

Draft Shop Front Design Guidance for Newcastle-under-Lyme

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for a Shop Front Design Guidance document as a Planning Practice Guidance Note, so it can be used by Development Management officers and applicants to improve the quality of development that affects commercial premises especially in the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area but also in other historic commercial centres in the Borough.

Recommendation

To adopt the Guidance Note.

Reasons

The document seeks to provide additional information to owners and developers to help improve the visual quality of commercial premises in the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area but also in other historic commercial centres in the Borough especially when considering new or existing shop fronts and signage.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members may recall that the draft guidance document was accepted by the Planning Committee for consultation purposes on 18th August 2015. A key purpose of the guidance document (attached as Appendix 1) is to provide technical information to assist architects, developers and Development Management officers when designing and assessing schemes affecting shop fronts. The Council will use the guidance when assessing applications for shop fronts, including advertisements and security measures in order to prevent further erosion of quality within its historic town and village centres.
- 1.2 It is envisaged that the document would be a Planning Practice Guidance Note and that whilst it would not form part of the Local Development Framework, it would be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.3 The consultation ran for 6 weeks until 30th September. The draft Guidance document was shared with local organisations like the Chamber of Trade, the Town Centre Partnership and the Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society. The press also printed an article setting out the main points and posters and copies of the Guidance were available at the usual places.

2.0 Consultation responses

- 2.1 The Council has received 3 consultation responses during the process which are summarised below.
- 2.2 The **Conservation Advisory Working Party** fully supports the Guidance.

- 2.3 The **Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society** felt that the guidance document was informative and well-illustrated and agreed that it was important to emphasise that shop premises sit within a context. They want a stronger emphasis with regard to 'A' boards as their numbers are increasing and cluttering up the streets. If shops have appropriate signage that should reduce the need for 'A' boards. They also want the document to encourage owners to number their properties to help with referencing buildings and that streets also have a street name plate to help with identifying properties.

Response

The Council welcomes the support for the document from the Civic Society. It notes the point in relation to the 'A' boards which are considered on page 11 of the Guidance where it is recognised that they can be hazardous and inappropriate. As this is a matter for the County Council to control and take action over, it is not felt that a stronger stance can be taken by the Borough Council in this Guidance, given the lack of control available and the subject matter of the Guidance itself. In reference to encouraging applicants to number shop fronts, this again can only be encouraged during an application process and it is not considered essential to good design of a replacement shopfront and therefore not essential to alter the guide to reflect this issue. The naming of streets is not relevant to this Guidance and the design of new shop fronts and advertisements. However, this is a Borough Council matter where the road is adopted and has been passed to the relevant section of the Council who will look into it in consultation with the Civic Society.

- 2.4 An **individual trader** responded in relation to security shutters and feels that the Council should consider exceptions to policy and that sometimes external shutters are essential.

Response

Security issues are considered on pages 11 and 12 of the Guidance, stating that external systems will be resisted but might be considered acceptable if they respect the shopfront, the shutter housing box is recessed and if they are of a lattice type which allows visibility through at night. This policy offers a way in which an external shutter might be considered acceptable. It is already Council policy that solid external shutters on buildings in Conservation Areas will not be permitted (saved Newcastle Local Plan Policy B18). In the determination of planning applications regard has to be had to the policy of the development plan for the area, and any other material considerations which includes the prevention of crime and, if adopted, the Guidance.

- 2.5 In conclusion, apart from some typographical alterations, it is not proposed to alter the Guidance following the consultation process.

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 Once agreed, this Guidance will form part of the advice documents to consider when discussing and determining planning and advertisement applications. It will be published on the Council's website
- 3.2 If in the future developers appear to be disregarding the guidance, then consideration will be given to making the guidance into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would require further consideration by the Planning Committee.

4.0 Background Papers

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2011

Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance SPD 2010

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for Newcastle Town Centre and Audley

5.0 **Date report prepared** 29th October 2015