be given the appropriate weight by members and by the Head of Planning and City Regeneration when delegated powers are being used to determine applications.

7.0 Equality & Engagement Implications

7.1 Section 4 of this report outlines equalities considerations in respect of consultation activity. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening was carried out prior to the public consultation and this indicated that a full EIA was not necessary. As a part of the public consultation a Welsh language version of the guide was provided. Furthermore an accessible version of the document (as highlighted in paragraph 4.3) was made available for visually impaired people. Finalised versions of both of these documents will be made available on the website alongside the English version.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

- A Table of representations received on the draft Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide
- B Final draft of the Shop Front and Commercial Frontage Design Guide