Summary

This report briefs Members on the purpose, objectives and approach of the draft Shop Front Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and seeks Members' views prior to consultation.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1: Shop front Design SPD: Consultation draft

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief Members about the content of a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on shop front design, which is being proposed for public consultation. A number of Supplementary Planning Documents were proposed to supplement Development Plan Documents, and were presented to the Planning Policy Committee on 14 April 2009. A SPD on shop front and advertisement design was among those identified.

1.2 A copy of the draft document is attached as an appendix to this report, although it should be noted that the document has yet to be formatted. Members are therefore asked to consider the content of the document, which will be formatted in the corporate style prior to any public consultation.

2.0 Background

2.1 Supplementary Planning Documents are prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. They form part of the Local Development Framework which delivers the spatial strategy for the area. Whilst they do not have the status of the statutory development plan, they do have material weight in the consideration of planning applications. Their purpose is to expand or supplement policies within the development plan documents.

2.2 A draft SPD has been prepared as a guide to new shop front design, which would supplement Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy in the East Northamptonshire area. Specifically it would supplement parts H and I of Policy 13 which require high quality design and architecture which respects and enhances the character of its surroundings, and the creation of a strong sense of place through strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities. The purpose of the document is to improve the quality of shop front design throughout the district, in recognition of the impact that shop front design can have on perceptions of an environment, particularly town centres.

2.3 During the recent Enquiry by Design process in Rushden, undertaken by the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, the impact of shop front design on the perceived quality of Rushden town centre was clearly recognised. Participants in that process were informed that this SPD was already in preparation and the draft report acknowledges the importance of this.

3.0 Objectives

3.1 The objectives of the SPD are:
   - To provide an integrated and consistent approach to shop front design
- Promote high quality shop fronts across the district
- Promote inclusive design
- Protect and enhance the character and appearance of town centres and conservation areas
- Ensure shop fronts contribute positively to the day and night-time economies in the district.

3.2 In meeting the above objectives, the document would support priority outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan; including specifically:
- Rushden regeneration,
- Improved market towns
- High quality built environment.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 The SPD will take forward Policy 13 of the Core Spatial Strategy, which requires high quality design that reflects and strengthens distinctive qualities and character of place. The draft SPD sets out design principles under the following headings:
- Basic design principles
- Security
- Blinds and canopies
- Advertisements.

4.2 These principles are not intended to be prescriptive, but to set out a framework for considering the design of a new shop front in the context of its immediate surroundings and the architectural whole of the building in which it would be located.

4.3 Although matters of style and detailing will vary, the document identifies that general principles of proportion, advertisement design and security are applicable to all shop fronts. As a result, the draft SPD sets out general principles to avoid common mistakes in shop front design.

4.4 The SPD has the following functions:
- For applicants for planning permission – to provide an understanding of expectations before preparing planning applications
- For designers – provide a guide to assist designing new shop fronts by clarifying what is expected.
- Development control officers – provide a clear systematic framework of principles to assist in the determination of planning applications.

Together these functions should ensure good quality shop front design in future, to meet the objectives set out above.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 That the draft Shop Front design SPD be approved for public consultation.

| Implications: |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy** | **Good Quality of Life** | *Good Reputation* |
| Good Value for Money | *High Quality Service Delivery* |
| Effective Partnership Working | *Strong Community Leadership* |
| Effective Management | *Knowledge of our Customers and Communities* |
| Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours | |
| **Other:** | |
| Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval | |
| **Financial** | *There are no financial implications at this stage* |
**Risk Management**
- There will be financial implications – see paragraph
- There is provision within existing budget
- Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date
- Decisions may have potential for income generation
- An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks
- Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference - inherent risk score -
- residual risk score -

**Staff**
- There are no additional staffing implications
- Additional staff will be required – see paragraph

**Equalities and Human Rights**
- There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications
- There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph

**Legal**
- Power: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Other considerations:

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**Background Papers:** Shop front Design SPD: Consultation Draft

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**Date:** 28 May 2010

**CFO**  |  **MO**  |  **CX**

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 21)
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1.0 Introduction

Town centres are the areas of towns that residents and visitors are most likely to visit. Shops and their frontages occupy significant proportions of High Streets and central areas. Therefore shop frontages can have a significant impact on the visual appearance of these places. Excellent shop front design can enhance the appearance of a place and play a role in regeneration, whilst poor design can have a detrimental impact. Shop front design is therefore a matter of public interest.

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document is a guide for shopkeepers and their agents in the principles of good design, and is relevant to all elements of shop front design whether or not they require planning permission. It is not intended to inhibit or stifle creative and innovative design solutions, but to highlight common ‘mistakes’ and outline elements that should be carefully considered when in the process of designing.

The guidance within this document is applicable to all shop fronts within East Northamptonshire District, and will be a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission and advertisement consent.

Shopkeepers are strongly advised to contact the Council at the earliest convenience, to establish whether planning permission is required, and to obtain pre-application advice where appropriate. Contact details are provided in Appendix 1 of this document.

1.2 Policy Context


This SPD supplements Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy adopted in June 2008, specifically parts h and i.

1.3 Consultation

To be added
1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this document are as follows:

• To provide an integrated and consistent approach to shop front design
• Promote high quality shop fronts across the district
• Promote inclusive design
• Protect and enhance the character and appearance of town centres and conservation areas
• Ensure shop fronts contribute positively to the day and night-time economies in the district

1.5 General approach

Historically shop fronts were designed as integral elements of buildings. As such, a shop front traditionally reflected and incorporated architectural detailing of the building in which it was located. Where original shop fronts exist, their removal will be resisted, particularly in listed buildings and conservation areas.

Notwithstanding the above, integrating new shop fronts into their respective buildings is a key principle of this SPD. New shop fronts should be designed with regard to the architectural whole of the building and the character of the immediate surroundings. Evidence that these matters have been considered in the design process should be included in the design and access statement accompanying any application for planning permission.

However, whilst details and style will inevitably vary; it should be noted that principles of balance and proportion are generally applicable to all shop fronts. As such, particular attention should be given to section 3.0 of this document, which specifically addresses matters of proportion and composition.
2.0 Elements of a traditional shop front

The combination of all the elements of a traditional shop front creates a balanced composition. New and contemporary shop front design may vary in terms of detail and style, though a similar balance of proportions should ensure that the design avoids common ‘mistakes’ and is in-keeping with surrounding shop fronts in the street scene. These matters will be considered in greater detail in Section 3.
3.0 Basic design principles

Whether the design of a shop front is traditional or more contemporary, basic principles relating to scale and proportion are essentially the same. The principles set out in this section therefore apply to all shop fronts.

Scale

Where a shop occupies the ground floor space of two or more buildings, the shop front design should respect the divisions between buildings. This approach demonstrates that the shop front has been designed to respect the architecture of the buildings on which it is located.

- The shop front does not respect the division between the buildings. The doorway is in the centre, and the fascia continues across the two buildings.

- The shop front respects the division between the two buildings by having two distinct fascias.
Fascia

The height, depth and width of a fascia should compliment adjacent shop fronts and not be overly dominant in the streetscene. As a general guide, the depth of a fascia should not usually be greater in depth than 1/5 of the height of the shop front (from the cornice to the floor).

Fascias should not cover up interesting features of the building, and should not obscure first floor window sills. Covering or obscuring architectural details would indicate that the shop front design has not been adequately considered as part of the building as a whole.

Glazing

Generally, excessively large areas of glazing in a shop front should be avoided. Instead there should be some vertical division with for example, the use of mullions.

Stallriser

Stallrisers, irrespective of style and detailing; form an important visual base. They should however be in proportion with the overall shop front. They should not be removed completely nor made too deep.

Figure 4

- Fascia is dominating and obscures first floor window details
- Single large area of glazing
- No stallriser

Figure 5

- Fascia is not dominating but integral to the shop front
- Glazing has vertical division
- Stallriser in proportion
Clutter

Where possible, new or altered shop fronts should minimise all clutter including cables, wires and alarm boxes. These can detract from the appearance of the shop front as a whole.

Where necessary, alarm boxes and other items should be located to minimise their visual impact (also see Section 4).

Figure 6
- Various paraphernalia attached to the whole building detracts from an otherwise well proportioned shop front, and gives a negative impression.

Figure 7
- An uncluttered shop front.
4.0 Security

Many security features on shop fronts are highly visible, and as such can have a significant impact on the appearance of the building and the streetscene. Sometimes security features can give the impression of a place in decline, resulting in negative perceptions.

Reducing risk through design

The design of shop fronts can reduce the need for additional security measures. For example, incorporating doorways flush with the shop front rather than having a recessed access can reduce the potential need for additional shutters to prevent antisocial behaviour and the creation of hiding places. Principles of 'Secured by Design' address such matters, and suggest standards of materials to enhance the security of the design.

Security devices

Where necessary security features and devices should be integrated into the shop front design from the outset, in order to reduce their visual impact. The incorporation of security measures should be proportionate to risk and avoid creating clutter on the shop front (see page 7).
Shutters—design principles

- Where necessary security shutters should minimise any obstruction of views into the shop. This creates the impression of an animated place. Solid shutters by contrast can give the impression of a place in decline, and can attract graffiti. They will not therefore be acceptable; especially on listed buildings and in conservation areas; unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

- Where they are necessary, security grilles and shutters should be incorporated internally (i.e. behind glazing). External grilles and roller shutters will not usually be acceptable, particularly in conservation areas, as they have a greater visual impact and could obscure features of the shop front itself. Where they have to be external, grilles should allow views through into the shop (i.e. should not be a solid shutter). See figure 12 overleaf.

Figure 9—Internal grill

Figure 10—External solid shutter
5.0 Canopies and blinds

Canopies and blinds should only be used where the particular use of a shop requires shading from direct sunlight. Where canopies and blinds are considered appropriate, they should be capable of being closed away into a recessed area on a daily basis.

- Dutch—blind fixed open
  - Intrudes into the street scene
  - Usually made of unsympathetic ‘shiny’ materials

- Can be opened and closed
  - Retracts into the fascia when closed
6.0 Advertising

By their nature, advertisements are designed to attract attention. However advertisements and signage should be integrated and respectful of the shop front and the building on which they are located, and not detract from their character. A consistent, high quality approach to advertisements and signage can benefit the overall environment, and therefore retail businesses.

Advertisements on fascias

Traditionally, the fascia is the principle space for advertising (see also Section 3 — Fascias). As a general guide, lettering should not exceed ¾ of the depth of the fascia.

Signs which do not appear integrated into the shop front design will not be acceptable, especially on listed buildings or in conservation areas. Protruding box signs for example have the appearance of being ‘tacked on’, and are unsympathetic in the context of the individual shop front and the street scene (see figure 15 below). They will therefore be resisted.

**Figure 15— Oversized lettering**

**Protruding box sign with over-sized lettering**

**Figure 16— Appropriate lettering**

**Integrated fascia with lettering which does not exceed 3/4 of its depth**

**Hanging signs**

Hanging signs can add interest, though too many can cause clutter to the building and streetscene. The cumulative impact of hanging signs should not detract from the character of the area.

Projecting signs should generally not be internally illuminated (see ‘illumination’ overleaf)
Illumination

Good illumination can be beneficial after dark as it can animate the streetscene to make it visually attractive and enhance perceptions of safety.

Views into shops after hours were highlighted as important in Section 4. Subtle internal illumination could further assist views into the shop after closing.

External illumination

External illumination of fascias through the use of trough up-lighters or halo lights may be appropriate, though these should not be obtrusive during daylight hours. Cables should not create clutter on the shop front.

The use of internally illuminated signage (box signage) will not usually be acceptable, especially on listed buildings or in conservation areas. This is due to their un-integrated and unsympathetic appearance as highlighted in Figure 15.
Glossary

**Advertisement** – public promotion of a product or service. In the context of this SPD, ‘advertisement’ relates specifically to signage and lettering displayed on the shop front to advertise the business and/or its products.

**Capital** — The top of a column. Fascias can appear to rest on top of *capitals*, as in Figure 1 (page 4). Alternatively a *capital* can extend across a fascia to meet the cornice.

**Character** – A term relating to the appearance of any area in terms of its layout, scale, massing, landscaping and any other features that make it distinctive. The term is most frequently used in relation to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas where greater weight is attributed to character as a planning consideration.

**Conservation Area** – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to conserve or enhance.

**Cornice** – a projecting horizontal moulding along the building (see Figure 1, page 4).

**Elevation** – The actual façade (or face) of a building, or a drawing of a façade.

**Fascia** – the flat horizontal surface between the top of the shop window and the roof (or next floor), which usually displays the name of the shop (see Figure 1, page 4).

**Listed Building** – A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II, with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building, and any buildings or permanent structures within the curtilage.

**Mullion** – a vertical bar that separates panes of glass in a window

**Pilaster** – a vertical architectural element which can resemble an ornamental column (see Figure 1, page 4).

**Plinth**—The base of a column. A plinth is wider than the column to provide a stable base (see Figure 1, page 4).

**SPD** – A Supplementary Planning Document is a Local Development Document that may cover a range of issues, thematic or site specific, and provides further detail of policies and proposals in a ‘parent’ Development Plan Document.

**Stallriser** – a vertical surface between the pavement and the shop window (see Figure 1, page 4).
Appendix 1

Contact details

Address: Planning Services
             East Northamptonshire Council
             Cedar Drive
             Thrapston
             Northamptonshire
             NN14 4LZ

DX No: 701611 Thrapston

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E-mail: planning@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk
POLICY 13: GENERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Development should meet the needs of residents and businesses without compromising the ability of future generations to enjoy the same quality of life that the present generation aspires to. Development should:

Meet needs
a) Incorporate flexible designs for buildings and their settings, including access to amenity space, enabling them to be adapted to future needs and to take into account the needs of all users;
b) Seek to design out antisocial behaviour, crime and reduce the fear of crime by applying the principles of the "Secured by Design" scheme;
c) Maintain and improve the provision of accessible local services and community services, whilst focusing uses that attract a lot of visitors within the town centres;
d) Have a satisfactory means of access and provide for parking, servicing and manoeuvring in accordance with adopted standards;
e) Be designed to take full account of the transport user hierarchy of pedestrian-cyclist-public transport-private vehicle, and incorporate measures to contribute to an overall target of 20% modal shift in developments of over 100 dwellings and elsewhere 5% over the plan period;
f) Not lead to the loss of community facilities, unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer needed by the community they serve and are not needed for any other community use, or that the facility is being relocated and improved to meet the needs of the new and existing community;
g) Not lead to the loss of open space or recreation facilities, unless a site of equivalent quality and accessibility can be provided, serviced and made available to the community prior to use of the existing site vacated.

Raise standards
h) Be of a high standard of design, architecture and landscaping, respect and enhance the character of its surroundings and be in accordance with the Environmental Character of the area;
i) Create a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities and townscapes of the towns and villages through its design, landscaping and use of public art;

j) Be designed to promote healthier lifestyles and for people to be active outside their homes and places of work;
k) Allow for travel to home, shops, work and school on foot and by cycle and public transport.

Preserve assets
l) Not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider area, by reason of noise, vibration, small, light or other pollution, loss of light or overlooking;
m) Be constructed and operated using a minimum amount of non-renewable resources including where possible the reuse of existing structures and materials;

n) Not have an adverse impact on the highway network and will not prejudice highway safety;
o) Conserve and enhance the landscape character, historic landscape designated built environmental assets and their settings, and biodiversity of the environment making reference to the Environmental Character Assessment and Green Infrastructure Strategy;
p) Not sterilise known mineral reserves or degrade soil quality;
q) Not cause a risk to (and where possible enhance) the quality of the underlying groundwater or surface water, or increase the risk of flooding on the site or elsewhere, and where possible incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and lead to a reduction in flood risk.