

Planning Policy Team

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Shopfronts and Signage

Technical Advice Note (TAN)

July 2021

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose of this TAN	3
3. Permissions and Consents	4
Planning Permission	4
Advertisement Consent	5
Listed Building Consent.....	5
Building Regulations.....	6
4. Policy Context	6
National Policy	6
Local Policy.....	6
5. History of Shopfronts	7
6. Traditional Shopfronts	8
Elements of a Shopfront	8
7. Design Style	10
Layout of Shopfront	10
Proportions	11
Symmetry	12
Glazing.....	13
Colour of the Shopfront	15
Corporate Identity.....	16
8. Shopfronts to Modern Buildings	18
9. Materials and Workmanship	18
10. Accessibility	20
11. Shopfronts Summary:	21
12. Canopies and Blinds	22
13. Fascia and lettering	23
14. Projecting or hanging signs	24
15. A-boards	26
16. Internal adverts	26
17. Illumination	26
18. Security	28
19. Mechanical and Electrical Fixtures and Fittings	29
20. ATMs	29
21. Case Study – The Covered Market, Oxford	29
22. Useful contacts	32

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Shopfronts are a vital element of any vibrant commercial centre, adding significantly to the character and appearance of a street scene. Shopfronts have historically had a very specific purpose: to entice potential buyers into the shop and this reason still exists today.
- 1.2. Shopfronts have plenty of scope for variety and individuality, but the relationship between the shopfront and the existing building is of great importance. The shopfront should reflect the period and design style of the existing building and its surroundings.
- 1.3. Whether in the city centre or in one of Oxford's district centres, shopfronts and advertisements which are designed carefully to reflect their setting will enhance the street scene. An attractive shopping environment can have a beneficial effect on the vitality and viability of a shopping area.



2. Purpose of this TAN

- 2.1. The purpose of this Technical Advice Note (TAN) is to provide guidance for Policy DH6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036. It aims to avoid bland and soulless shopfronts and embrace the individuality of Oxford. While the historic dreaming spires are one of the city's biggest attractions, there are shops and buildings from several eras throughout Oxford and so there is no one standard approach to shopfronts and adverts which can be applied to every situation.
- 2.2. This TAN sets out a clear indication of the criteria against which the Council will assess applications for new shopfronts and adverts, with the aim to encourage and promote good practice in design.
- 2.3. Policy DH6 will ensure that shopfronts and advertisements will be well-designed to integrate well with buildings and the character of the area, to create a shopping

environment which respects and reflects the evolving history and personality of the city centre and outlying suburban areas. The Council will use this guidance as a basis for assessing proposals on their merits.

- 2.4. The TAN will also provide information on consents that may be required. These include listed building consent, planning permission, and advertisement consent.
- 2.5. We encourage early discussion through our pre-application advice service to help guide you through the process and proposed scheme.

3. Permissions and Consents

- 3.1. This section outlines the types of consent which could be required for proposals of this nature. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that they have obtained the necessary permissions prior to carrying out any works to the shopfront, including any alterations and/ or new signage.
- 3.2. Alterations to a shopfront will often require at least one form of consent, with some requiring more than this. If you are in doubt as to whether your proposal would require any of the permissions or consents below, we would strongly advise that you check this prior to making any alterations.
- 3.3. Typically, applications take 8 weeks to determine and must be received before the works are undertaken. This needs to be built into any project plan for a new shop, shopfront, or advertisement. Making these changes without getting prior consent or permission may incur enforcement action and you may be required to remove the new shopfront and/or signage at your own cost.
- 3.4. It is easiest to submit all of the relevant applications at the same time where more than one type of consent is required.

Planning Permission

- 3.5. Any works which would materially affect the appearance of the shopfront externally will require planning permission. This includes, but is not limited to, proposals such as the complete replacement of a shopfront, significant alterations to the shopfront, the installation of blinds or a canopy, ramps and handrails, and shutters or grilles. If you would like confirmation as to whether a proposed change to a shopfront is lawful or

not, you should submit an application for a lawful development certificate. Please visit our website for information on how to apply¹.

Advertisement Consent

- 3.6. Advertisement works may require express advertisement consent from the council, such as the installation of a new fascia, hanging sign or projecting sign. Alterations to existing advertisements such as a change in the material or colour of a sign could also require advertisement consent. Signs which are to be illuminated require advertisement consent in a number of instances, in particular in conservations areas or any setting where they could have an impact upon a listed building.
- 3.7. There are several exceptions to the above which are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. These advertisements are those permitted without requiring either deemed or express consent from the local planning authority and those which have deemed consent. We would advise that where you would like the Council's view relating to whether or not a proposed change to any advertisement is lawful, you should submit an application for a lawful development certificate. Please visit our website for information on how to apply².
- 3.8. It is also important to note that sometimes the ability for adverts to be displayed without the need for express consent is removed by a condition attached to a previous planning permission at the site. A search of the planning history of a site should provide this information.

Listed Building Consent

- 3.9. Any works, internal or external, that will affect the special architectural and historic interest of a listed building will require listed building consent. This can involve alterations to small details and features of the shopfront, such as decorative detailing. Where works are proposed to the shopfront of a listed building, we would always advise that our Urban Design and Heritage Team is contacted for their advice in the first instance. Contact details can be found at the end of this TAN.

¹ [Oxford City Council - Apply for planning permission webpage](#)

² [Oxford City Council - Apply for planning permission webpage](#)

Building Regulations

- 3.10. For certain works to a shopfront, building regulation approval may also be needed for issues of fire, access and structure. For further advice on this aspect of a proposal we would encourage applicants to contact the building control team. Contact details can be found at the end of this TAN.

4. Policy Context

National Policy

- 4.1. Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 'Achieving well-designed places' makes specific reference to advertisements, stating that "*The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.*" The NPPF goes on to specify that "*Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.*" The planning practice guidance (PPG) for advertisements provides key definitions, consent requirements, additional restrictions and considerations for applications relating to advertisements.

Local Policy

- 4.2. Policy DH6 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 ensures that new or altered shopfronts are of a high quality design which will complement the character of the buildings which they are on and will contribute to a vibrant surrounding public realm. The policy will help to maintain Oxford's historic shopfronts, ensuring that there are no detrimental impacts to assets with heritage significance. It aims to avoid clutter and visual pollution to ensure visual and residential amenity are not adversely impacted by proposals:

Policy DH6: Shopfronts and signage

Planning permission will only be granted for new or changed shopfronts and advertisement consent will only be granted for signage and other forms of advertisement where the design, positioning, materials, colour, proportion and illumination are not detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity, as demonstrated through the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a) the design responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings; and*
- b) public safety would not be prejudiced; and*
- c) visual pollution and clutter are avoided; and*
- d) historic shop fronts are retained*

5. History of Shopfronts

- 5.1. In order to appropriately design a new shopfront, or alter the existing, it is important to first understand the history of the building and its shopfront.
- 5.2. The historic size and layout of shops forms the basis of many of the retail areas which we see today. Since pre-Roman times, people have traded from their own properties or simple markets with barrows and stalls. By the late 18th century, shops as we know them today had developed.
- 5.3. The most popular approach for shopfronts now deemed ‘traditional’ (See section 6.0) takes its influence from Georgian style shopfronts.
- 5.4. The main influence on the changes seen across historic shopfronts has been the availability of materials. The tax on glass from 1746 until 1845 led to the smaller size of shop windows commonly seen throughout this period of time. The technology to make increasingly larger panes of glass through the 19th and 20th centuries meant that shops could expand their windows and provide decorative detailing such as coloured or etched glass.
- 5.5. Buildings and their shopfronts from all eras should be appreciated for their individual style, and each has their place in the development of the city and its outlying areas.

- 5.6. An understanding of the type and age of a building is required to ensure that the correct style of shopfront is designed. Policy DH6 makes clear that in the case of historic shopfronts, these shopfronts are to be retained.

6. Traditional Shopfronts

- 6.1. Irrespective of its era, a shopfront will contain several of the basic elements shown below. To maintain a traditional appearance, and to comply with Policy DH6, each of these should be in proportion to give a balanced appearance. More modern shopfronts may have different proportions but will still contain many of these standard elements.

Elements of a Shopfront

- 6.2. Below are two examples of shopfronts in Oxford, where several of the basic elements which make up the majority of shopfronts are annotated.





Capital and pilasters: These provide the vertical break/ edge to the shopfront, with the capitals (also referred to as corbels or consoles) sitting on top of the pilaster. These give the appearance of a supporting column, but are purely decorative.

Cornice: The cornice is the decorative moulded ledge along the top of the fascia which creates a horizontal break to the building. It also provides weather protection to the fascia.

Fascia: The fascia is the section where the signage with the shop's name is often located. It should respond to the proportions of the shopfront and the building, but in most cases it will be approximately 10% of the shopfront height, as to avoid overpowering the shopfront.

Glazing/ fenestration: Glazing forms the main plane of the shop windows, held in a frame which can vary in thickness and detail.

Mullions: Mullions are the vertical divisions used to divide large expanses of glass and provide vertical structural support to the shop glazing.

Stall riser: The stall riser is the section beneath the shop window which forms a solid base and contributes to the balance of proportions of the different elements of the shopfront. Typically constructed in timber, brick or stone, or covered with glazed tiles.

Threshold: The threshold is the entrance to the shop on the ground.

Transoms: Transoms are the horizontal divisions used to divide large expanses of glass and provide horizontal structural support to the shop glazing.

7. Design Style

- 7.1. It is possible to appropriately design proposed works to comply with the requirements of Policy DH6, by understanding the style of the era that the host building is from.
- 7.2. The influencing factors may include:
- the **setting** of the shopfront in terms of the **street scene** and **local context**
 - the **age** and the **style** of the **existing building**
 - the **age** of the **existing shopfront**
 - the **materials** previously used and to be used in the new shopfront
 - the **business or purpose** of the shop – original shopfronts were often designed to reflect the goods they were selling
 - the **location** of the shop, either on a high street, side street, suburb, or estate
- 7.3. The overall design should be mindful of the smaller details that add interest to an individual building. Where items such as patterns in glass, sign writing on the side of the building or door handles are original, they are likely to be an important part of the historic value of the shopfront and building. Interesting features like this should be retained and incorporated into the design of the proposed shopfront.

Layout of Shopfront

- 7.4. Policy DH6 makes specific reference to appropriate positioning as one of the design considerations to avoid detrimentally impacting upon heritage assets or visual or residential amenity.
- 7.5. The positioning of the door is an important first step in the design of a shopfront. This is generally placed in the centre or to one of the sides of the shopfront. This should take influence from the existing building and its surroundings.
- 7.6. The next stage is to design the fenestration, which includes deciding upon the height and construction of the stall riser. The design rationale for the location of these should take its inspiration from the proportions of the existing building in accordance with Policy DH6.
- 7.7. A recessed doorway or threshold was often used as a show of wealth, as it provided a shop with more display area but less sales space. For a shop in a prominent location, this may be appropriate, however convenience stores or small shops in less affluent areas may forego this option to increase floor space. However, the benefit of a recess today means that shoppers can shelter from inclement weather.

Proportions

- 7.8. Policy DH6 makes specific reference to designing shopfronts and signage to have proportions which are not detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity.
- 7.9. A new shopfront should be designed to be in proportion with the existing building. The council is unlikely to support a shop frontage that covers, cuts across or removes existing features such as pilasters, windows to the first floor, or other important architectural features, as this would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the building.
- 7.10. Through the design of a shopfront/ shopfronts, the individual identity of each separate building must be retained, particularly where one business occupies two or more adjacent buildings. Shopfronts and fascias should not cut across the frontages of different buildings. The distinction between buildings should be made through the design of the shopfront, for example by designing different height stall risers and fascia levels to reflect the individuality of the existing buildings.
- 7.11. In addition to the horizontal sightlines, the design of the shopfront must take influence from the vertical sightlines of the existing building, which should stop at the top of the shopfront (generally with the cornice) without interfering with the façade of the building above. The positioning of this visual break should be informed by the existing building, therefore it will vary from building to building.

Below left and right: Shopfronts on Oxford High Street well-designed to identify the separation between the buildings. Vertical sightlines stop at the top of the shopfronts without interfering with the character and design of the buildings above.



Symmetry

- 7.12. The symmetry of a building is an important element of its design and should be taken into consideration when designing the shopfront. Generally, a Georgian building has a symmetrical style, whereas vernacular buildings are more likely to be asymmetrical.



Left: Shopfronts on Market Street reflecting the symmetry of the windows above. Well-proportioned glazing to reflect the patterns of the fenestration above, as required by Policy DH6.

- 7.13. In order to comply with Policy DH6, the horizontal and vertical relationships of door placement, fascias, transoms and mullions, signage and other details should be designed in a way which responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings. Consideration of the symmetry of the shopfront and building is an important aspect of this design process.

Below left: Shopfront asymmetry reflects the fenestration in the building above the shopfront. Positioning of the recessed doorway aligns with the windows above and the mullions align with the centre of the windows above.

Below right: The front elevation of the building above the shopfront is very symmetrical in design but this is not well reflected in the shopfront.

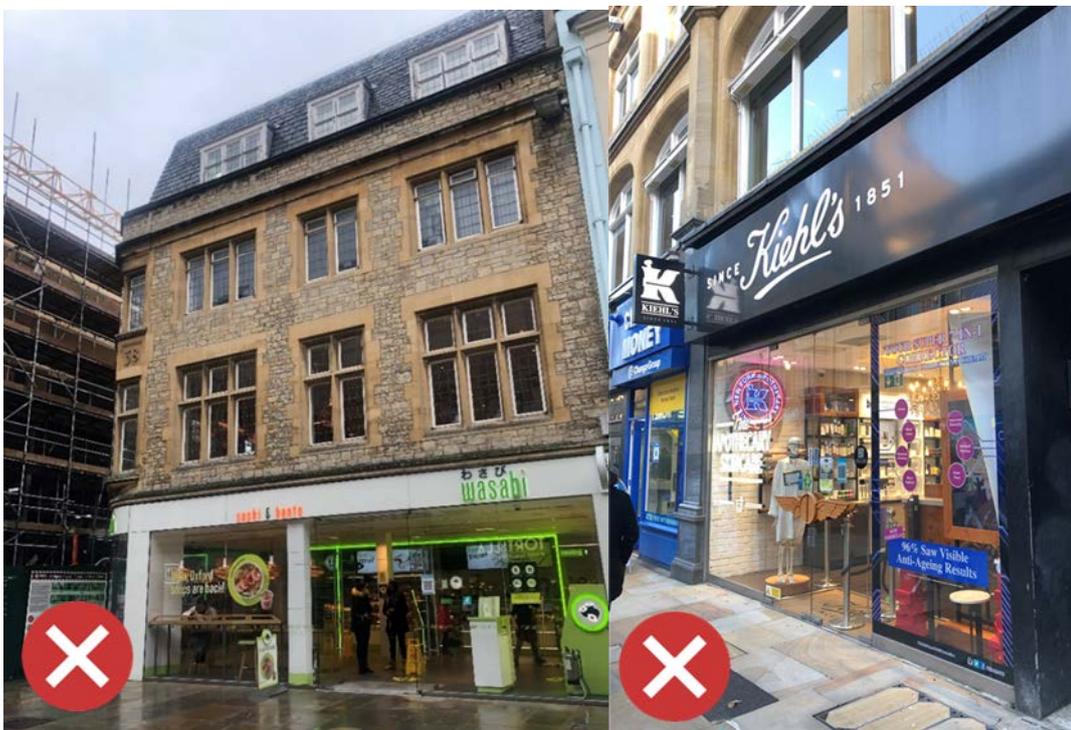


Glazing

- 7.14. In order to comply with Policy DH6, the design of a shopfront and any signage must respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings. Therefore, the age and style of the building will influence the size of the fenestration selected.
- 7.15. In general, large areas of undivided glass are unlikely to receive support from the council, as they are of less visual interest and can detract from the overall character and proportions of a building, particularly in older buildings. Large undivided areas of glass give a horizontal emphasis to the shopfront which often does not respond to the proportions of the existing building. This can create the appearance of a void at the ground level of a building. Larger panes of glass are more likely to be appropriate in contemporary shopfronts, where they may be characteristic of their appearance.
- 7.16. The design and age of the frontage should inform the proposed details of the mullions and transoms. For Georgian shopfronts, details are very delicate and simple, whereas Victorian shopfronts tend to feature thicker details with a more solid appearance. The design of a new shopfront should be mindful of the era of the building.



Left: Shopfront well-proportioned and details above the windows reflect the arches and design of the windows of the buildings above. The design responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings in accordance with Policy DH6.



Left: Large areas of glazing, with few features of a traditional shopfront. Glazing does not reflect the fenestration of the building above and the shopfront fails to take inspiration from the design, era and style of the building above.

Right: Shopfront heavily glazed with no framing to divide the appearance and reflect the proportions or details of the windows above. A shopfront in this context should have a stall riser but this shopfront lacks this feature, creating a horizontal emphasis that detracts from the vertical emphasis of the building. Fascia board does not reflect the setting in terms of the scale and materials used – appears to be a corporate design which has not considered the specific setting within Oxford.

Colour of the Shopfront

- 7.17. Policy DH6 states that planning permission will only be granted for new or changed shopfronts where the colour is not detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity.
- 7.18. The colour choice for a shopfront should be appropriate to its context. It should be carefully considered in terms of tone and colour in order to not detrimentally impact the character of the building and the appearance of the wider street scene.
- 7.19. Colours are often used to reflect the type of shop. Red and white is commonly used for Barbers, British Racing green is deemed as a classic colour and yellow is seen as vibrant and easy going. Colours proposed to be used should be complimentary to the surroundings, the materials, the building, its neighbours and to the period of the property.

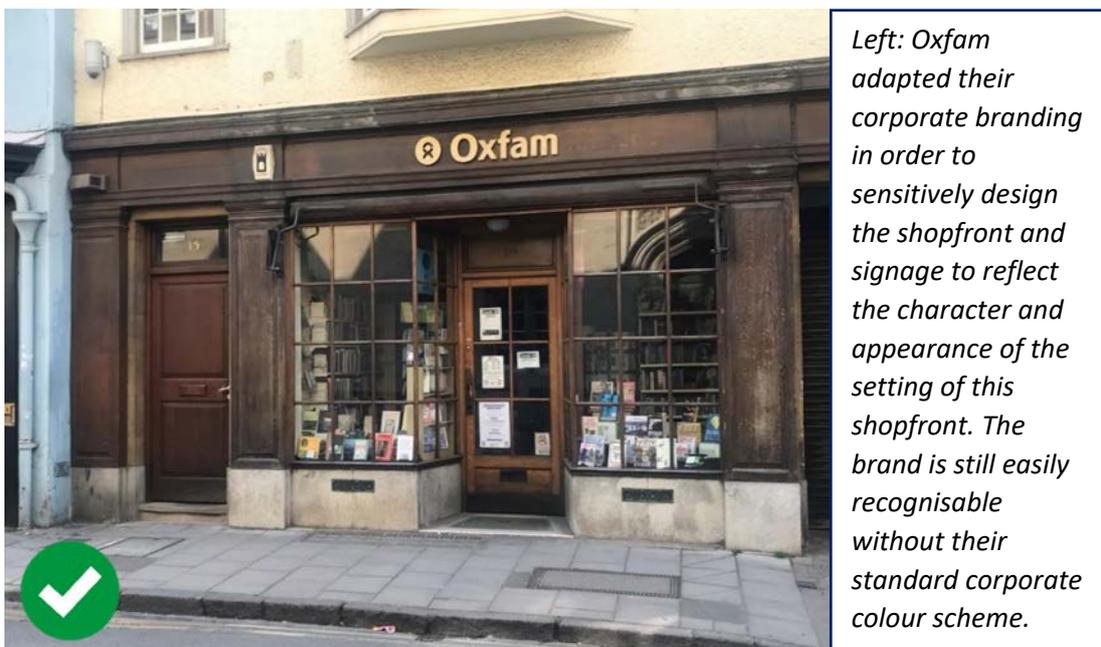
- 7.20. For historic buildings and their shopfronts, it is very important that the correct historic colours and tones are used. Some colours and hues were not manufactured until the 20th Century and, as such, the use of these colours would not respond to, nor positively contribute to, the character and design of shopfronts from before this era.
- 7.21. Repainting the shopfront of a listed building would require listed building consent as this alteration could have a detrimental impact upon the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.22. Where the use of hardwoods would be discouraged in the present day unless it has been sustainably sourced, the trading of hardwoods during the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods made these timbers accessible. As such stained or varnished timber was mainly used in this period but is now an unusual finish. For the majority of replacement shopfronts, the council will expect to see the use of painted timber.

Corporate Identity

- 7.23. Many retailers and chain stores have a corporate identity which people expect to see in our high streets. However, in some settings it may be necessary for these retail outlets to adapt their use of corporate images to respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings, as required by Policy DH6.



Above: Sensitively scaled 'Pret a Manger' shopfront. The shopfront has been designed to avoid obscuring any of the details of the building above and to respect the setting within a conservation area. As required by Policy DH6, the design of this shopfront therefore responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of the existing buildings and surroundings.



- 7.24. Oxford City centre is a great example of a setting where corporate image must be adapted to respond to, and positively contribute to, the character and design of the area. This is the historic core of the city, set within the Central Conservation Area, and home to many listed buildings and other heritage assets. As such, Policy DH6 requires that design positively contributes to the setting of the shopfront, and that historic shopfronts are retained.
- 7.25. Individual properties and their settings should be considered as part of any design for shopfronts or advertisements. Within conservation areas and for works to listed buildings, justification is required for the design together with an analysis of the significance of the building or area, and how the proposed design would enhance it. The use of individually designed shopfronts that work with the setting and the building is encouraged through the requirements of Policy DH6.
- 7.26. Some retailers may have a standard 'heritage' solution for the design of shopfronts in a historically sensitive location. However, these may not be appropriate for the specific existing building for which the new shopfront is proposed, and the historic period which it is from.
- 7.27. Shoppers can instantly identify a certain chain store from the retail chain's corporate colour scheme. However, the corporate colour scheme is not always appropriate to the surroundings of the shopfront or the existing building. Therefore, where a more sensitive, muted approach to colour is needed, the corporate design can still retain its identity by adapting the design to the location. For example, elements of the

corporate design can be used as applied lettering, rather than the colour scheme as a whole being used.

- 7.28. In order to comply with Policy DH6, the applicant will need to demonstrate how the corporate design has been adapted to respond and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings.

8. Shopfronts to Modern Buildings

- 8.1. Many of the design principles mentioned above which apply to traditional shopfronts also apply to those within a more modern setting. As Policy DH6 stipulates, the design, positioning, materials, colour, proportion and illuminations must not be detrimental to visual or residential amenity. The design should respond to the context of the site, contributing positively to the character and design of those existing buildings surrounding it. Therefore, there is still a need to clearly explain and justify the design rationale for a shopfront to a modern building.



9. Materials and Workmanship

- 9.1. Policy DH6 states that planning permission will only be granted for new or changed shopfronts, and advertisement consent will only be granted for signage, where the materials used are not detrimental to assets with heritage significance, or visual or residential amenity.

- 9.2. The materials proposed for use in a shopfront must take influence from the existing building in terms of its design style and age. For example, from the Edwardian era onwards, metals including bronze and cast iron tended to be used. Therefore, the use of these materials would not be considered to be appropriate for a building from before this era as they would not reflect the character and design of the existing building.
- 9.3. Traditionally, timber was used for shopfronts as this material could easily be painted to renew the shopfront quickly and at a low cost. The use of paint also allowed the opportunity to pick out certain features of the shopfront in contrasting colours to add to its interest. In conservation areas and for listed buildings, painted timber should be the basis of newly designed shopfronts.
- 9.4. The council would not support the use of plastic or polished aluminium frames within historic buildings and conservation areas unless strong justification could be provided for the specific circumstances that would make these materials appropriate to their setting.



Left: The materials used for the fascia board and lettering are bulky, shiny and of an inappropriate colour. The signage is not appropriate to the setting and does not reflect the materials or design of the building above. The use of plastic for advertisements is generally discouraged, particularly in this historic setting within a conservation area. This shopfront would not meet the criteria set out in Policy DH6, in particular criteria a) and criteria c).

- 9.5. Well-designed shopfronts are also about the smaller details which can add interest to and enhance the appearance of the building and its surroundings. High quality workmanship with attention to small details, such as good quality fixings with neat returns, trims and mouldings can make a positive contribution to the appearance of the shopfront and will be encouraged by the council.

Left: Existing detailing has been retained and incorporated into the shopfront which does not obscure or detract from the design of the existing shopfront. Lettering is painted onto the fascia board which is of an appropriate scale and proportion to the building, in accordance with Policy DH6.



10. Accessibility

- 10.1. Shopfronts must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, to enable access for all. Part M of the Building Regulations provides detailed guidance on access to and use of buildings. For further guidance on this aspect of the proposal, please contact our Building Control team using the contact details at the end of the TAN.
- 10.2. It may be necessary to make changes to a shopfront and the building such as the installation of ramps, call pads for wheelchair assistance or to open automatic doors, all of which will require careful consideration in terms of positioning and design, in order to comply with the requirements of Policy DH6.
- 10.3. Where this would affect a listed building, we would encourage seeking pre-application advice from the Council's Conservation officers to make sure that the significance of the listed building is balanced against the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. If this would require a significant amount of alterations that would be unsympathetic to the significance of the listed building, for example, if the building is changed from another use to become a shop, it may be necessary to consider whether the proposed use of the building as a shop is appropriate.
- 10.4. Traditional shopfronts often have a recessed doorway which adds interest to the shopfront, increases window display area and in most cases provides level access to the shop. The threshold can be used to add individuality to the shopfront, for example by using tiles to personalise or decorate it.

- 10.5. Where shopfronts have a recessed doorway, the council will strongly encourage that this is retained. They should also be re-instated where appropriate. As with all of the elements which make up the shopfront, the design of the threshold and the door itself should respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of the existing building and the surroundings, as specified by Policy DH6.



Above: The threshold for the doors has been used to personalise and add some interest to the entrance to these shops. This detailing should be retained where alterations and new shopfronts are proposed and we would encourage that they are reinstated where possible and appropriate.

11. Shopfronts Summary:

- 11.1. In order to meet the criteria set out in Policy DH6, applicants should ensure that they have considered each of the points below. The council will be expecting to see how these considerations have influenced the submitted proposal:

- ✓ Historic shopfronts must be retained
- ✓ Design of shopfront should respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings
- ✓ Layout of the shopfront should be in proportion to the building and positioning of the elements of the shopfront must not be detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity
- ✓ Each building should be clearly identifiable
- ✓ Colours should complement the era of the building and reflect the type of shop where appropriate
- ✓ Materials used should be informed by the building age and style
- ✓ Consideration should be given to the smaller details that can enhance the appearance of the shopfront
- ✓ Good quality workmanship and materials will be encouraged

- ✓ Standard corporate schemes will need to be amended to ensure they respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings

12. Canopies and Blinds

- 12.1. Canopies and blinds can provide interest to a shopfront and its surroundings as well as protecting goods from the sunlight and shading customers. Where proposed, they must be appropriate to the period of the building, simple in form and retractable into a blind box as to avoid obscuring the shopfront when not in use.
- 12.2. The colour and materials should reflect the design style of the shopfront. New blinds should be traditional in their design, therefore the use of bright plastic or highly reflective materials will not be supported.



- 12.3. Fixed material canopies are not traditional features of the streetscape and are likely to be out of character with their surroundings, unless they were part of the original design of the building. Fixed metal canopies were particularly favoured during the Edwardian period, therefore, the council will support the reinstatement or refurbishment of these if historic evidence can be found to support the proposed style.

13. Fascia and lettering

- 13.1. Policy DH6 states that advertisement consent will only be granted for signage and other forms of advertisement where the design, positioning, materials, colour, proportion and illumination are not detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity, as demonstrated through the four criteria of the policy.
- 13.2. The style of signage typical of some periods would be simple and plain, whereas Victorian and Edwardian signage was often more busy and decorative.
- 13.3. Effective signage will be simple, clear and instantly recognisable. As mentioned in Section 7, the design of signage is often driven by corporate identity. Policy DH6 overcomes this by requiring that any proposed signage must respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings.
- 13.4. Policy DH6 refers to positioning as an important design consideration. For fascia boards, the design process should consider the positioning of the lettering. Traditional shopfronts, for example, would typically have the name of the shop in the centre of the fascia board.
- 13.5. Lettering should be clear and simple, taking influence from the style and design of the shopfront. In general, traditional hand painted lettering on fascia and windows would be supported by planning officers. The use of raised three dimensional lettering and lettering on metal plaques may be supported, where it can be demonstrated that the design responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings, and would meet all of the criteria of Policy DH6.



Left: Lettering is hand painted onto a timber fascia board in a colour which contrasts the fascia colour. The size of the lettering relates well to the depth and length of the fascia. The font is simple and reflects the style of the shopfront and the existing building.

- 13.6. The colour of the lettering should be carefully selected as to contrast with the colour of the fascia. Where lettering is proposed to be applied directly to the building, the council would generally encourage these to be metal, raised letters. Plastic, highly reflective and back-lit fascia are unlikely to receive officer support, as they would not positively contribute to the character and design of existing buildings and their surroundings.
- 13.7. Proportions are also a key consideration under Policy DH6. The size of the lettering should not dominate the fascia, and should positively respond to the size of the fascia and the existing building. Lettering should be well spaced and well-proportioned, as required by Policy DH6.



Left: Large fascia board made from materials which do not take inspiration from the existing building. The signage is driven by corporate identity and fails to take into account the setting of the shopfront. The lettering is not hand-painted onto timber as the guidance advises nor is it raised three dimensional lettering of an appropriate material.

14. Projecting or hanging signs

- 14.1. Traditional projecting or hanging signs can add character and interest to a building and the surrounding street scene. The council will generally support well-designed projecting signs which are constructed of timber or metal and painted with details of the shop. The shape of the sign could be made more individual by being cut into a traditional symbol which reflects the type of shop.

- 14.2. Hanging signs should generally be located below the level of the first floor window cill, positioned such that they do not obscure any of the architectural details of the building or shopfront.
- 14.3. There should normally be no more than one projecting or hanging sign per shopfront, to avoid a cluttered appearance in the street scene, which would be contrary to criterion c) of Policy DH6. However, where a business has more than one street frontage, the additional elevations will be taken into consideration when assessing any additional proposed signage.
- 14.4. Thick box signs are bulky and usually unattractive. They should be avoided as they detrimentally impact the appearance of the shopfront and the wider streetscene.

Right: Simple hanging sign on a relatively simple bracket and arm which reflects the design style of the setting of this shopfront. Lettering is applied three-dimensional lettering of an appropriate material. The height is approximately level with the height of the fascia board and is below the first floor window cill.



- 14.5. Projecting signs should be designed as to avoid dominating the shopfront, and should avoid obscuring neighbouring shops' signs. They should be of a proportionate size in relation to the shopfront, as to comply with Policy DH6.
- 14.6. Brackets and arms should be designed to reflect the character of the building, avoiding overly complex decorative designs where this does not positively contribute to the character of the existing building.

15. A-boards

- 15.1. A-boards on highways, where vehicular traffic is prohibited, will require express advertisement consent. This includes on footways. Consent is also required from the Highways Authority, in this case Oxfordshire County Council, to place the items in the highway. The Highways Authority should be contacted in the first instance for their advice on this process.
- 15.2. A-boards should always be temporary, being displayed only during the opening hours of the business which they advertise, and taken down at the close of business each day. The number of A-boards should be kept as low as possible as they cause street clutter and can obstruct pedestrian footways.

16. Internal adverts

- 16.1. In the majority of cases, signs which are set behind shop windows are subject to the same controls as external signage
- 16.2. Permanent window advertisements, such as telephone numbers and email addresses can be acceptable if sensitively designed, positioned, coloured and proportioned, to comply with the criteria of Policy DH6.
- 16.3. Shopfront windows which are blanked out with advertising will be discouraged as this reduces active frontage and can appear cluttered.
- 16.4. We would also discourage the use of internal LED signs, for example 'Open' signs as these can be harmful to the character of the surrounding area, causing visual pollution detrimental to the street scene and contrary to Policy DH6.

17. Illumination

- 17.1. The successful incorporation of illumination to a shopfront can enhance the shop and its setting by picking up on particular architectural features, illuminating the signage and/ or illuminating a display in the shop window, so that these can be easily seen by customers.
- 17.2. Policy DH6 makes specific reference to illumination, again requiring that it would not be detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity, as demonstrated by the four criteria of the policy.

- 17.3. The type of lighting and its design should respond to and positively contribute to the character and design of the existing buildings and surroundings, whilst avoiding visual clutter and pollution.
- 17.4. There is no historically correct style in this instance, as light fittings are a relatively modern invention. Therefore, in the absence of design influence based on the era of the building, illumination should be carefully designed to respond to the style of the shop and should be as discreet as possible. Trough lighting, 'halo' back lit letters, or spot lights are the most likely forms of illumination to receive officer support, but it should be noted that these may not be appropriate in all locations.
- 17.5. Levels of illumination should be carefully considered to avoid causing light pollution, particularly in residential areas. This is likely to be controlled through condition where necessary to avoid adverse impact. 'Flood' lighting will generally be discouraged as it can cause light pollution.
- 17.6. Internally illuminated projecting signs and fascias are actively discouraged by the council as they are not in character with most settings in the city, particularly where they would impact upon historic buildings or conservation areas.
- 17.7. In order to avoid conflict with criterion b) of Policy DH6, any illumination should be designed in such a way that it would not prejudice public safety.
- 17.8. Depending upon the setting of the shopfront and the individual circumstances associated with this, the following forms of illumination (subject to their design) could be appropriate:
- Discreet spotlights to illuminate fascias and hanging signs
 - Trough lighting
 - Signs painted on to shop windows which are illuminated from inside the shop
 - Externally front-lit or 'halo' back-lit individual letters (generally not acceptable within a conservation area or where they would impact upon a listed building or its setting).
- 17.9. It should be noted that illumination may not be acceptable in some settings and the Council will consider whether there is a need for illumination on a case-by-case basis.

18. Security

- 18.1. The installation of security measures should be considered carefully as to avoid negatively impacting upon the character and design of the shopfront and its surroundings.
- 18.2. The criteria of Policy DH6 must all be carefully considered in relation to security measures, as these have the potential to impact upon public safety, create visual pollution and could be detrimental to the character and design of existing buildings and their surroundings.
- 18.3. In order to promote the vibrancy and vitality of a shopping street, active frontages are very important. Active frontages also allow shoppers to see into a shop which provides added security. Shutters and external grilles can lead to a reduction in active frontage, which not only harms the character and design of the buildings and their surroundings, but also may lead to reduced footfall and increased anti-social behaviour.
- 18.4. The council will not permit the use of permanently fixed external grilles in public places. The installation of fixed external grilles to the rear of a building could create an accessible route for enabling illegal access to this building or those adjoining it and should be avoided.
- 18.5. The council will encourage the use of toughened glass to improve security, as this can be designed to have a negligible impact on character and appearance of the shopfront and its surroundings.
- 18.6. Where applicants are seeking higher forms of security, additional glazing bars and internal window grilles, which allow views into and out of the shop are likely to be the most appropriate option to ensure compliance with policy. These measures keep the street scene open, and therefore visually attractive, and also allow surveillance into the shop.
- 18.7. Security is a material consideration in planning and therefore alarms and associated boxes and CCTV offer an effective crime prevention mechanism. It is recommended that the location of any alarm box or camera and its associated wiring should not impact on any features of a historic shopfront, and be of a colour which is not visually intrusive, as to meet the requirements of Policy DH6.

19. Mechanical and Electrical Fixtures and Fittings

- 19.1. Mechanical and electrical fixtures and fittings, such as air conditioning condenser units, must be located as to minimise their visual impact in accordance with Policy DH6.
- 19.2. The council will encourage careful siting of these to the rear of a building where possible, particularly in the case of historic buildings to mitigate harm to the fabric of a historic building and the street scene.
- 19.3. The lack of visibility of a plant from street level may not result in it being acceptable. Oxford is a city of varied rooflines and heights, and high level plant proposals will need to assess the surrounding views for impact.

20. ATMs

- 20.1. ATMs on historic shopfronts and in conservation areas should ideally be located in internal lobbies of buildings or in the least obtrusive location on the façade.
- 20.2. When the machines have to be located on the facades, they should be incorporated as much as possible into the design and not detract from the character of the building or disrupt its integrity. In order to comply with Policy DH6, ATMs in these areas should be simple in design and not have excessive advertising, signage or illumination.

21. Case Study – The Covered Market, Oxford

- 21.1. The following case study should be used as an indication of the considerations which should be made, particularly where proposals affect a listed building and/or are within a conservation area. The advice is specific to the Covered Market, however most of these principles are those covered in the TAN and can be applied to any proposed shopfronts or signage.



- 21.2. The Covered Market is a Grade II Listed Building in the centre of Oxford, within the Central Conservation Area. Many covered markets have been demolished or converted to other uses. Oxford's covered market has rarity value remaining in use as a covered market, occupied predominantly by local traders and in public ownership.
- 21.3. In order to maintain the historic significance of the market, it is important that proposals which would involve the alteration of any of the shopfronts and/ or signage to any of the units, carefully considers the significance of the building and the setting of the unit within this unique historic building.
- 21.4. Below are the main heritage considerations which should feed into the design process when proposing new or altered shopfronts within the Covered Market.

Heritage and Design Considerations

- Where original and traditional elements of the shopfronts remain, such as an original fascia board or brackets for signage, these should be used for any new signage.
- Where modern signage and fixtures have been placed over the top of traditional and original shopfronts, the council would strongly support and encourage the removal of these boards and fixtures, and the restoration of the original features.
- The Market contains unique historic features such as old meat racks which were used by the butchers. We would encourage applicants to consider how these can be incorporated into the design of the shopfront. They could, for example, be used for the display of signage rather than putting up any additional fittings.

- Within this setting, traditional paint colours should be used for signage and shopfronts as these best compliment the products and emphasise the unique character of the building and its architecture.
- Stylish signing and careful use of colour can add interest and vibrancy. Proposals should, where possible, take into account the colours of surrounding units and should seek to provide variety to distinguish between units.
- Traditional materials such as painted timber boards with sign written lettering and logos tend to be the most appropriate option for new signage to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the market.
- Projecting signs can be useful when viewing down an avenue as they can help to identify a shop. They should be appropriately sized and positioned as to not obscure the architectural features of the shopfronts and the building, or the signage of another shop. They should be used sparingly to avoid cluttering the shopfronts.
- Projecting signs should be of a traditional style, ideally a painted timber board with sign written lettering, hung from black metal brackets.
- Illumination of the fascia board is not always necessary for shop units, in particular those near entrances or windows which benefit from natural lighting. Where lighting is deemed to be necessary, external lighting fixtures which are small, discreet and have a soft level of illumination would work best. Harsh, bright lights would detract from the character of the shopfronts and their setting within the market.



21.5. Where it is proposed to make an alteration to a shopfront in the covered market, we would strongly recommend that applicants contact the Urban Design and Heritage team for their advice as early in the process as possible. Proposals should demonstrate that they have taken into account the considerations set out in this section as well as the Shopfronts and Signage TAN as a whole.

22. Useful contacts

Planning Policy Team:

By phone: 01865 252847

By email: planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk

By post: Planning Policy Team, SAC 3.1, St. Aldate's Chambers 109-113 St. Aldate's Oxford OX1 1DS

Urban design and heritage team:

By phone: 01865 249811

By email: heritage@oxford.gov.uk

By post: Urban Design and Heritage Team, SAC 3.1, St. Aldate's Chambers 109-113 St. Aldate's Oxford OX1 1DS

Building control team:

By phone: 01865 252807

By email: buildingcontrol@oxford.gov.uk

By post: Building Control, SAC 3.1, St. Aldate's Chambers 109-113 St. Aldate's Oxford OX1 1DS