

Shopfront Design Guide

Including the conversion of Use CLASS A properties to residential



Supplementary Planning Document For adoption 24 September 2019



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This document is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It builds upon and provides more detailed advice and guidance on the policies contained in the Local Plan.

As such, this document should be used in conjunction with the other policy and guidance documents contained in North Somerset Council's planning policy framework available to view on the Council's website. This document acts as a material consideration in planning decisions but is not part of the development plan.

This document incorporates the results of the public consultation exercise and was presented to North Somerset Council for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 24th September 2019.

This document has been produced by North Somerset Council in conjunction with Historic England as part of the Heritage Action Zone scheme which aims to promote and enhance the heritage of Weston-super-Mare.

This document sets out design principles and standards which will preserve or enhance the appearance of both historic and modern shopfronts.

The principles and standards detailed in this document are applicable throughout the North Somerset Council area.



Contents

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Who is this document for? 5
- 1.2 Why is shopfront design important? 6

2 Key design principles

3 Shopfront design

- 3.1 Preservation, restoration and modern intervention 10
- 3.2 Shopfront unity and cohesion 11
- 3.3 Materials 12
- 3.4 Use of colour 14
- 3.5 Fascia design 15
- 3.6 Fascia and signage lettering 16
- 3.7 Windows, doors and stallrisers 17
- 3.8 Shopfront advertising 18
- 3.9 Shopfront lighting 19
- 3.10 Blinds and awnings 20

4 Shopfront access

- 4.1 Accessibility for all 21
- 4.2 Access to upper floors 22

5 Security

- 5.1 General 23
- 5.2 Shutters 23

6 Change of use – use class a properties to residential use

- 6.1 Enhancing character 25
- 6.2 Consideration of conversion of upper floors to residential 26
- 6.3 Change of use in a conservation area 27

7 Change of use and the building regulations

Appendices

- A: Glossary 29
- B: Resources and further reading 31
- C: Planning policy 33
- D: Different types of consent 34



1 Introduction

North Somerset has a range of shopping opportunities from individual shops, local centres through to town centres and retail parks. The aims are to ensure residents and visitors spend locally with these businesses, benefit from an enjoyable shopping and leisure experience, and make sure heritage assets are enhanced and put to a viable use consistent with their conservation.

One of the council's key priorities is to ensure town centres and villages are thriving. Each is unique, the aims are to celebrate this identity, support local retailers and regenerate poorly performing areas to create quality environments that people are proud of, are places they want to visit and the whole community can enjoy.

High quality shopfront design set within a cohesive streetscape can have tremendous impact on the retail and visitor experience, especially at a time where the role of the traditional high street is changing. This document sets out the principles to be followed when designing shopfronts or converting retail premises into residential or other forms of accommodation.

1.1 Who is this document for?

This document has been created for use by all parties involved in the design of shopfronts or the conversion of shops to other uses such as residential. It is applicable to property owners as well as residents, estate agents, developers, contractors, shopfitters, architects, planning officers, civic societies and town and parish councils.

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to help those proposing to alter or install a new shopfront or to convert a shop into residential or other form of accommodation. It sets out what is required in terms of permissions and statutory consents. It promotes a greater understanding of the existing heritage value and architectural detail of existing shopfronts in North Somerset and will ensure delivery of a high standard of design and workmanship which will benefit traders, shoppers and improve the local environment.

These guidelines apply to all businesses in Use Class A as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments. At the time of publication this includes:

A1 (Shops)

Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes.

A2 (Professional and Financial Services)

Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) and including estate and employment agencies. It does not include betting offices or pay day loan shops.

A3 (Restaurants and Cafes)

For the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises – restaurants, snack bars and cafes.

A4 (Drinking Establishments)

Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments, not including night clubs.

A5 (Hot Food Takeaways)

For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.

Although A2 does not include betting offices or pay day loan shops, and A4 does not include night clubs, for the purposes of shopfront design these are included in the scope of the SPD.

1.2 Why is shopfront design important?

Shopfronts are the most conspicuous part of a building's façade and as the first point of contact between a business and the public, a well-designed shopfront is integral to enticing customers inside. An accessible shop will increase customer numbers.

Implementation of good design can have a considerable impact on the wider streetscape; cumulative improvement can ultimately lead to the creation of aesthetically pleasing retail areas as well as the overall improvement of a village or town centre. Conversely, poor design decisions can harm an area, especially if the cumulative impact of small scale changes occurs over a prolonged period.

Shopfronts contribute to an immediate impression of a place and the general condition of shopfronts can affect the image of a town or village. High quality, well maintained shopfronts make a town feel more welcoming to locals and visitors. They contribute towards a stronger sense of identity. Unfortunately, the appearance of some buildings has been spoiled by inappropriate shopfront alterations which are unsympathetic to the character and appearance of their buildings and wider surroundings.

2 Key design principles

A well-designed shopfront should be in keeping with the appropriate historical style and character of the building which frames it, as well as the prevailing historical character of the area in which it is located. Alterations to existing shopfronts should improve this harmony.

Where a traditional, historic shopfront is of the same date as the parent building, retention and restoration will always be preferred to replacement.



SIX KEY PRINCIPLES:

1. The character and significance of buildings and their surroundings should be preserved or enhanced by the implementation of well-designed shopfronts using appropriate, high-quality materials.
2. Shopfront alterations should retain and enhance the original architectural features of a building rather than hide or detract from them. Repair rather than replace historic architectural features.
3. Shopfront or fascia signage should enhance the design of the building rather than detract from it
4. Alterations should seek to ensure access for all.
5. Residential conversions of shops should seek to retain original shopfront features where these are of historic interest and/or contribute to the character of the area
6. Development within a conservation area should pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

3 Shopfront design

A traditional shopfront is made up of key elements which frame the shop entrance and shop window. Each element has its own practical and visual function. The image below, figure 1, highlights the key features of a traditional shopfront and a glossary of terms can be found in Appendix A of this document.

The pilasters provide the vertical separation between shopfront units. The cornice is an important element that finishes the top of the shopfront and provides a transitional element between fascia and first floor. The stallriser creates a visual and structural base for the glazing of the window. The transom is a horizontal bar dividing the upper section of the window and aligns with the top of the door. In North Somerset this transom feature is found on many traditional shopfronts, often with smaller

panes of glazing above the transom line and a fanlight above the entrance door.

In addition to traditional shopfronts, there are many modern, typically twentieth century developments where the shopfronts have a distinctively different character. Modern shopfronts are characterised by lower stallrisers, modern frame materials and less ornamentation. The vertical division between units will be defined by the structural column instead of the traditional pilaster. Mosaic tiles will often be used as a decorative layer instead of a timber moulding or carved stonework.

The typical components of a modern shopfront are highlighted (fig.2) and a modern design approach will be appropriate where the setting or building suits this situation. Locations such as



Figure 1 Key components of a traditional shopfront

the High Street south of Regent Street in Weston-super-Mare, or The Precinct in Portishead are good examples of where a modern shopfront design would be appropriate as these are strong twentieth century architectural settings.

In every instance, the shopfront should be formed by the original building framework set by structural walls and beams and should carry significant features through to ground floor level rather than visually separating the ground and first floors.

In areas which aren't distinctly traditional e.g. a Victorian setting or overtly modern e.g. a twentieth century architectural setting, the design of a new shopfront should seek to include the following important elements and principles:

- i. a cornice above the fascia.
- ii. a stallriser that provides a solid base to the glazing – aim for between 400 to 700mm high. Ensure the sill is appropriately detailed.
- iii. a glazing arrangement that breaks down large expanses of glass.
- iv. a continuous horizontal transom that defines the top of the door and creates an upper section of glazing that can be intricately detailed, and where necessary conceal a suspended ceiling with opaque or back painted glazing.
- v. avoid disproportionately wide or tall entrance doors.
- vi. use sustainable natural materials such as timber and specify the correct materials to create sufficient robustness.



Figure 2 Appropriate new shopfront design

3.1 Preservation, restoration and modern intervention

Where the existing shopfront contributes variety and interest to the character of the building or street, it will always be preferable to repair rather than replace the shopfront. For traditional, historic shopfronts, which in some cases will still have the original materials, this will be the expected approach. The retention of existing features that contribute to the special character of a conservation area is especially important and is supported by development management policies. Alterations to statutorily protected listed buildings will require separate listed building consent, including fixing details for signage or other external attachment.

KEY PRINCIPLE 1 – The character and significance of buildings and their surroundings should be preserved or enhanced by the implementation of well-designed shopfronts using appropriate, high quality materials.

To understand whether the shopfront can be repaired, applicants and their agents should seek advice from an external consultant specialising in the repair of historic fabric. Please contact the Council's Conservation Officer for further advice and information in this regard.

KEY PRINCIPLE 2 – Shopfront alterations should retain and enhance the original architectural features of a building rather than hide or detract from them. Repair rather than replace architectural features.

After a full investigation into the feasibility of repair, and where the only course of action is to replace a traditional, historic shopfront, a newly designed shopfront should take into consideration the constraints of the existing shopfront and style of the building. Emphasis should be on a design that respects the architectural language, proportion and style of the appropriate historical period, for example a traditional shopfront would be appropriate in a Victorian setting. Appendix B recommends further reading on the subject of historical shopfront development.

Replacing materials like for like to the original will preserve the special character of a building and new design proposals should be informed by buildings of similar historical character or based on archival evidence if the original design or materials have been lost. Poor quality imitations of historical shopfronts should be avoided.

In some instances, it may be appropriate to interpret the design of a shopfront in a modern way; each planning application will be assessed on a case by case basis and a contemporary design approach will need to be of exceptional design quality with a justification for the proposal and how it either preserves or enhances its setting demonstrated by illustrations in the design and access statement.

Poorly designed shopfront alterations that detract from the character of the parent building or local area will not be supported.

3.2 Shopfront unity and cohesion

Over time, alterations to shopfronts can lead to a loss of unity in a building's appearance, which can result in a loss of harmony and/or cohesion across a group of buildings. When altering shopfronts, businesses and owners should aim to restore cohesion across architectural lines and design features. Efforts should be made to establish visual order across all stories of a building or facade, as opposed to focusing on the ground floor shopfront in isolation.



Figure 3
Shopfronts that relate well to the building facade and street



Figure 4
Shopfronts that have little or no cohesion with inappropriate alterations

Where opportunities exist to improve unity across a facade or group of buildings, North Somerset Council will work with business and property owners to ensure consistency in design as part of the planning process. Where site wide improvements are required, for instance in a conservation area, the council may use planning conditions to secure improvements to the development.

OLIVERS ANGLING

OLIVERS ANGLING
01275 871590

OLIVERS ANGLING
01275 871590

3.3 Materials

Materials used in alterations or new shopfront design should be appropriate i.e. reflect the status of a building; should not contribute to the deterioration of an existing material; and be sufficiently durable and attractive. North Somerset Council support the use of traditional craft skills and sustainably sourced materials such as timber should be specified for alterations to historic shopfronts. Materials that are original should be preserved and where necessary repaired using appropriate techniques, minimising the need to replace materials on a like for like basis.

In Victorian shopfronts, a durable softwood such as Scots Pine, European Redwood or Douglas Fir would have been used for general timber joinery. Elsewhere, European Oak would have been applied to areas that required greater durability, such as thresholds and steps. Pine panels would have been used for fascia boards. Exterior timber finishes would have been painted or varnished offering protection to the elements and to distinguish one shop from another.

The design of new shopfronts should aim to use these same materials and techniques or achieve the characteristics of these historically

appropriate materials and their external finishes. Fascia panels should be made of solid natural timber and not a lower grade equivalent that may delaminate. The use of plywood, chipboard, MDF or other timber composite panels will be discouraged as their edges will require covering to prevent delamination, resulting in an unnatural appearance. Applied mouldings that are poorly fixed and historically inaccurate will not be supported as they are inappropriate features, particularly within a conservation area, and are often proven to be short-lived. Traditional joinery techniques should be applied to timber shopfronts if they are to remain robust and attractive.

Excessively glossy or reflective materials such as acrylic or plastic will not normally be supported in new shopfront design or alterations. In new or replacement shopfront design, it is preferable to have a matt finish to prevent an overly reflective or bright surface. In areas where there are existing glossy or reflective materials that have a negative visual impact, for instance in a conservation area, the Council will seek improvements and will work with businesses and property owners to achieve this aim. The Council may use planning conditions to secure improvements to the development.

New buildings and buildings designed and constructed in the twentieth century provide scope for the use of more modern materials and fixing methods. Bronze, aluminium and steel shopfront frames and finishes are all evident in North Somerset. Granite can be seen at the ground floor level on some of the more high-end examples. Mosaic and stone tile cladding are a commonly found feature on twentieth century commercial developments and should be repaired or restored as part of any new proposal. Good quality materials are the key to successful modern shopfronts.

The focus of a shopfront design or alteration should be on the appropriateness of the material to the age, style and character of the parent building. In cases where there is no alternative but to replace materials, and only after a full investigation into the feasibility of

repair, replacing glass while leaving the frame intact may sometimes be preferable over a comprehensive replacement of frame and glass, particularly where the replacement system may be of a much lower quality. Replacing original timber, aluminium or other metal shopfront frames with uPVC will not be supported as it would result in a lowering of the quality of the shopfront. The higher commercial cost of fabricating and installing the original shopfront frames should be borne in mind.

High standards of design and construction are particularly important. It is therefore recommended that anyone designing or specifying a shopfront and those on site repairing or constructing a shopfront are sufficiently capable and experienced. Consult a specialist such as an architect or heritage consultant if in doubt.



3.4 Use of colour

When considering the colour of new or replacement shopfronts it is important the selected colour scheme complements the character and style of the building rather than conflicting with it. The colour of a shopfront should be sympathetic to the historical style and character of the building and the prevailing historical character of the area in which it is located. External paint finishes should preferably be of a matt finish and not excessively bold or bright. The RAL range of conservation or heritage colours may be appropriate. Applications to alter shopfronts should include a colour scheme in the form of colour swatches or illustrations which should include a comparison with the external materials of the parent building, for example stone or brick.

For historic buildings it is important the solid masonry external wall maintains a permeable external surface so any moisture within the fabric can evaporate. Painting masonry or external render will often trap moisture within the fabric



of the wall. This can lead to deterioration of the structure and should be avoided where possible. Any external application of paint or render should ensure that it will not trap moisture within the fabric of the external wall. Consult a specialist such as an architect or heritage consultant if in doubt. Stonework, especially Bath stone, should not be painted over under any circumstances. Caution is required when removing paint from historic buildings as some older paints contain lead which is hazardous to health.

Attention to architectural detail is also required to ensure rainwater adequately runs off the shopfront. Lead flashing on top of the cornice and an adequate drip edge detail for the window sill should be considered at the outset.





3.5 Fascia design

The fascia sign is an important element in shopfront design and consideration should be given to the scale, placement, materials, colour and lettering. Fascia signs should appear as an integral part of the design of the shopfront and the building, and should not dominate the façade. They should frame the top of a shopfront at the correct proportions and should not cover first floor window sills or other architectural features.

Oversized fascia will not be supported – aim for a depth no greater than 750mm or no more than one fifth of the height from pavement level to the bottom of the fascia.

Fascia signs should not project forwards of the building line, they should sit between the console brackets at either side. Fascia signs should contain the name of the business and preferably the property's street number. Supplementary advertising applied to fascia will not be supported and fascia colours should aim to complement those of the building as a whole.

Two adjoining shopfronts (or more if part of a terrace or group) of the same architectural phase should attempt to align their fascia in order to restore cohesion across the pair or group. If a shop occupies more than one building, the vertical division between the buildings should be retained. Separate fascia signs rather than one long fascia sign across multiple units will maintain a distinction between units.

The use of single sheet plastic signs or other excessively glossy or reflective material will not normally be permitted. The use of traditional materials such as timber with a painted finish will be supported.

Please refer to the materials section for information on appropriate materials to use. The council may use planning conditions to secure an appropriately detailed shopfront design. Work that is proposed to alter or install small scale architectural features or details should provide elevations at 1:10 or 1:20 and sections at a legible scale of 1:5.



3.6 Fascia and signage lettering

Hand painted fascia signs will be supported for traditional shopfronts. A capable and experienced signwriter should be employed to ensure a professional appearance.

KEY PRINCIPLE 3 – Shopfront or fascia signage should enhance the design of the building rather than detract from it.

Individual letters mounted onto the fascia are also appropriate where they are well-proportioned, respect the character of the shop or business, are appropriately fixed using minimal fixing pins, and are made of an attractive durable material with an appropriate matt finish. Excessively glossy, reflective or oversized lettering will not be supported. As a general principle, aim for all lettering, figures, symbols or similar features in the design to be no greater than 0.3 metre in height.

Traditional hanging signs, when of an appropriate design and size, can enhance the streetscape. The character and material of the sign should complement the fascia, preferably

made from a similar material and in a similar style. The sign should suspend from a traditional bracket. Oversized projecting or hanging signs will not normally be permitted – aim for a sign no greater than 750mm x 750mm positioned centrally on a pilaster, preferably at the same height or slightly above the fascia sign, and certainly no lower than 2.6m above the pavement to the underside of the sign. Projecting or hanging signs should not obstruct architectural detail and no more than one per business is permitted with deemed consent.



3.7 Windows, doors and stallrisers

From the fascia downwards, a shopfront generally consists of windows, doors and stallrisers. Together with transoms and mullions, these separate elements form the main window display of a shopfront and play an important role in framing and presenting the products of the business. The main window provides natural light to the shop and a view out towards the street.

Historic shopfronts tend to be more detailed and ornate in design, drawing their influences from different architectural or stylistic sources, while modern shopfronts are often much simpler. In terms of their historical development, older shopfronts are typically characterised by smaller more numerous panes of glass. At the beginning of the Victorian period, technological advances ensured larger sheet glass could be produced at much lower cost and this became evident in the design of shopfronts as windows became larger and glazing bars less numerous. It also meant the window sills of shopfronts could be lowered along with the heads of windows which could be raised. Towards the end of the Victorian period deeper entrance lobbies became more of a feature.

In modern shopfronts, large expanses of glass can sometimes be out of scale and can be expensive to replace. The method of subdivision of the shopfront glass should suit the character of the shopfront as well as the design of the building, including the position, size and proportions of the first floor. Glazing bars, transoms or mullions should be used to subdivide large windows so they relate to the building and create a more intimate scale. Where appropriate, doors and recessed lobbies can also be used to break up the window area.



For the design or alteration of a shopfront, the starting point should be to consider the details presented in Figures 1 and 2.

In historic buildings and high-quality buildings constructed in the twentieth century, the original shopfront fabric should be preserved and repaired, minimising the need to replace materials on a like for like basis. During alterations, traditional details may have been hidden from view behind oversized fascia or other modern panels. Where traditional details are discovered, they should be preserved and repaired, restoring the historic shopfront to its original design and quality.

In modern shopfronts, window heads and fascia are often oversized and lowered to disguise a new suspended ceiling inside. To overcome this issue, suspended ceilings should be inset by a minimum of 1 metre from the shop window. Alternatively, careful detailing of the glass above a transom may be appropriate adopting opaque glass to disguise the suspended ceiling within. Careful consideration of the architectural proportions of the shopfront will be required in this instance.

3.8 Shopfront advertising

Advertisements, including shopfront signage should be kept to a minimum. In general, if the business premise is a shop, an advertisement may be displayed only on an external wall which has a shop window in it, and no more than one hanging sign and one fascia sign will be permitted. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 and its subsequent amendments set out the advertisement control system and how it applies to shopfront development.

There are different categories of advertisement consent and certain classes of advertising that benefit from deemed consent are not applicable in conservation areas, so please check before proceeding. Care should also be taken when signs are displayed on or close to listed buildings so they do not detract from the character and appearance of the building. Signs that are normally permitted within the advertisement regulations (through applications for advertisement consent or full planning applications including advertisement consent) require separate listed building consent if they are attached to listed buildings.

Shopfront advertising should not extend above the level of the bottom of the first-floor window in the wall where the advertisement is.

Where opportunities arise to improve the appearance of a shopfront or building, through the reduction of stickers, laminate and posters for example, such a de-cluttering exercise will improve the attractiveness of a business and the Council may use planning conditions to secure improvements to the development.

The display of an unauthorised advertisement is an offence and can be subject to prosecution in Court where substantial fines can be imposed. It is strongly recommended that anyone wishing to display an advertisement first checks with North Somerset Council and, when required, obtains the relevant permission first.

The use of graphic window displays which cover the whole or the majority of a shop window will be discouraged and will not be supported on listed buildings or within a conservation area. This technique frequently turns a shop window into an oversized advertising hoarding and detracts from the character of the area and appearance of the building.



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3.9 Shopfront lighting

Internal lighting within a shop can enhance the attractiveness of the property and bring life to the wider streetscape, especially during the winter months. The night time economy can also be supported by a degree of internal illumination and shopfront security enhanced by a sensitively lit display area.

External illumination of the shopfront should be carefully considered. Within a conservation area, special attention will be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area and lighting schemes that affect a listed building or its setting should have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting. Therefore, illumination of signs or advertisements on listed buildings and all buildings in conservation areas will not be supported.

The deemed consent of illuminated advertisements does not extend to any premises in a conservation area. Internally lit box fascia signs and projecting box signs will not be supported in conservation areas or on listed buildings because they are unsympathetic to the special character of the area or building.

In cases where external illumination is appropriate, such as on business premises that are open in the evening, the amount, type and design of illumination should be sympathetic to the building and its wider street setting. Light fittings should be an integral feature of the fascia, concealed at source to prevent overly bright or dazzling displays. Signs lit by individual halo illumination or signs illuminated by light fittings concealed within a trough integral to the fascia may be acceptable.

Other forms of lighting such as swan necks can adversely affect the character of a shopfront by obscuring historic details but may be appropriate where there is historic usage, for example public houses. Careful consideration should be given to the environmental impacts of lighting and illumination, and how these effects can be mitigated. Many buildings in commercial areas are externally lit beyond their basic requirement and light spill can disrupt the attractiveness of an area at night.



3.10 Blinds and awnings

Traditional retractable awnings or blinds can be an attractive feature in the streetscape particularly where a sense of enclosure or intimacy is desirable for window shoppers or the provision of external tables and chairs. The appearance of the awning is important, and its material should be sufficiently durable to protect against the sun and rain. Awnings were originally made of canvas. Care is needed in the selection of an appropriate fabric for a shopfront, particularly in conservation areas. Correct detailing and traditional craftsmanship is encouraged on all historic buildings, including listed buildings.

Recessed blind boxes provide a protective enclosure for the blind or awning when it is not in use. Integral blind boxes will be supported where they are positioned neatly above or below the fascia board. Blind boxes added retrospectively should not project forward of the building line or sit uncomfortably above the cornice. It may be possible to fit the blind box on the underside of the structural soffit.

Modern fabrics, where they have a non-reflective or non-glossy plastic appearance are suitable in new awnings. The colour of the blind or awning should correspond to the shopfront and fascia and the blind should not act as the primary sign for the shop with lettering kept to a minimum, limited to the name of the company or business.

Curved, rigid framed fixed blinds, also known as Dutch canopies will not be supported in new development in conservation areas or on listed buildings as they are generally unsympathetic to the character of the area or building.



4 Shopfront access

4.1 Accessibility for all

The improved accessibility of businesses to all members of society is of considerable importance. With improved accessibility, a shopfront that takes into consideration the Equality Act (2010) makes good business sense and has the potential to increase custom.

KEY PRINCIPLE 4 – Alterations should seek to ensure access for all.

Very narrow doorways and changes in floor level are unhelpful and shopfront alterations should aim to comply with Building Regulations Approved Document M – Access to and use of buildings. As a general principle, entrances should be clearly defined, well lit, unobstructed and preferably level. Only in exceptional circumstances should people be obliged to ring a bell or wait to be escorted onto the premises.

For the development of a shop unit, an extension to a non-domestic building is treated as a new building under part M of the building regulations. The requirement for suitable independent access need not require separate provision, if it can be demonstrated that the extension will have suitable access through the existing building, which may be modified to provide access.

For alteration work to existing non-domestic buildings, it should comply with Requirement M1, and the building overall should be no less compliant than it was prior to the work being undertaken. Where an alteration does not affect



access, there is no need to upgrade access to meet Requirement M1.

Where the whole building is subject to material change of use the whole building should be upgraded to comply with Requirement M1.

Where only part of the building is subject to change of use that part should be upgraded to comply with M1. Sanitary conveniences in, or connected with, that part should comply with M1, as should those in other parts of the building to which users have access. There should be suitable access to that part of the building, either by a route to and through other parts of the building, or independent access.

If the change of use results in a building which includes both non-domestic and domestic parts then the non-domestic and common parts should comply with non-domestic guidance.

Accessibility in historic buildings should be improved as much as is practically possible, without prejudicing the character of the historic building or increasing the risk of long-term deterioration of fabric or fittings.

4.2 Access to upper floors

Where work is proposed to improve a shopfront, and where street level access to a floor above a retail unit is restricted, consideration should be given to integrating an additional entrance door to the shopfront with an internal staircase for improved access to the upper floors. The integration of the new door should complement

the character or appearance of the building and street, and is only feasible with a sufficiently wide retail unit. Where residential use is created above a shop, refuse and recycling storage and cycle parking need to be sized and accommodated within the building envelope, not outside.



5 Security

5.1 General

The Council will seek to adopt a balanced approach to shopfront security. The key objective should be to preserve or enhance the visual quality of the built environment and acknowledge there may be requirements for crime prevention measures that are proportionate to the risk. Where physical measures are required, they should be sympathetically integrated into the design of the shopfront.

The placement of security equipment on a building frontage, such as an alarm box or camera should not detract from the character or architectural integrity of the building and should allow architectural details such as console brackets to remain visually prominent. Security equipment that is on display can undermine perceptions of safety so measures should be commensurate to the risk.

Laminated glass is considered the most desirable shopfront security option as it has the capacity to remain intact when damaged or broken and is a robust deterrent against repeated acts of vandalism. Combined with a stallriser, the provision of a security shutter or grille becomes less essential.

5.2 Shutters

Projecting shutter boxes and solid security shutters will not be supported because of their poor quality appearance. They are detrimental to the visual quality of the shopfront and local area, and because solid shutters obscure details of the shopfront, including the window display and any

internal illumination, features which contribute to the character of the street are lost.

Internal open grille shutters, behind the glazing are the preferred shutter option, but in some locations external open grille shutters may be acceptable, each application will be assessed on its own merits. Shutters should not cover any part of a column, pilaster or fascia and thought should be given to the finish or colour that is appropriate to the character of the shop, and its overall design.

Shutters will only be considered suitable if the shutter boxes are an integral part of the shopfront surround, situated behind the fascia line. When used in conjunction with laminated glass, internal open grille shutters provide a theft-proof shopfront security system while allowing visibility into the shop.

Open grille shutters may also increase perceptions of safety, increasing the potential for natural surveillance from within the shop to the street, and vice versa, potentially discouraging anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. This form of shutter allows businesses to maintain a visual presence outside of trading hours.

Traditional timber shutters and grilles fitted to historic buildings are encouraged and should be retained where they exist. They should not be removed or replaced.

Planning, listed building and conservation area legislation are applicable to the installation of security measures so please check and apply for the appropriate permission before proceeding with any shopfront alteration.

6 change of use – use class a properties to residential use

This section provides guidance concerning the change of a building from Use Class A to residential use.

North Somerset Council encourages residential development in town, district and local centres as part of mixed use schemes with housing above other uses on the ground floor.

It also recognises that retailing is changing and that many centres now have excess retail floorspace and that vacant shops can detract from a vibrant centre. Therefore, outside of the primary shopping areas, district and local centres; the conversion of vacant ground floor premises in residential style streets to residential use is also supported. Many of these former shops have historic frontages which form an essential part of the identity and character of the building or area. Conversions will need to retain important historical shop front features and meet high quality design and place-making standards.

KEY PRINCIPLE 5 – Residential conversions of shops should seek to retain original shop front features where these are of historic interest and/or contribute to the character of the area.

National permitted development rights play an important role in helping high streets adapt to changes in how people shop and use the high street. These rights, to change use from Class A to Class D2, support new businesses and encourage



further diversity on the high street, allowing a greater change of use to support high streets to adapt and diversify and change to a wider range of uses, allowing more leisure and community uses such as gyms, cinemas, indoor recreation and office use (Class A) as well as homes.

Permitted development rights for the conversion of shops (use Class A1) and professional and financial services (use Class A2) to residential use are already in place, subject to prior approval and a floorspace limit of 150 square metres and subject to a number of conditions including the design or external appearance of the building.

Conversion of A1 and A2 uses to residential is not a permitted development right if the building is within a conservation area, is a listed building or a scheduled monument.

A planning application will be required.

6.1 Enhancing character

Where shop fronts of poor design have been incorporated into domestic buildings, windows and doors should reflect the original street design and first floor fenestration. High quality creative design solutions will be considered where these enhance the character of the area.

The most attractive examples of where a former shop has changed to a residential use, the identity of the building often remains unaltered. The shop window is maintained, quite often with its original frames and glazing. The corporate image of the shop is removed. New occupants typically apply a form of privacy screening, be it a layer of opaque film to the inside of the glazing up to an appropriate height to prevent passers-by looking in, or alternatively internal blinds are installed. Internal timber shutters may also be used, and these physical methods to support the change of use are supported.



The key requirement is to maintain a sense of identity of past use, possibly for reverting back to commercial use in the future but mainly for ensuring that visual interest and diversity of ground floor frontages is maintained across the area. The most appropriate approach will depend on the individual circumstances of the property.

In maintaining an original shopfront, a new glazed partition can be built internally, creating a small conservatory or lobby behind the original frame. Such an approach will be supported as the new partition provides additional acoustic and thermal protection, and can include ventilation grills or opening window sections.

Removing shopfronts in their entirety and infilling with blockwork, external render or other equally unsympathetic forms of external wall construction along with windows and doors that are out of character will not be supported in a conservation area as such an approach fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that area.

Planning applications will be expected to demonstrate that as well as featuring an appropriately designed and detailed conversion to residential use, they will also identify site wide enhancements to benefit the improvement of the conservation area. Each case will be different, and it is not possible to state exactly what enhancements will be required as much will depend on the existing condition of the building or site and whether any enhancement works have already been carried out. This should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the Council's development management and urban design officers through the planning application process.



6.2 Consideration of conversion of upper floors to residential

The conversion of upper floors to residential accommodation is encouraged. Permitted development rights also exist to add up to two flats above premises used as shops, financial and professional services, betting offices and pay day loan shops.

The following points should be taken into consideration when planning an upper floor conversion:

- Access arrangements to the upper floors should be considered in any refurbishment or development including individual joint access to facilitate access to upper floors – reducing damage to street scape by only affecting one unit.
- Access arrangements to residential units to take the form of separate arrangements to the front, rear or side of the building as appropriate
- Recommend higher level of sound insulation than Building Regulations to ensure comfortable noise levels for all occupants

6.3 Change of use in a conservation area

North Somerset Council places greater demands on a change of use from uses falling within Class A (shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways) to residential use within conservation areas.

Paragraphs 193 to 202 of the NPPF detail the need to consider potential impacts on the significance of a designated heritage asset such as a conservation area or listed building.

KEY PRINCIPLE 6 – Development within a conservation area should pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In developing proposals for Weston-super-Mare town centre, applicants and their agents should consult the Great Weston Conservation Area Town Centre Appraisal and Management Plans to inform their understanding of the area in which they are developing and to identify areas for improvement directly related to the development

site. This may include repairs to stonework, removal of advertising clutter, reinstatement of historic features or reversal of insensitive additions or alterations. This may also include restoration of an original Victorian shopfront where it has been lost and the Council will make full use of pre-occupation planning conditions to secure improvements to development which otherwise would be unacceptable, and to ensure the residential use cannot be occupied until the wider conservation area improvements have been satisfactorily completed.

Wider conservation area improvements related to the development can help to improve the character and appearance of a conservation area and may be considered necessary to help mitigate the harm that would be caused by conversion to residential use. If carried out to an appropriately high standard, such works could provide a public benefit.

Maintaining the architectural integrity of a property is of the utmost importance in cases of change of use. Archival evidence and planning history should be consulted to inform future designs.



7 Change of use and the building regulations

Through the change of use to a residential dwelling the detailed design of a former shop unit will require careful consideration. New designs will require creative adaptation and consideration of the building regulations.

There will be general requirements for upgrading the thermal performance of the walls, ceilings and floors including the glazed shopfront. A sound test will be needed between party walls or/and party floors. There will be a requirement for ventilation through background ventilation or/and possibly mechanical ventilation. Toughened glass in walls or windows below the 800mm level and below 1500mm level in doors and side panels within 300mm of the doors edge will be required and glazing with a fire rating will also be required in certain circumstances.

The standard for listed buildings, buildings within a conservation area or a scheduled monument is different.

Where changes to a property are typically required to meet the standards set by Building Regulations Approved Documents B (Fire safety), E (Resistance to the passage of sound), F (Ventilation), K (Protection from falling, collision and impact), L (Conservation of fuel and power), M (Access to and use of buildings) and Q (Security in dwellings) work to a listed building, a building within a conservation area or to a scheduled monument should not prejudice the character of the building or increase the risk of long-term deterioration. The building should be improved as much as is practically possible, although it may not reach the standards. This is

not an exhaustive list please contact our building control team for further advice.

The building regulations only apply to new work and there is no general requirement to upgrade all existing buildings to meet these standards.

Where a building did not comply with the regulations before the alteration, the work of an alteration shall be carried out so that afterwards the building's compliance with the regulations is no more unsatisfactory.

Listed buildings, buildings within a conservation area and scheduled monuments are exempt from compliance with the energy efficiency requirements to the extent that the requirements would unacceptably alter the character or appearance of such buildings.

In support of shopfront conversions, the use of secondary glazing systems that are sympathetic to the original shopfront design will be considered appropriate. This maintains the original shopfront character and has the added benefit of minimising areas of cold bridging around glazing frames and minimising the risk to the shopfront from condensation which may form on single glass panes.

To achieve the necessary fire and sound insulation requirements, suspended ceilings that are appropriately designed in relation to the shopfront will be supported.

Appendices

A: Glossary

Alteration: To change or improve the function of a building or artefact or to modify its appearance.

Architrave: Moulded frame around a door or window.

Awning: A sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a show window or doorway.

Awning/Blind Box: An area integral to the shopfront surround often behind the fascia, but found elsewhere such as around the cornice, which contains a retractable blind.

Canopy: A hood suspended or projected over a door or window.

Cill (or Sill): The horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame often timber but sometimes granite or bronze or with a brass cill plate.

Conservation: Action to secure the survival or preservation of buildings, cultural artefacts, natural resources, energy or any other thing of acknowledged value for the future.

Conservation Area: Area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Conversion: Alteration, the object of which is a change of use of a building or artefact.

Console Bracket: At the top of a pilaster and/or either end of the fascia forming a bracket, often moulded and decorative. They are a characteristic feature of Victorian shopfronts, typically carved from wood with a curved outline. Usually of greater height than projection.

Cornice: The ornamental moulding or projecting structure along the top of a wall, arch or building exterior (including the shopfront).

Façade: The whole frontage of the building including shopfront and upper floors.

Fanlight: A window over the door within the main door frame.

Fascia: A plain horizontal band projecting slightly from the surface of a wall, forming a part of the entablature above the shop window. Angled fascia was introduced in the Victorian period and pressure to accommodate larger fascia lettering resulted in increasingly larger fascia areas.

Intervention: Any action which has a physical effect on the fabric of a building or artefact.

Lights: The openings between the upright posts or mullions of a window.

Mullion: Vertical post or upright dividing a window or opening into two or more lights.

Pilasters: A rectangular shaped column or shallow pier which projects out slightly from a wall often with a decorative moulding.

Plinth: Found at the base of the pilaster in a traditional shopfront often with a decorative moulding, or chamfer at the top.

Preservation: State of survival of a building or artefact, whether by historical accident or through a combination of protection and active conservation.

Repair: Work beyond the scope of regular maintenance to remedy defects, significant decay or damage caused deliberately or by accident, neglect, normal weathering or wear and tear, the object of which is to return the building or artefact to good order, without alteration or restoration.

Restoration: Alteration of a building, part of a building or artefact which has decayed, been lost or damaged or is thought to have been inappropriately repaired or altered in the past, the objective of which is to make it conform again to its design or appearance at a previous date.

Reversibility: Concept of work to a building or artefact being carried out in such a way that it can be reversed at some future time, without any significant damage having been done.

Sill (or Cill): The horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame often timber but sometimes granite or bronze or with a brass sill plate.

Soffit: The underside of an architectural structure.

Stallriser: Solid base to the shopfront beneath the shop window providing a transitional element between the glass of the shop window and the ground. Providing a protective function as well as support for the glazing and frame.

Threshold: A strip of wood or stone forming the bottom of a doorway.

Transom: Horizontal bar dividing the upper section of the window or panel which may be of wood, stone or metal.

Ventilator: An aperture, typically a grill in traditional shopfronts, for ventilating a room or other space.





B: Resources and further reading

Approved Documents, MHCLG. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/approved-documents>

BS 7913:2013 – Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History, 2003, K Morrison

National Planning Policy Framework 2019: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779764/NPPF_Feb_2019_web.pdf

Great Weston conservation area: management guidance and appraisal, 2018. Available from: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/planning-advice/heritage/conservation-areas/>

Historic England Great Weston Heritage Action Zone. <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/weston-super-mare/>

North Somerset Council Building Control. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/building-control/buildingcontrol/>

North Somerset Council Conservation and Design. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/planning-advice/heritage/heritage-further-reading/>

North Somerset Council Planning Policy. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planningpolicy/>

North Somerset Council Local List of Planning Application Requirements: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/applyforplanning/supporting-documents/>

This outlines the supporting drawings that are required for each type of planning application.

Change of use:

Visit the planning portal to determine which changes of use require planning permission: https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use/2.

Old lead paint: What you need to know as a busy builder, 2014, HSE. Available from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis79.pdf>

Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers, 2007, DCLG. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers>

Advertising consent: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/consent/advertisementconsent/>

Replacing Windows Advice Note, 2012, North Somerset Council. Available from: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Replacing-windows-advice-note.pdf>

Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading, 2017, Historic England. Available from: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/>

UK Legislation search. www.legislation.gov.uk

Disability Design Standards: <https://theaccessofficer.n-somerset.gov.uk/2016/12/09/core-design-documents/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/heag010-easy-access-to-historic-buildings/>

Housing

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/housing/help-if-you-own-or-want-to-own-a-home/find-out-about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing/>



C: Planning policy

This Design Guide is based on policies set out in these documents:

- **The National Planning Policy Framework, 2019**

Chapter 7: Requiring Good Design

- **North Somerset Council Core Strategy, 2017**

CS2: Delivering sustainable design and Construction

CS5: Landscape and the historic environment

CS12: Achieving high quality design and place-making

CS21: Retail hierarchy and provision

CS28: Area Weston-super-Mare 'New development proposals should take into account the following objectives 'respect the characteristic heritage of Weston-super-Mare' and 'provide high quality design'.

- **North Somerset Council Development Management Policies, Sites and Policies Plan Part 1, 2016**

DM3: Conservation Areas

DM4: Listed Buildings

DM7: Non-designated heritage assets

DM32: High quality design and place-making

DM33: Inclusive access into non-residential buildings and spaces

DM 34: Housing type and mix

DM60-67: Retailing

- **Weston Town Centre Regeneration SPD, February 2017**

- **Great Weston Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, 2018**

- **Access: Designing for Diversity, 2012**



D: Different types of consent

Planning permission

Most physical changes to shopfronts will require planning permission, however some small alterations may not. Changes to properties situated within conservation areas are more likely to require planning permission.

Consult the planning portal website for further information concerning planning permissions: <https://interactive.planningportal.co.uk/>

Contact North Somerset's planning team to determine whether you will need planning permission: <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/contact-us/contactplanning/>

Listed building consent

Listed building consent has to be obtained before any alterations which will affect the character and appearance of a listed property can be made. This includes the insertion of new advertisement.

Search Listed building status on North Somerset Council planning map: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/planningmap/find-applications-using-the-planning-map/>

Search Historic England's National Heritage List for your property if you are unsure of your building's status: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Building regulations approval

Changes such as insertion of new windows and doors sometimes require building regulations approval as well as planning permission.

Contact North Somerset's planning team to determine whether you will need planning permission: <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/contact-us/contactplanning/>.

Advertisement regulations

Advertisement consent is often needed when making changes to fascia, hanging signs and other forms of external advertisement. The criteria for what does and does not require advertisement consent is complicated.

For further clarification access the following government page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advertisements#requirements-for-consent>

or contact North Somerset's planning team: <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning/contact-us/contactplanning/>

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