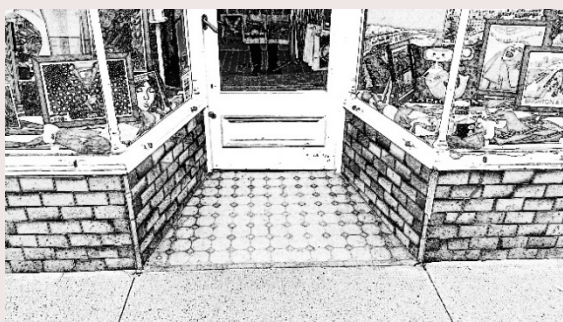


DESIGN GUIDE FOR SHOPFRONTS

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Draft for Consultation, July 2021



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Reading
Borough Council

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Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Planning Context.....	6
	When is planning permission required?	6
	National Planning Policy	7
	Local planning policies.....	8
	Other local policy.....	8
3.	Historic Context.....	10
	Elements of a shopfront	11
	Overview of shopfront design	12
4.	General Design Principles	20
	Frontages	23
	Stallrisers	25
	Advertisements related to shopfronts	26
	Fascia.....	26
	Other advertising considerations	27
	Other considerations	29
	Accessibility	29
	Forecourts	29
	Materials	30
	Fixtures	31
	Security	33
	Lighting	34
	Cash machines	34
	Periods of vacancy.....	34
	Upper Floors.....	34
	Specific considerations for historic or traditional shopfronts	34
	Materials	35
	Doors and windows	36
	Pilasters and fasciae	37
	Shutters and blinds	38
5.	Conversions from shopfront to residential.....	39
6.	Glossary.....	40
	Appendix 1: Design Checklists	42
	Appendix 2: Relevant Local Plan Policies	44
	References and further reading	49

1. Introduction

- 1.1 High streets define character and place, serving as the centre of the community. Individual shopfronts have a major impact on the streetscape and help to shape the daily experience of Reading for residents and visitors.

Figure 1: Castle Street. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure 2: Oxford Road (82). (Source: RBC Library Archive)



1.2 The benefits of physical improvements to shopfronts are wide-reaching. These include:

- Contributions to placemaking and vibrancy;
- Increased retail footfall and dwell time;
- Attractiveness to investment;
- Greater levels of occupancy;
- Improved community cohesion and social outcomes;
- Enhanced sense of civic pride and higher levels of engagement;
- More usable floorspace;
- Higher land values; and
- Achieving an appropriate mix of uses including residential, commercial and retail. In particular, historic high streets are correlated with better economic outcomes and prove to be more resilient in times of economic downturn¹.

Figure 3: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



¹ [Policy Implications of Recent Trends in the High-Street/Retail Sector \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Figure. 4: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure. 5: Oxford Road. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



Figure. 6: Oxford Road. The original character has been lost over time. (Source: RBC Library Archive)



2. Planning Context

- 2.1 Once adopted, this supplementary planning document (SPD) will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It will apply to all shopfronts within Reading Borough, both historic and traditional as well as modern frontages. It will supplement the policies in the [Reading Borough Local Plan](#) (adopted November 2019).
- 2.2 For the purposes of this SPD, shopfronts include all ground floor premises with a fascia and/or window display. This may include non-retail uses such as banks, estate agents, cafes, bars, restaurants and hot food take-aways.
- 2.3 All applications should clearly illustrate the plans, sections and elevations while including adjacent buildings and upper floors.
- 2.4 This SPD may also guide applications for advertising consent, but only in cases where advertisements are directly related to a specific shopfront.
- 2.5 This SPD should also be used to guide applications for conversions of existing shopfronts to other uses, such as residential.

When is planning permission required?

- 2.6 A new or replacement shopfront will always require planning permission. Alterations to an existing shopfront that involve a material change will also require planning permission. This may include:
 - Removal of a shopfront (either in whole or part);

- Alteration or replacement of features such as doors, window frames, cornices, corbel brackets or mouldings;
- Alteration of the frontage line;
- Changes to the size, shape or materials of a shop window (includes installation of reflective or obscure glazing);
- Removal or addition of mullions, transoms or glazing bars;
- Repositioning of the entrance;
- Enlargement or reduction of the fascia, as well as changes to depth or bulk;
- Changes to the facing materials;
- Removal or installation of an accessibility ramp;
- Installation of awnings or security shutters; and
- Repair works and maintenance: Repair works, interior redecoration or like-for-like replacement of features do not require planning permission, unless the building is statutorily listed. However, it is advisable to check with the RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer before starting works to determine whether approval is required.

2.7 Listed building consent is required when a new or replacement shopfront is within or attached to a listed building, as unapproved to a listed building is a criminal offence. In addition to the items listed above requiring planning permission, the following works will require listed building consent:

- Removal, addition or alteration of entrance floor tiles;
- Removal of an original blind and/or blind box;
- Installation of an extractor fan outlet;
- Painting any previously unpainted exterior walls (as it is generally not supported);
- Repainting in a markedly different colour or with a textured wall paint; and
- Alterations to the interior of the shop.

2.8 Building regulations approval will likely be required for all new or replacement shopfronts and for some alterations. Applicants should contact [building control](#) before proceeding.

National Planning Policy

2.9 [The National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) states in paragraph 85 that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should promote long-term vitality and viability of town centres.

2.10 Section 8 (promoting healthy and safe communities) emphasises that planning policies and decisions should achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- Promote social interaction through strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages;
 - Are safe and accessible with high quality public spaces;
 - Enable and support health and wellbeing through provision of local shops;
 - Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, such as local shops, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities; and
 - Ensure that established shops are able to develop and modernise and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- 2.11 Paragraph 118 states that planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example, converting space above shops).
- 2.12 Paragraphs 189 to 202 state the requirements for applicants and local authorities when considering applications that affect heritage assets. Applicants must describe the significance of the asset and any potential impacts on their significance or setting.

Local planning policies

- 2.13 This SPD provides specific guidance on shopfront design, but forms part of a wider planning policy framework and should be read in conjunction with other relevant planning policy documents, particularly the Local Plan (adopted November 2019). This SPD specifically supplements the following policies (full text is included in Appendix 1):
- CC7: Design and the public realm;
 - EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
 - EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas;
 - EN6: New development in a historic context;
 - OU4: Advertisements;
 - OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines;
 - CR2: Design and central Reading;
 - CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading; and
 - CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading.

Other local policy

- 2.14 The three themes of [Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2021/22](#) are:
- Healthy environment - making Reading a nicer, greener, more attractive place to live;

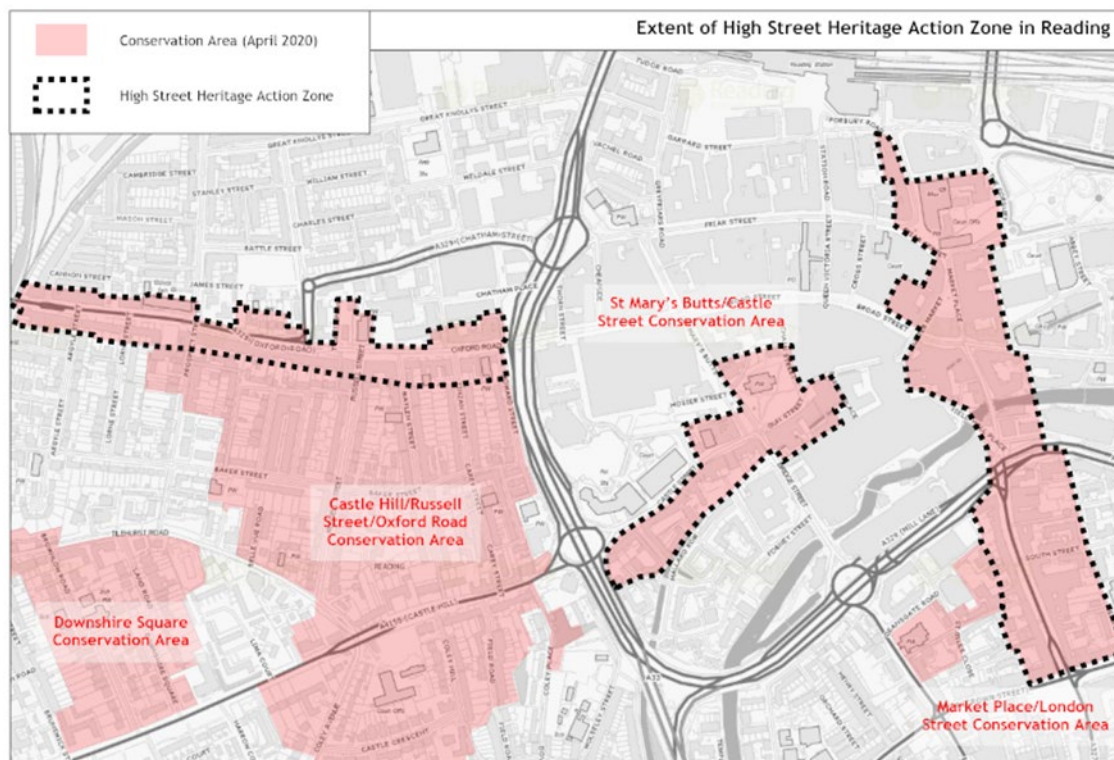
- Thriving communities - embracing diversity and community and ensuring that everyone has an equal chance to thrive; and
- Inclusive economy - a town where everyone can access education, skills and training, good jobs and decent housing.

Delivering a vibrant town centre with shopfronts that contribute to the character of the area is a key part of achieving these objectives.

- 2.15 [Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030](#) aims to enhance Reading's identity as a cultural and historic destination. Restoration of historic shopfronts will serve to engage local businesses, attract and retain investment and promote Reading as a visitor destination.
- 2.16 [The Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone \(HSHAZ\)](#) programme is a heritage-led regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve our historic high streets through physical interventions, community engagement and cultural programming. The programme is based around areas on the Oxford Road, Castle Street, Gun Street, the southern end of St Mary's Butts and Market Place. One of the major objectives of the programme is:

“To improve the physical condition and the viability of the high streets within the three conservation areas by identifying those properties most at risk and engaging with property owner to help them to restore the building, to show them how to maintain the building and to share best practice. We want to see premises viably and fully occupied and footfall and customer satisfaction increasing.”

Figure 7: Map of the High Street Heritage Action Zone in Reading



3. Historic Context

- 3.1 Reading is home to a variety of surviving historic shopfronts which together illustrate a rich history of our high streets.

Figure 8: Broad Street, Reading in 1905 (Source: Reading Library).



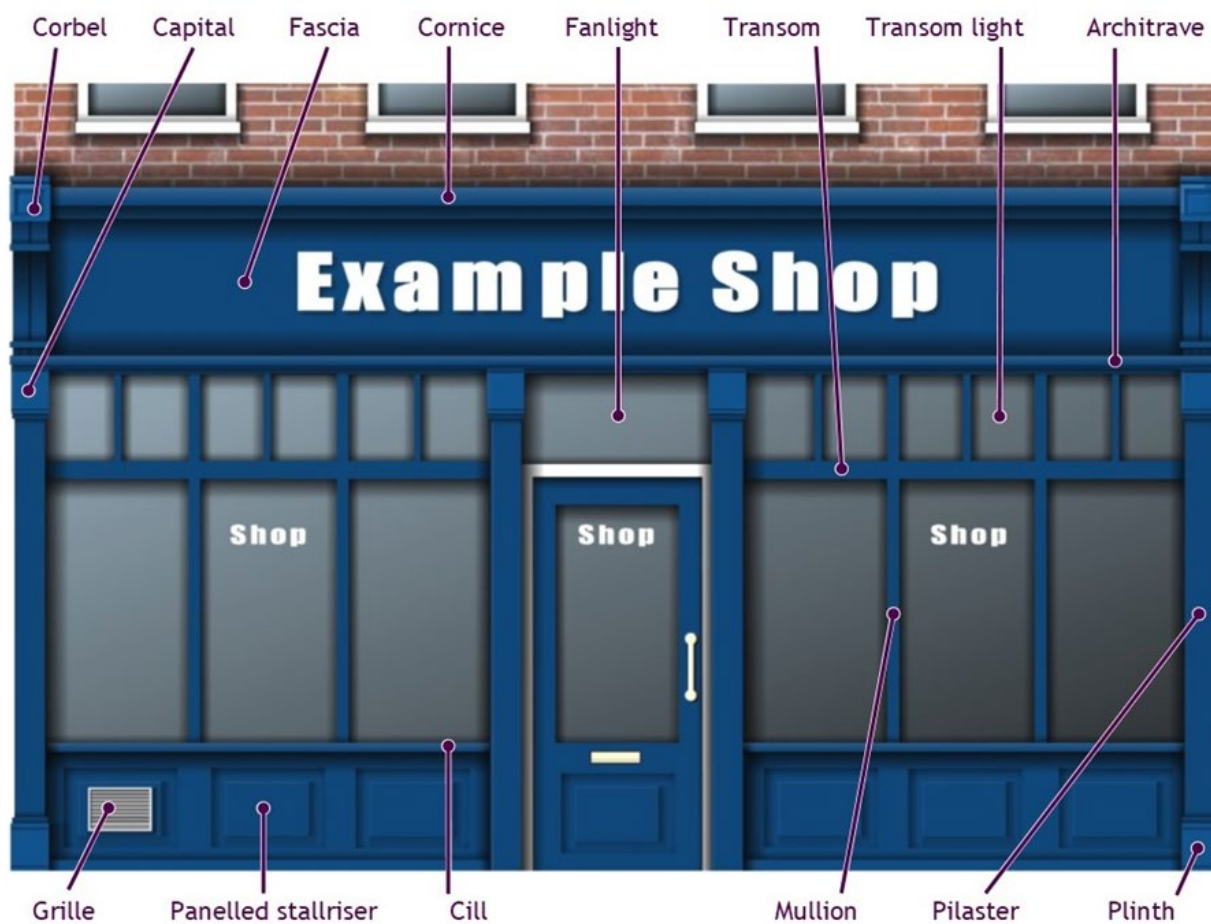
Figure 9: Broad Street, Reading in 2021. (Source: Reading Library).



Elements of a shopfront

3.2 The following elements of shopfronts are referenced in this document.

Figure 10: Elements of a shopfront



Overview of shopfront design

- 3.3 Medieval shopfronts (14th or 15th century), have rarely survived in Reading, but can sometimes be seen on the ground floors of timber-framed buildings. The work area or shops were usually on the ground floor, with residential on the upper floors. The ground floor, usually consisted of a simple door and windows (originally shutters), sometimes open to the street, and did not resemble shopfronts as we recognise them today.

Figure 11: Example of a medieval shopfront on corner of London Street and London Road, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning)



Figure 12: Ground floor of Figure 11, showing front door. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.3 As times changed so the design of shopfronts evolved. After the great fire of London, generally buildings were designed in brick. In the 17th and 18th centuries. In Reading, a number of original medieval buildings had their facades updated.

Figure 13: Medieval Back (15th) / Georgian (18th) shopfront, London Street, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.4 Georgian shopfronts (c. 1710s - 1830s) established many familiar elements of shopfronts such as glazed windows to display goods with numerous panels divided by glazing bars, as well as decorative exterior elements such as pilasters, stall-risers and cornices.

Figure 14: Georgian shopfront on London Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning)



- 3.5 Regency & Mid-19th century Victorian Shop fronts had multi-pane full height windows, with decorative cornices. In time as window glass was made bigger, the number of panes reduced. Then towards the end of the 19th century full height glazed shopfronts became the norm. The shopfronts were then placed in ornate timber frames with decorative columns, moulded panelling and cornices, sometime with rows of dentils. There was also the introduction of panels of stained or frosted glass.

Figure 15: Example of an Inter-war shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 16: Example of an Inter-war shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton. Dated 1846. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 17: Example of a Mid-19th century shopfront, High Street, Oxford (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 18: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.4 Victorian shopfronts (c. 1840 - 1900) exhibited larger single-paned display windows made possible for the first time by plate glass framed by decorative architectural elements and fasciae displaying the shop name. A feature which became very common was retractable canvas awnings, traditionally with a timber panel on the exterior end.

Figure 19: Regency / Classical motifs Early 19th century. the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning)

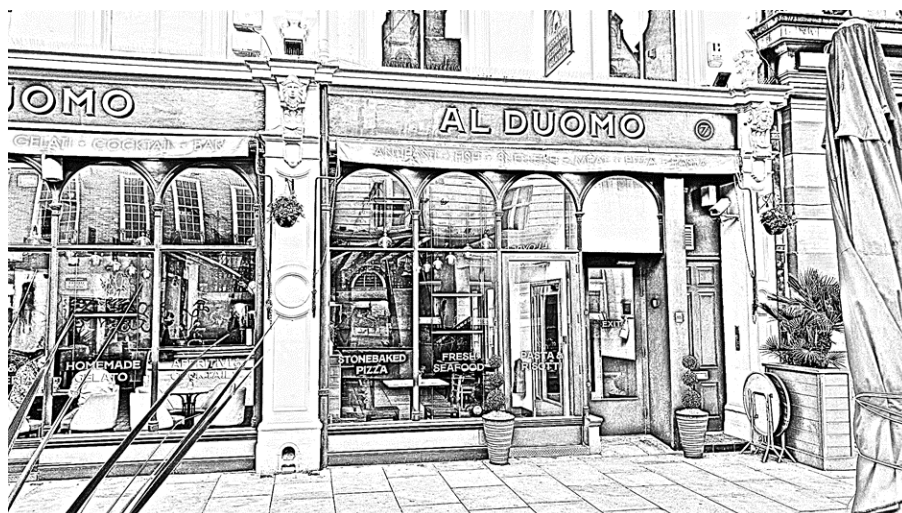
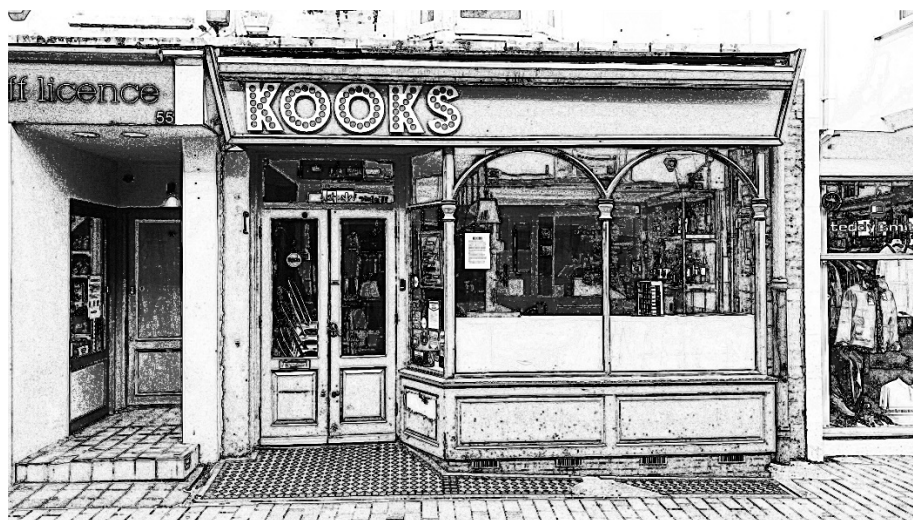


Figure 20: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.5 During the Edwardian period (c. 1900 -1915) many stallrisers were lowered, fasciae enlarged and doorways recessed.

Figure 21: Edwardian. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 22: Edwardian. (Source: RBC Planning).



3.6 The 20th century saw the advent of new materials, such as chrome or vitrolite.

Figure 23: Interwar. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 24: Interwar. Art Deco or Moderne. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 3.7 Today, contemporary shopfronts are often made of plastics, metal or stainless steel with large expanse of undivided glass and wide, level entrances.

Figure 25: Modern. (Source: RBC Planning).



4. General Design Principles

4.1 Proposals for new or replacement shopfronts or alterations to an existing shopfront are expected to:

	Principle	Local Plan Policy Reference
1.	Respect or enhance key features of any historic interest, aiming to enhance and improve upon any original features through repair in the first instance, rather than replacement;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part A) EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
2.	Respect the character of the building and the wider area in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting and location;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines CC7: Design and the Public Realm CR2: Design in Central Reading CR8: Small Shop Units in Central Reading
3.	Employ signage that enhances the street scene and does not detract;	OU4: Advertisements OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
4.	Provide safe and inclusive access for all;	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
5.	In the case of conversions from shopfront to residential or non-retail uses, retain original shopfront features to the greatest extent possible; and	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
6.	Present an active frontage to the street at all times and minimise any opaque coverings that obscure the shop window.	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part E) CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading

- 4.2 Shopfronts of architectural and historic merit are expected to be retained and restored. Wherever possible, shopfronts should be restored to original designs, particularly if the shopfront is in an area of other traditional shopfronts. Applicants should identify a local example that has retained original details to guide design proposals.

Figure 26: Watlington Street 19th century Shopfront, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.3 Shopfronts should not be designed in isolation. Applicants should treat the building as a unified whole, thinking carefully about upper storeys and neighbouring properties. Proposals are expected to relate to the scale, proportion and architectural style of the host building and wider streetscape by acknowledging common features that occur on surrounding shops.

Figure 27: Elevation showing the plot spacing and shopfront details.



Continuous facades which extend across several buildings weaken the rhythm of the streetscape and create a horizontal emphasis



Subdividing the street into individual shopfronts and varying the size and height of the fascia to suit the scale of the building reinstates the rhythm of the streetscape

Figure 28: Photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details. (Source: RBC Planning).

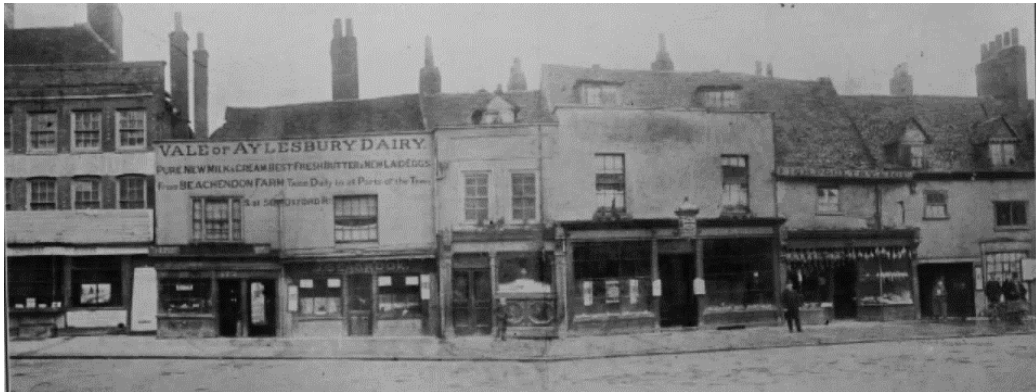


Figure 29: Detail photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details. (Source: RBC Planning).



4.4 Modern shopfronts are almost never appropriate as part of a historic building or within a Conservation Area. Chain shops or larger shops that wish to use a house style or corporate image must adapt these to fit within the historic environment.

Figure 30: On left - Recent (2021), newly completed shopfront on corner of Friar Street and Station Road. New Wendy's fast food shop. (Source: RBC Planning).



Frontages

- 4.5 Display windows should avoid large frontages of undivided glass. Vertical and horizontal subdivision of the façade is preferred. Display windows should avoid clutter, as well as proliferation of advertising and/or posters. Glazing should be clear glass.

Figure 31: Broad Street. This is a relatively good example of a timber glazed shopfront. However, the silicon joining the corners of the glass need timber frames to make it a more traditional detail. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.6 Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint, films and temporary or permanent posters applied to the interior or exterior of the window should be minimised and should not obscure the shop window. The area of opaque coverings should not exceed 30% of the total area of glazing. Shopfronts should remain active during both the day and night.

Figure 32: Oxford Road. Good example of sympathetic window display. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 33: Poor example of shopfront windows that are obscured by advertising with poor visibility (Source: RBC Planning).



4.7 Natural ventilation via grilles or opening lights should be considered.

Figure 34: Photo of historic façades, with air grilles in Friar Street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Stallrisers

- 4.8 Applicants should retain or install a Stallrisers with a moulded and projecting cill at the base of the shopfront of at least 300mm (450mm to 700mm preferred) in height in order to form a solid visual base. This prevents damage to glazing and reduces cleaning and maintenance.

Figure 35: Stall riser new shopfront on Broad Street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 36: Historic Tiled Stallrisers in Hay-On-Wye (Source: RBC Planning)



Figure 37: Shopfront with no Stallriser, Oxford (Source: RBC Planning).



Advertisements related to shopfronts

Fascia

4.10 Fasciae should:

- relate appropriately to the scale, character and features of the building and the adjacent buildings;
- be located beneath the sills of first floor windows and above the highest part of the ground floor windows;
- span the entire width of the shopfront between the corbels;
- not block or extend onto a cornice or stringcourse;
- be positioned evenly between corbels;
- Signage: Discrete downlighting is the preferred choice, avoid lettering which is internally illuminated and comply with the illumination requirements of the Local Plan (Policy OU4 and paragraphs 4.7.24 - 4.7.31); and
- avoid excessive use of bright colours or any use of fluorescent colours (bright colours and reflective materials such as mirrored lettering should be avoided entirely on traditional shopfronts and historic buildings).

Figure 38: Good example of signage, on Oxford Road, Road. Note a well detailed timber glazed black shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.11 Best practice guidance regarding illumination can be found in the [Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements](#).
- 4.12 Multiple fasciae should be avoided. On double or multiple shopfronts the dividing corbel and pilaster should be retained, and the fascia divided.
- 4.13 Fasciae should be placed as to ensure that the first-floor window cills are visible from the pavement on the opposite side of the road. The bottom edge of the fascia should not extend over the edge of the ground floor windows.
- 4.14 Text should not occupy the entire fascia and should be well-proportioned. As a guide, text should occupy no more than half the width and half the height of the fascia.
- 4.15 A modest logo may be included. Corporate images are expected to suit local characteristics and may need to be reduced in size. Contemporary designs may be acceptable provided they respect historic context. Refer to Figure 39.

Other advertising considerations

- 4.16 'A-boards' should be avoided in order to avoid a cluttered appearance or obstruction of footpaths or pavements. These may be appropriate within a private forecourt but should be modest in size and colour and reflect the design of the shopfront itself. A [license](#) is required for any A-boards or other freestanding adverts, directional signs or information signs and inanimate characters on the public highway.
- 4.17 Estate agent boards on shopfronts should be avoided unless permitted under deemed consent in the national regulations. More information is available on the [Council's Planning Enforcement page](#).

- 4.18 Signage at high levels should be avoided.
- 4.19 One, small projecting sign per shopfront frontage may be appropriate. These should be reasonable in scale, avoid internal illumination and should reflect the style of the fascia. In some cases, a larger sign may be appropriate if it reflects traditional character (such as a larger, flat painted pub sign).

Figure 39: Good example of hanging signage, on Broad Street. Note new Bank Machine, in shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



Figure 40: Good example of hanging signage, on Broad Street. Note new Bank Machine, in shopfront. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.20 Temporary signage, such as banners, should be avoided. Signage applied to windows either internally or externally should never occupy more than 30% of the shopfront window. Refer to Figure 34.

Other considerations

Figure 41: 1979 The Horn. Public House. St Mary's Butts, Reading. Source: RBC Planning



Accessibility

- 4.21 Any proposed alterations should result from a full consideration of accessibility. For historic shopfronts, a pragmatic approach should be taken to ensure both reasonable accessibility and retention of historic interest.
- 4.22 Access points should:
- be wide and level in order to be accessible for individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals and those with prams;
 - have entrance doors that are visually distinguishable from the rest of the shopfront;
 - employ visual manifestation on glass such as small opaque decals to highlight the presence of glazing and to prevent accidents;
 - ensure that wheelchair access can be achieved without users opening double doors;
 - utilise doors that are easily opened by those with limited strength; and
 - avoid automatic sliding doors (unless on large modern shopfronts).

Forecourts

- 4.23 Forecourt seating or trading can invigorate the street scene but must avoid causing obstruction to pedestrians or nuisance to nearby residents.
- 4.24 Forecourts must be clearly delineated from the pavement and provide adequate clearance for pedestrians free of street furniture. For primary routes with heavy footfall, 3m is required at all times. 2m is required for all other routes.

- 4.25 Forecourts must be kept uncluttered to avoid negative visual effects and obstruction. Forecourt trading must not obscure historic shopfronts or shopfronts within a Conservation Area. It is not appropriate to park vehicles on forecourts or pavements. This significantly detracts from the character of the area and obstructs pedestrian routes.

Figure 42: Shopfront with cluttered forecourt (Source: RBC Planning).



Materials

- 4.26 All shopfronts are expected to use high quality materials and avoid the use of plastics, metal and reflective materials. Modern metal frames are not supported.
- 4.27 Applicants should consider the sustainability of materials. Hardwood and softwood sourced from sustainably managed forests is preferred. UPVC should be avoided.

Figure 43: Good example of shopfront and entrance to residential above on London Street, Reading. Source: RBC Planning



- 4.28 Brickwork or stonework should not be rendered, gravel-dashed or painted. Removal of paint to restore original brickwork is encouraged.

Figure 44: Where brick is an important part of the character of the façade, it should be retained. However, tiled Stallrisers are an important character element. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 45: Historic Tiled Stallriser in Friar street. (Source: RBC Planning).



Fixtures

- 4.29 Canopies and shopblinds should
- be at ground level only and should avoid spanning more than one structural bay;
 - be used to provide shading;

- complement the design of the shopfront in suitable colours (avoid excessively bright or florescent colours);
- use high-quality materials such as canvas or rayon, rather than acrylic or plastic;
- be retractable and avoid bulky, curved or rigid framed blinds, such as Dutch blinds;
- provide 2.4 m headroom;
- cover the full width of the fascia; and
- avoid the use of side panels.

Figure 46: Retractable awning (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 47: Shopfront with non-retractable Dutch blind (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).



4.30 Blinds with lettering will likely require advertising consent.

Security

- 4.31 Shopfront security is expected to be carefully considered at the earliest design stage. Security measures should be limited to the minimum measures necessary and should be integral to the shopfront itself, appropriately reflecting the character of the building.
- 4.32 Security shutters detract from the character of the high street and should be avoided in favour of laminated glass as 10-15mm glass can often achieve the same level of security. If laminated glass is not possible, internal grilles should be used. Solid internal shutters are generally inappropriate. All effort should be made to ensure that the shopfront display remains visible. If necessary, demountable or removable grilles are preferred to external roller grilles.

Figure 48: Shopfront with solid external security shutters (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).



Lighting

- 4.33 External lighting should only be used on shopfronts that trade after dark. Light-coloured writing on a dark background can be effective. In conservation areas or on listed buildings there should be particular caution with internal illumination, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable.
- 4.34 Illuminated projecting or hanging signs on the exterior of the building will not be permitted.

Cash machines

- 4.35 Cash machines should be located within well-lit, busy areas and away from dark corners or deep recesses that obscure visibility. Refer to Figure 40.
- 4.36 Cash machines should be minimal in design, in keeping with the building's character and should avoid dominating the shopfront.

Periods of vacancy

- 4.37 Periods of vacancy can have a significant impact on a building's appearance and the vitality of the area. Conditions may be imposed on planning permissions to ensure that the boarding of shops is limited to a specific period of time and may specify decoration to ensure the attractiveness of the area, such as painting a colour that matches the fascia or pilasters.

Upper Floors

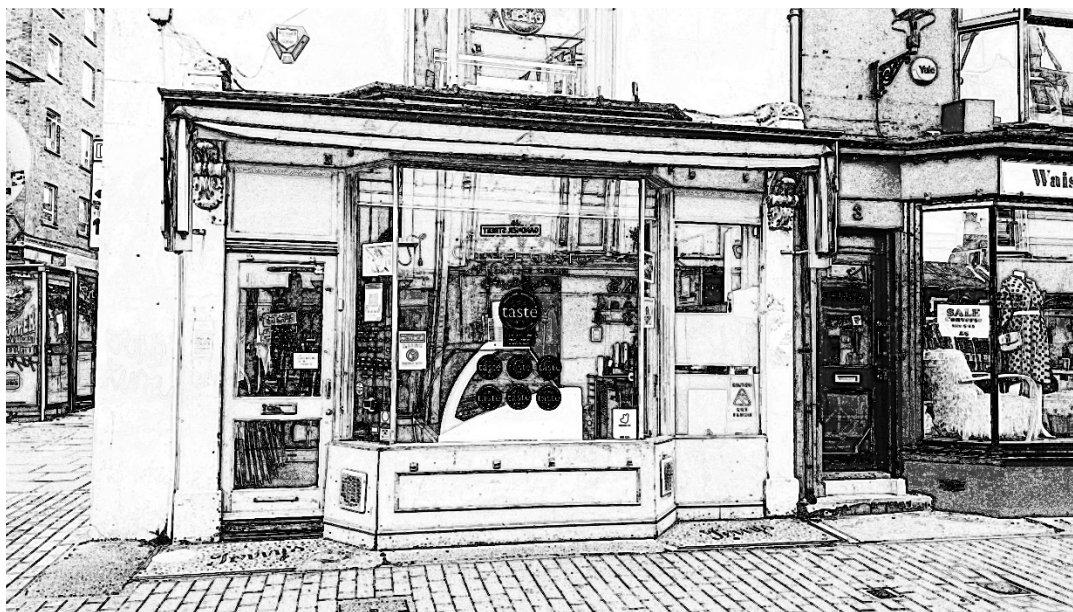
- 4.38 Applications should consider the appearance of the entire building. Applications should seek to improve the appearance of upper floors, if possible. Removal or consolidation of wiring or exterior installations on upper floors should be considered, particularly within Conservation Areas.
- 4.39 Every effort should be made to keep upper floors in use, such as for ancillary storage or residential.
- 4.40 Upper floors fenestration and architectural style should be in keeping with the ground floor and overall character of the building.

Specific considerations for historic or traditional shopfronts

- 4.41 Where a historic or traditional shopfront exists, consent will not be granted for its removal. All original elements and materials are expected to be retained and sensitively restored.
- 4.42 Applicants should use an accredited conservation architect and base designs in historic evidence, such as:
- archival materials such as historic photographs;
 - original architectural drawings; and/or
 - physical evidence uncovered during works.

- 4.43 The architectural features of reinstated shopfronts should be indistinguishable from nearby units which have been retained in good condition.
- 4.44 Many historic units featured a separate entrance to upper floors. These should be reinstated and employed to bring upper floors back into use. Upper floors should be sensitively restored and be in keeping with the ground floor shopfront.

Figure 49: Dual access shopfront. Shop entry and residential, Brighton. (Source: RBC Planning).



Materials

- 4.45 Timber with lead capping is the most common traditional material, as well as stall risers of stone, brick, glazed brick, render, iron, tile or bronze.

Figure 50: Cornice with lead flashing over, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 51: Shopfront with tradition materials are part of the street character and significance. Note the stone paving in the passage. London Street, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.46 Raised detailing (particularly timber detailing) often serves more than a decorative purpose and is often designed to help shed rainwater. Therefore, original raised detailing should be restored and application of superficial elements for decoration should be avoided.
- 4.47 Colours should reflect the character of the particular area. Typically, rendered areas (such as Stallrisers) were painted to contrast joinery. Where a single pilaster or corbel is shared by adjoining units, they should not be painted half one colour and half another. Any original brick, bronze or hardwood should not be painted. Reflective materials should be avoided.

Doors and windows

- 4.48 Proposals to adapt historic shopfronts for disabled access will be considered and encouraged, but proposals should remain sensitive to historic character.
- 4.49 A contemporary shop window and door can sometimes be appropriately inserted within an original framework, fascia and pilasters.
- 4.50 The design of the shop door should reflect the design of the shopfront and windows, with a bottom panel or kickplate to match the height and style of the stall riser.
- 4.51 Where they have been removed on historic shopfronts, recessed doors should be reinstated.

Figure 52: Shopfront with traditional recessed entryway at High Street, Oxford.
(Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.52 Modern framing materials such as aluminium or UPVC will not be acceptable on historic buildings or within Conservation Areas.
- 4.53 Shopfronts with glazed folding doors which enable the frontage to be fully opened will only be acceptable in historic buildings if designs incorporate a stall riser.
- 4.54 Graphic window vinyl which obscures views into the shop will be discouraged. Vinyl is not permitted on listed buildings as this detracts from the character of the area.

Pilasters and fasciae

- 4.55 Original pilasters or corbels should not be altered or removed. Where a pilaster or corbel is missing or partially missing, it should be reinstated.

Figure 53: Panelled, plain and fluted pilasters with decorative consoles. Brighton.
(Source: RBC Planning).



Figure 54: Good example of signage and cornice above shopfront. Oxford Road, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).



- 4.56 New pilasters should have a plinth at the base and be treated with the prevailing material of the building.
- 4.57 A new fascia should avoid projecting further than the original fascia.
- 4.58 Fasciae should have moulding cornices in timber with a lead flashing. Marine quality plywood is an acceptable alternative to timber.
- 4.59 Glossy, reflective or plastic/acrylic fasciae are not acceptable.
- 4.60 In well-lit areas, there should be no need to light fasciae (particularly if shops do not trade after dark). Should illumination be required, it should comply with Policy OU4 of the Local Plan and paragraph 4.7.26 which states:

“Whole fascia internal illumination should be avoided. Care should be taken to ensure that illumination is in keeping with the character of the area, particularly where it would affect heritage assets, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable.”

Policy OU4 also emphasises that “care should be taken to ensure that illumination does not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway.”

Shutters and blinds

- 4.61 Any original blinds or awnings should be reinstated.
- 4.62 Roller blinds made of canvas or woven acrylic fibre with a matte finish are the most appropriate solution for listed buildings, historic buildings and shops within a Conservation Area. Blinds should retract into a timber box that sits flush with the fascia. The colour should match the fascia and shopfront or be a natural canvas colour.

- 4.63 Exterior security shutters should be avoided on Listed Buildings or within Conservation Areas in favour of laminated glass. Any original or traditional wood shutters should be retained and maintained.

5. Conversions from shopfront to residential

- 5.1 Applications to convert shopfronts to residential use will be expected to retain the shopfront to the greatest extent possible. This may require improvements to the existing shopfront in order to ensure that the frontage reflects the character of the area, particularly within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Please refer to figures 44 and 50 for examples of entrances to upper floors.
- 5.2 Replacement of shopfronts with solid walls and windows is not acceptable.
- 5.3 Privacy should be provided by internal blinds and/or curtains, rather than opaque film.
- 5.4 If the proposal aims to provide a glazed opening for light to a basement, removal of the stallriser will not be permitted unless glazing is appropriately obscured for example by an iron grille. A solid visual base should be maintained.
- 5.5 Changes made under permitted development rights should follow these guidelines, as well.

6. Glossary

Architrave - the moulded frame of a door or window, can also refer to the lowest member of an entablature

Awning or canopy - a sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a shop window or doorway

Blind box - storage located above to fascia to store retractable blinds or awnings

Capital - ornamental feature at the top of a pilaster or column

Cill - horizontal bar at bottom of a window frame

Console brackets - located at the top of a pilaster and either end of the fascia

Conservation Area Appraisal - document that defines the special characteristics of defined areas of special architectural or historic interest which are worth preserving

Corbel - a block of masonry or material such as brick or wood which projects and supports a beam or other feature (such as a cornice)

Cornice - Flat topped ledge with moulded underside, usually found along the top or near the top of a building

Entablature - collective name for the architrave, frieze and cornice which forms the upper part of a classical building below the roof

Façade - the exterior face of the building, including the shopfront and upper floors

Fascia - flat surface above a shop window on which the name of the shop is displayed

Fluting - shallow grooves running vertically along a surface, usually on a column or pilaster

Grille - opening of several parallel slits in a wall, metal sheet or other barrier intended to let air or water enter or leave while keeping larger objects out

Halo lighting - back lighting for letters that creates a glow around a raised letter by illuminating the surface behind

Laminated glass - two pieces of glass containing a plastic interlayer. If broken, the interlayer prevents a large entry from being created.

Listed Building Consent - Permission required before works that might affect the character or appearance of listed buildings can be undertaken

Marine Quality Plywood - plywood that is more water-durable and performs better in high-moisture conditions

Moulding - continuous projection or groove used decoratively or to guide rain water off of a surface

Mullion - vertical glazing bar that divides a window into two or more sections

Pilaster - Flat representation of a pillar

Plinth - moulded projecting base at the foot of a pilaster

Stallriser - structural element that provides a solid base beneath a shop window between the ground and the glass window. These support the glazing and frame and provide protection.

String course - a projecting, decorative horizontal band on the exterior of a building

Supplementary Planning Document - Planning documents which provide more detailed information than development plans, but do not have the same weight

Transom - Horizontal bar dividing the upper section of the window

Trough lighting - enclosed lighting unit that is supported by brackets and casts light, typically onto a fascia

Appendix 1: Design Checklists

Design Checklist

Heritage	Is the building or area a heritage asset? (i.e. Listed, locally listed, within a Conservation Area)	
	Establish the building's history. Is the existing shopfront original? Are original features beneath a modern exterior? Can original features be retained and restored or an original shopfront reinstated?	
	Find any local historic records pertaining to the property, such as historic photographs. These should inform your proposals.	
	Are there any other material considerations to inform the proposal, such as a local listing description or Conservation Area Appraisal ?	
Local Plan Policies	Do the proposals comply with all relevant Local Plan policies, particularly those outlined in Appendix 2?	
Design	Is the shopfront divided vertically and horizontally to avoid large areas of undivided glass? Inactive or closed panels should be avoided.	
	Is signage and advertising kept to a minimum in order to avoid a cluttered appearance?	
	Is the fascia well-designed, positioned consistently with adjoining buildings and located as not to obscure architectural features?	
	Does the shopfront have no more than one small projecting sign?	
	Does the shopfront relate in scale, proportion and architectural style to the wider building and area?	
	Have high quality materials been used?	
	Are the materials complementary in colour and style to the existing building?	
	Are canopies, blinds or awnings integrated into the shopfront and consistent with the requirements stated in this document? Are the proportions appropriate?	
Security	Are any roller shutters internally fitted?	

	Have security measures been considered as an integral part of the overall design? What impact do these measures have on the visual appearance of the shopfront?	
Accessibility	Is the shopfront accessible for all?	
	Is the forecourt clearly delineated from the main pavement? Is it visually uncluttered with sufficient space for pedestrians?	
Illumination	Have internally illuminated fasciae and signs been avoided?	
	Are lighting levels in keeping with the character of the area?	

Additional considerations for conversions from shopfront to residential

Has the original shopfront been retained? If it is not possible to retain the original shopfront, have original features been retained or reinstated?	
Has adequate privacy been achieved without adverse visual impacts?	
Have windows been retained?	
Has a solid visual based been retained?	

Appendix 2: Relevant Local Plan Policies

CC7: Design and the public realm

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity - meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.

EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- *Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;*
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- *Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;*

- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *Sympathetic landscaping and planting;*
- *Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;*
- *Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;*
- *Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.*

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

EN6: New development in a historic context

In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;*
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.*

OU4: Advertisements

Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:

- a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;*
- b) Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between the shopfronts;*

- c) *Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- d) *Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;*
- e) *Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and*
- f) *Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.*

OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines

Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.

For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:

- a) *New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- b) *Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;*
- c) *Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;*
- d) *Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and*
- e) *Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.*

CR2: Design and central Reading

Applications for development within Central Reading should demonstrate the following attributes:

- a. *Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
- b. *Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality*

and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;

- c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;*
- d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*
- e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and*
- f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.*

CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading

Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map will be within one of the following use classes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, and provide visual interest.

Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.

Proposals that would result in the loss of A1 or A2 use such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street in A1 or A2 use falls below 50% will not be permitted, unless the proposal introduces a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. 50% of new primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map should be in A1/A2 use.

CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading

Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.

Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.

Major new retail development (more than 2,500 sq m) for multiple units in the Primary Shopping Area should include some provision for a range of small shop units.

References and further reading

[Historic England \(2012-2015\), Practical Building Conservation Series](#)

[Historic England \(2015\), Easy Access to Historic Buildings](#)

[Historic England \(2017\), Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading](#)

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(2019\) National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(2020\), Statutory Guidance: Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M](#)

Morrison, K. A. (2003), English Shops and Shopping, English Heritage.

[The Institute of Historic Building Conservation \(2018\), IHBC Guidance Note on Alterations to Listed Buildings](#)

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