

# Guide to shopfront advertising for historic buildings

Design guidance



## Introduction:

If you own or run a business from a listed building or within a conservation area in Medway and you are thinking of changing your outdoor signage or putting up additional outdoor signage at your business premises, this design guide may apply to you.

It explains when listed building or advertising consent is needed for new shopfronts and for signs and lighting. This guide also gives general advice on achieving a good quality of signage design, and looks at the types of signage that are suitable for historic buildings, and that will be acceptable in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings.

The Guide does not introduce any new policies but it is an expansion of, and explanation of Medway Local Plan 2003 Policies BNE 8,14 and 19. These policies require the retention of traditional shopfronts and the use of shopfront signage and advertising that is sympathetic to historic buildings and areas.

After the shop window, signs are one of the most effective forms of advertisement for a retailer or business owner. Signs convey information through words, pictures and logos to inform passers by of the goods or services available. However, the quality of signage design can also convey a message about the quality of the individual business, and have an impact on the quality of the wider environment.



*The success of events like the Dickens and Sweeps Festivals rely on Rochester High Street offering an attractive environment with a sense of history and tradition.*

Good quality design makes good economic sense. A high quality environment leads to a sense of pride and enhances the experience of shoppers and visitors. The individuality and character offered by historic, town-centre high streets offer an alternative to 'identikit' shopping centres and retail parks.

**If you are thinking about installing new signage, or altering or replacing existing signage you may need to get Advertising Consent, or Listed Building Consent if your building is listed. Please check whether or not the works you wish to undertake will require consent *before* carrying out any work.**

## Consultation

A draft version of this guide was discussed at the Chatham and Rochester Business Forums in May 2015. The guide has been revised as a result of comments received.

## **Do I need Advertising or listed building or other consents to alter or add signs on my building?**

**Listed Building Consent** is likely to be necessary for general signage and will *always* be necessary for illuminated signage. Signage will only be acceptable where no historic or architectural features are damaged or obscured and the character and quantity of the signage is appropriate to the building in terms of the design, scale and quality of materials. Internally lit, or halo lit signage will, in general, not be acceptable on a listed building.

**Planning permission** may be required for replacing existing fascias (the signage boards on to which signs are applied) with bigger boards, particularly where the replacement boards are large and the building is within a conservation area.

**Advertising Consent for signage** on a shopfront or forecourt will be required if:

- Any letters, figures, symbols or similar features are more than 0.75m in height.
- The highest part of the signage is more than 4.5m above the ground
- The highest part of the sign is above the bottom of the first floor window.
- individual signs do not exceed 1.55 square metres
- Would result in more than 4.6 square meters of signage (in total) on the forecourt (the term 'forecourt' includes any enclosing railings, wall, fence etc that do not form part of the building itself).

**Advertising Consent for lighting** is required within all conservation areas for

- Internally illuminated signage,
- Separate lights shining onto the signage
- 'Halo' lit signage

The above includes the replacement of an existing sign, *or* its means of illumination. Generally halo lit or internally illuminated signs will not be considered acceptable in conservation areas.

Where consent is required, consideration will be given to the impact the signage will have on the appearance of the building, and the surrounding area.

## **What happens if I do not apply for listed building or advert consent and I do not follow the rules?**

If the signage does not conform with the policies set out in this guidance, the Council can serve an 'enforcement notice' on you. This requires you to remove or alter the signage so that it is acceptable. If you do not comply with this, the Council can take you to court. It is a criminal offence carry out work that damages the historic or architectural importance of a listed building.

## The design of signs

### *Keys to good signage design*

- Respect the character of the existing building and its neighbours
- Use materials that are in-keeping with the period of the building
- Have a clear identity, not a mixture of styles
- Lettering should not be over-large, and should not result in the building façade looking cluttered.
- Keep information simple, too much is be confusing
- Employ a competent designer and use skilled craftsmen

### *Shopfront fascias*

Fascias are the vertical boarding on a shopfront onto which shop signs are fixed or painted. Traditionally, shop-fronts have integral fascias, onto which the name of the shop can be painted, or spelled out in applied letters. In earlier shop-fronts (18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century), the fascia tended to be very narrow, whereas in later examples (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards) the fascia tended to be a bit deeper. Generally however, the fascia was approximately the same depth as the brackets and corbels on either end of the shop-front.



*Fascias, brackets and corbels*

Traditional shop fronts should have timber fascias kept to a size that is in proportion to the building and the shop-front, and should not obscure glazing or architectural detail. Only the name or trade of the shop and the street number of the property should appear on the fascia, and the lettering should be easy to read and reflect the quality of the shop-front.



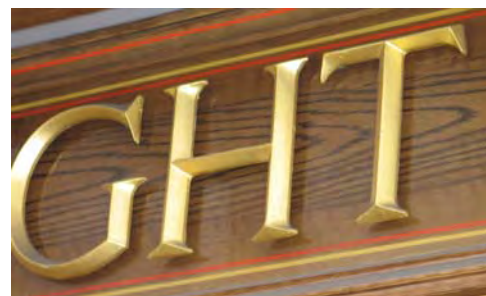
*Large fascias which hide architectural detail and are not in proportion with the building have a negative impact on its character and should be avoided.*

In Conservation Areas, hand-painted signs or those with applied lettering are preferred. For Listed Buildings, hand painted signs and some types of applied letters are likely to be the only acceptable options. The use of vinyl or acrylic for either the fascia or the lettering will not generally be acceptable.



*A skilled sign writer can create a unique and stylish identity for a business that wants to distinguish itself from its competitors. Equally, businesses with a corporate identity can maintain that identity whilst demonstrating an understanding of local character.*

*Applied lettering can offer a good alternative to a hand painted sign, particularly where the holes left by the fixings could be repaired easily such as on timber fascias.*



*Stone fascias can prove difficult as applied lettering requires multiple fixings to be applied directly into the fabric of the building. Over time this leads to an accumulation of damage to the fascia.*



Signs on non-illuminated (unlit) fascias do not *usually* require advertising consent as long as they are no higher than the bottom of the first floor window above the signage; no letters, figures or symbols are over 0.75 metres in height, and individual signs do not exceed 1.55 square metres in area. However, if you are in any doubt, please contact the Planning Department.

If your building is listed, Listed Building Consent may be necessary, particularly where the signage will require new fixings to be put in the walls of the building.

## *Projecting signs*

Projecting signs can be a useful way of advertising your business; they can either display the name of your business, or your trade, and can catch people's attention from further down the street. The sign might be a hand painted board, or in three-dimensions

Traditionally projecting signs are hung from brackets attached to the face of the building. These 'hanging' signs will be favoured in conservation areas and on listed buildings over signs that are rigidly fixed to the face of the building. Careful consideration should be given to the size, shape and positioning of both the sign and the bracket from which it hangs. Hanging signs will not be appropriate for all buildings.



*Having a corporate identity doesn't mean you can't be creative.*

*Projecting signs might bear the name of your business, or the type of business you run.*



Projecting signs will usually need advertising consent, and will almost certainly need listed building consent if your building is listed.

## **Other types of non-illuminated signage fixed to commercial premises**

Sometimes it is desirable to have signage that advertises particular products or services, as well as the name or nature of the business. For example, a café may wish to display a menu board on the outside of the building to entice prospective customers inside.

### **Banners**

Generally speaking the council does not look favourably on the use of banners within conservation areas or on listed buildings, particularly when it is intended as a permanent sign. The council is therefore likely to require the removal of banners where the appropriate consents have not been secured.

Any fixings attached into the facade of a listed building in order to display a banner will need listed building consent. .



*Banners obscure architectural details and have a detrimental impact on the character of conservation areas.*

The Council does not encourage banners in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Advertisement consent is therefore unlikely to be granted for banners.

### **Estate agents' boards**

Signs advertising the sale or lease of premises do not generally need Advertising Consent as long as they are removed within 14 days of the sale or grant of the tenancy.

However, where a property is listed, this type of signage should not be fixed into any external elevation of the property without Listed Building Consent. Even though a sign may be temporary, the damage caused by the fixings will not be. Fixings drilled directly into bricks, rather than mortar joints can be particularly damaging. Where this type of sign is attached to a listed building without listed building consent, and any damage not made good once the sign is removed, Medway Council may take enforcement action.

### **Advertising on forecourts**

Where advertising consent is required for free standing or fixed signs within the grounds of a building, consideration will be given to the impact the signage will have on the appearance of the building, and on the surrounding area. This is particularly relevant if the building is listed or in a conservation area. Forecourts cluttered with signage can look messy and visually confusing.

**Advertising boards are not permitted on the highway without a licence from Medway Council Highways Department.** This type of signage can cause a dangerous obstruction and can result in serious injury. Medway Council's policy for placing items on the highway can be found at the end of this guidance note.

## Illuminated signage

This category of signage includes signs that are internally illuminated, halo lit, and signs that are lit by separate lights such as stalk or trough lights.

**Internally lit signs will not be acceptable on listed buildings and in conservation areas** as the nature of this type of signage is at odds with the character of historic buildings and streetscapes.

Halo lit signs may in some circumstances be acceptable, and applications for this type of signage will be considered on the merits of the design, choice of materials, level of illumination, and the impact of the signage on the character of the building, and that of the surrounding area.

The only type of illuminated signage that will be acceptable in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings is externally lit signs. Stalk lights, trough lights or spotlights cast the light towards the sign and can highlight the detail on the shop-front.

Generally speaking the more discrete the lighting, the less cluttered the shop-front appears. Large swan-neck lights were popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but they are easily damaged and can be over-bearing. Modern lighting technology allows for much smaller lights, to give the same effect, and these are preferable over larger types.



*These large swan-neck lights have been knocked and broken. They look clumsy, not classy.*



*If you are intending to replace the whole shop-front, trough lights or spot lights can often be designed into the cornice above the fascia.*

All types of illuminated signage require advertising consent in Conservation Areas, and illuminated signage will always need Listed Building Consent if a building is listed



## **Appendix 1: Relevant local planning policies from the Medway Local Plan 2003.**

All planning, listed building and advert application are decided by reference to Medway's Planning Policies. These are contained within the 'Medway Local Plan 2004.

The Council's adopted planning policy BNE12 states:

*"Special attention will be paid to the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of Conservation Areas"*

The Council's adopted policy BNE15 states

*"Within conservation areas advertisements will not be permitted if their design, materials, size, colour or siting detract from the special character of the Conservation Area.*

The Explanatory Memorandum to policy BNE 15 (3.4.49) states

*"In Conservation Areas it is particularly important for advertising signs (such as those on shops and other commercial premises) to be sympathetic in form, scale and materials to their context."*

The Council's adopted policy BNE19 states:

*"Advertisements will not to be permitted if they adversely affect the character, appearance or settings of due to*

- (i) inappropriate siting; or*
- (ii) the use of internally illuminated signs; or*
- (iii) the painting over, obscuring or alteration of architectural details or traditional materials.*

## **Appendix 2: Useful information**

Interactive map showing listed buildings and conservation areas within Medway (NB click on 'planning' button)

<http://maps.medway.gov.uk/webmaplayersext/map.aspx>

Listed buildings: the law and our policy, Medway Council Guide

[http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/listed\\_buildings\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/listed_buildings_leaflet.pdf)

Conservation Areas: the law and our policy, Medway Council Guide

[http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/listed\\_buildings\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/listed_buildings_leaflet.pdf)

### *The Planning Application Process*

For advice on planning issues please contact the Planning Department on 01634 331700 between the hours of 9am-6pm, Monday to Friday or by e-mail at [planning.representations@medway.gov.uk](mailto:planning.representations@medway.gov.uk)

For advice on matters relating to listed buildings or buildings in a conservation area, please contact a Medway Council conservation officer on 01634 331700 or by email at [design.conservation@medway.gov.uk](mailto:design.conservation@medway.gov.uk)

Medway Council's Planning Department processes applications for planning permission and listed building consent. Once an application is registered, it will be allocated to a particular planning officer who will consider it against Medway planning policies and guidance. The target time for deciding applications is eight weeks.

### **Appendix 3: Medway Council Statement: Placing Items on the Highway**

#### *Advertising Boards, Booths and Structures.*

The erection of advertising boards on the public highway, i.e. the footway, footpaths or carriageway is **NOT** permitted. Boards may not be left leaning to or attached to shop fronts and items may not be placed over private covers or cellar lights.

A permit/licence is required from the Council for the erection of any booth or structure on the highway.

#### *Display of Goods*

The display of goods on the footway and projecting from a shop front will require permission from Medway Council under the Highways Act 1980. Before approval is given, the area will be measured by a representative of the Highway Manager and an appropriate display area will be agreed. Goods must be kept within the agreed display area. The criteria used for defining an area for the display of goods outside a shop is:-

- (i) A minimum width of 2 metres between the edge of the goods and the edge of the footway (being a kerbline or a drainage channel or any other feature as defined by the Highway Managers representative).
- (ii) If (i) above is satisfied, then the maximum projection of the display area from the shop front will be 1 metre, there should be no gap between the display and the shop front.

The Council reserves the right to require the removal of goods within the permitted display areas during festivals or any other event.

#### *Tables and Chairs*

- (a) The placing of tables and chairs on the public highway outside restaurants and public houses requires a licence issued by Medway Council under Part VII of the Highways Act 1980.
- (b) The Council reserves the right to require the submission of a planning application to control the design and appearance of furniture in conservation areas.
- (c) In considering requests for a licence to place tables and chairs, the requirements of highway users will be paramount, the minimum clear footway width left for pedestrians will be 2 metres.
- (d) The Highway Manager will define the area to be used and an annual charge of £25.00 per annum will be levied for each licence granted, the terms of which will be reviewed each year.

#### *General*

- (a) Goods or other items placed outside of the approved area or placed in contravention of any instruction given under this Policy may be removed immediately by the Council in accordance with Section 137(1) of the Highways Act 1980.
- (b) A charge of £50.00 will be levied by the Council for the return of each item removed under this policy. Medway Council cannot be held responsible for any damage caused to items during their removal, storage and return.
- (c) Traders will require public liability insurance of at least £3 million but preferably £5 million if they wish to place items on the highway.
- (d) Any breach of this policy may lead to prosecution by Medway Council.

