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Signs and Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas

Wyre Borough
Council

Supplementary
Planning
Guidance

Adopted for
Development Control
Purposes
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SIGNS AND SHOPFRONTS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Within the Conservation Areas in Wyre Borough special attention has to be paid to maintaining and improving the environment. The Council as local planning authority has a duty to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of these areas and to apply such principles when dealing with development proposals in conservation areas. Shop fronts and signs have a major impact on the appearance of these areas and alterations to these features are of special importance. These guidelines give advice which will help to fulfil this duty to protect the character and appearance of these areas.

1.2 These guidelines seek to encourage:

- (i) The retention and restoration of traditional shopfronts and sign boards;
- (ii) Shopfronts and signs which respect existing buildings and the character of the area, and
- (iii) Signs which identify the trader and the nature of the business and avoid repetition.

1.3 The Conservation Areas within Wyre Borough are as follows: Pharos (Fleetwood), Albert Square (Fleetwood), The Mount (Fleetwood), Poulton Town Centre, Churchtown, Garstang Town Centre, Calder Vale, Scorton and Dolphinholme (part in Lancaster).

2. REFURBISHMENT AND REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS

2.1 In considering planning applications for alterations to retail and commercial shopfronts in Conservation Areas, it is

important to take account of the quality of the existing shop front. In cases where the shopfront is of special or traditional character, or retains many of its features and is capable of restoration then refurbishment will be encouraged in preference to replacement.

2.2 Where an existing shopfront is considered inappropriate to either the building or the location, replacement will be permitted. The replacement should be of a high standard. It is important to view shopfronts as part of the complete elevation of the building. Any alterations or new shopfronts should consider the need for maintenance or restoration of the whole elevation.

2.3 Painting stone or good brickwork is generally unwise, but cleaning can generally improve the appearance of a building. Where painting is appropriate the choice of colour can either enhance or detract from the street scene, and its use should be carefully considered.

3. NEW BUILDINGS

3.1 Designs for new shops within Conservation Areas should give detailed consideration to shop fronts and the provision of signs. 'Non-traditional' designs for shopfronts and signs will be treated sympathetically if these seek to maintain the character of the area in terms of scale, detail and materials.

4. TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS OF SHOPFRONT DESIGN

4.1 The Fascia Boards:

- (i) Should be designed as part of a co-ordinated shopfront design and should not obscure architectural features of elevation;
- (ii) Need not be of a standardised height except where there are a number of shops within one building, or group of properties;
- (iii) Should not normally extend across

the full width of the shop frontage and should relate to the individual shop, and

- (iv) Depth should be in proportion to the shop front, and be shallow in relation to the length.

4.2 Pilasters:

- (i) Are traditionally used to define the sides of shopfronts and support the fascia, and
- (ii) Are usually set in from the side of the shop.

4.3 Mullions and Glazing Bars:

- (i) Large individual areas of plate glass should be avoided in order to maintain the scale and character of shop fronts, and
- (ii) Standardised reproduction windows have poor detailing and will not normally be acceptable. New designs of similar proportion and detailing as 'period' windows will be considered.

4.4 Where shop premises incorporate several smaller units a long fascia is often used to give a 'corporate' image. This results in loss of individuality and visually separates the ground floor from the separate first floor uses and is not acceptable in a Conservation Area. The character of individual shop units should therefore be retained.

5. SIGNS

5.1 Shops and other commercial premises need to advertise their presence, especially in the larger town centres of the Borough. It is important that such advertising should preferably be restricted to the traders names and the nature of the business. This will avoid detracting from the special character of the Conservation Area. In Conservation Areas of a primarily residential nature advertising should be

more restrained.

5.2 Acceptable signs with lettering on buildings in Conservation Areas would be:

- (i) Fascia signs with lettering of a good design and restrained in scale;
- (ii) Separate free-standing letters fixed to the wall as an alternative to a fascia board (this is appropriate where there is restricted space between windows), and
- (iii) Lettering applied to windows advertising the name and nature of the business (this is appropriate when a fascia board is not practicable and for first floor uses).

5.3 Fascia boards are best located immediately above ground floor display windows and entrances. Signs above fascia level are considered obtrusive and are not generally acceptable. Businesses occupying first floor premises have little opportunity for street level displays, but can use modest signs adjacent to their street level entrance doors. Where this is not possible printed window signs may be acceptable.

5.4 Projecting signs have a great impact and their use should be restricted. These should be at fascia level on shops but can be higher on other buildings such as public houses.

5.5 In Conservation Areas, hoardings, poster advertisements and adverts on bus shelters, litter bins and other structures will be required to be compatible with the areas architectural or historic features. Smaller sizes of display panel may be required where the scale of surrounding buildings warrants such control in the interests of protecting the visual amenities of the Conservation Area.

5.6 Whether a sign is appropriate will be judged in terms of its visual effect on the elevation of the building and the requirements of public safety.

6. ILLUMINATION OF SIGNS

6.1 The illumination of signs will be the subject of careful control because of the potential impact on the appearance of a Conservation Area. Illumination should not be obtrusive. Where possible a secondary source should be used, such as spot lights fixed to the wall illuminating the signs, or at eaves level to floodlight the elevation.

6.2 Internally illuminated projecting signs are generally considered to be unacceptable. They are often bulky and are of bright and glossy, translucent materials. Internally illuminated fascia signs will not normally be allowed where external illumination is possible or where an alteration to a traditional shopfront or design would be necessary. The level of illumination should avoid excessive brightness. Flashing lights and exposed neon tubes will not normally be permitted.

7. LETTERING ON SIGNS

7.1 Signs, including hand painted signs, should have a professional finish using good, well spaced lettering. Separate free-standing lettering should be of modest scale, respecting the scale of the elevation and signs in the locality. In narrow streets and weinds, smaller lettering than elsewhere is desirable.

7.2 Traditional symbols and logos may be appropriate. They should be carefully positioned and not be too large or out of scale with the building.

7.3 Poor quality lettering, especially on a poorly designed shopfront, reflects badly on the shop and detracts from the appearance of the Conservation Area. Good design enhances the image of a shop and its attractiveness to customers.

8. MATERIAL FOR SIGNS

8.1 A whole range of materials are used to make signs. As a general rule, the traditional and natural materials are the most appropriate in Conservation Areas. These include:

- (i) wood (either stained or painted);
- (ii) cast metal (painted);
- (iii) high quality metallic lettering, and
- (iv) matt plastic in appropriate cases (e.g. free-standing letters).

Glossy plastic, aluminium and stainless steel should be avoided.

9. ADVICE

9.1 If you are considering alterations to or replacement of a shopfront a planning application may be required. An application for advertisement consent may be required for a new sign. For further advice on Conservation Areas and the Council's requirements please contact the Planning and Traffic Services Section at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde, Telephone Number: 01253 891000.