

Annexe C: Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage

Tamworth Local Plan 2022–2041

Draft for Consultation

Status of this Annexe

This Annexe forms part of the Tamworth Local Plan. It provides detailed guidance to support:

- **Policy DE7:** Shopfront Design and Security
- **Policy DE8:** Advertisements, Signs and Illumination

It should be read alongside **Policy EP1** and **Annexe A: Amenity Standards**, particularly in relation to impacts arising from illumination, glare and visual intrusion, and alongside **Policies HE1, HE2 and HE3** where a heritage asset is affected.

The standards and guidance set out in this Annexe will normally be expected to be met. Departures will be assessed against the test set out at paragraph 1.11.

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1. Purpose and Application

- 1.1. This Annexe provides detailed guidance to support Policies DE7 and DE8. It applies to all proposals involving the design, alteration or replacement of shopfronts, and to the display of advertisements, within the town centre, local and neighbourhood centres, employment areas, retail parks and other commercial areas across the Borough.
- 1.2. The Annexe establishes a set of principles that will be used as a primary basis for assessing the design and appearance of shopfronts and advertisements. Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have responded to this guidance.

Consent Requirements

- 1.3. Proposals for shopfronts and signage may engage more than one consent regime and the tests applied under each differ. Applicants should establish at the outset which consents are required.

Table C1: Consents that may be required

Consent	When required	Test applied
Planning permission	Alterations to a shopfront that constitute development, including changes to the fascia surround, stall riser, glazing,	The development plan as a whole, including Policies DE1, DE7 and EP1,

Consent	When required	Test applied
	doors, security shutters and shutter housings	unless material considerations indicate otherwise
Advertisement consent	Display of an advertisement not falling within the excluded or deemed consent classes of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007	Amenity and public safety only: see paragraphs 1.5 to 1.8
Listed building consent	Works to a listed building affecting its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, including most shopfront alterations and many fixed signs	The statutory duty to have special regard to preserving the building, its setting and features of special interest

Amenity and Public Safety Test

- 1.4. The display of advertisements is controlled under the **Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007**. It is important that applicants and decision-makers understand that these Regulations restrict the matters that may be taken into account.

The statutory test

Under the 2007 Regulations, the Council's powers of control over advertisements are exercisable **only in the interests of amenity and public safety**, taking account of the provisions of the development plan so far as they are material.

Amenity: regard will be had to the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest, whether or not those features are statutorily protected.

Public safety: regard will be had to the safety of persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome, and in particular to whether the advertisement is likely to obscure or hinder the interpretation of any traffic sign, signal or aid to navigation, or otherwise to render hazardous the use of those routes.

Matters such as the content of an advertisement, the identity or trading practices of the advertiser, or competition between businesses are **not** relevant considerations.

- 1.5. The guidance in Section 10 of this Annexe is therefore framed as guidance on what the Council considers necessary in the interests of amenity and public safety. Where an advertisement requires both planning permission and advertisement consent, the wider design considerations in this Annexe will be applied to the planning application.

- 1.6. Certain advertisements benefit from **deemed consent** under Schedule 3 to the Regulations and do not require an express application. Deemed consent is nevertheless subject to the standard conditions in the Regulations, including that advertisements are maintained in a clean and tidy condition and do not endanger the public. The Council may serve a discontinuance notice where an advertisement displayed with deemed consent is causing substantial injury to amenity or a danger to members of the public.
- 1.7. Advertisements displayed without the necessary consent are liable to enforcement action, and the display of an advertisement without consent is a criminal offence. Businesses are strongly encouraged to seek advice from the Council before installing signage.
- 1.8. The Council will keep under review whether the designation of one or more **Areas of Special Control of Advertisements** would be appropriate, having regard to the character of the town centre and the conservation areas.

Status and departures

- 1.9. The standards and guidance set out in this Annexe will normally be expected to be met.

1.10. A departure will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that a high-quality design solution is achieved and that no unacceptable harm would arise to the character, appearance or amenity of the area.

1.11. In such cases, a robust justification must be provided demonstrating that:

Departure test

- the departure arises from a specific and identified characteristic of the host building, the shopfront or the surrounding context, or from a genuine operational requirement that cannot be met by other means;
- a high quality design outcome would nevertheless be achieved; and
- no unacceptable harm would arise to the character or appearance of the host building, the street scene, the significance of any heritage asset, or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

The extent of justification required will be proportionate to the sensitivity of the location. A greater degree of justification will be expected within the conservation areas, on and adjacent to listed buildings, and on traditional shopping frontages.

2. Shopfront Design Principles

2.1. The design of shopfronts plays a critical role in shaping the character, quality and vitality of streets and centres. Well-designed shopfronts contribute positively to the streetscape, support economic activity and reinforce local distinctiveness. Poorly designed shopfronts result in visual clutter, harm architectural character and reduce the attractiveness and functionality of an area.

2.2. Shopfronts will be expected to:

- respond positively to the architectural character of the host building and the surrounding area;
- maintain the proportions, vertical rhythm and plot width of the wider street scene;
- use high quality, durable and appropriate materials;
- retain, repair or reinstate traditional architectural detailing where appropriate; and
- create attractive, active and visually engaging ground floor frontages.

2.3. A shopfront should be designed as a whole, and as part of the wider building. Piecemeal alteration of individual elements, such as a new fascia applied over an existing surround or replacement glazing without regard to the framing, is a common cause of harm and will not normally be supported.

3. Key Shopfront Components

3.1. Shopfronts should be designed as an integrated composition that reflects the architectural structure of the building. Unless the architectural form of the building indicates otherwise, shopfronts will be expected to include:

- a **fascia** for signage, contained within the shopfront surround;
- **pilasters** or console brackets defining the edges of the shopfront and expressing the structural bay;
- a **cornice** above the fascia, throwing water clear of the fascia and terminating the composition;
- a **stall riser** at ground level;
- **display windows**, subdivided by mullions and transoms where the width requires it; and
- a **recessed doorway** where appropriate to the building and the street.

3.2. These elements provide visual structure, help maintain the rhythm of the street and reinforce the character of traditional shopfronts. They are identified in **Figure C1**.

3.3. Where a contemporary approach is proposed, it should demonstrate a clear and coherent design that responds positively to the host building and its surrounding context.

A contemporary shopfront is not an exemption from the principles in this Annexe. It should still express the structural bay of the building, sit within a defined surround, and relate to the proportions of the elevation above.



Figure C1: The elements of a traditional shopfront

Fascias

3.4. Fascias will be expected to:

- be proportionate to the shopfront and to the host building, and contained wholly within the shopfront surround;
- align with neighbouring fascias where the buildings share a common height and datum;
- avoid obscuring architectural features such as cornices, string courses, console brackets or first-floor window cills;
- avoid extending upwards over the first-floor elevation or downwards over the transom; and
- be of a scale, depth and design that complements the surrounding streetscape.

3.5. Overly deep, dominant or poorly aligned fascias will not normally be supported. Deep fascias applied to conceal a roller shutter housing are a particular cause of harm and should be avoided by locating the housing internally (see Section 7).

Stall risers

3.6. Stall risers form an important visual and functional element of many traditional shopfronts, providing a visual base to the composition and protecting the glazing from damage. They will be expected to:

- be included where appropriate, and in particular within the conservation areas and on traditional shopping frontages;
- reflect the proportions and character of the building, typically between 450 mm and 750 mm in height; and
- be constructed using high quality and durable materials, such as painted timber panelling, brickwork or stone matching the host building, or tiling where this reflects the building's period.

3.7. Contemporary designs without stall risers may be acceptable where they are clearly justified and respond positively to the context, for example on a modern building or where a fully glazed frontage forms part of a coherent architectural composition.

4. Materials, Detailing and Historic Features

4.1. The choice of materials and the level of detailing are critical to the overall quality of shopfront design. Shopfronts will be expected to:

- use materials appropriate to the character of the building and surrounding area, with painted timber normally preferred on traditional buildings;

- incorporate high quality detailing and craftsmanship, including appropriately profiled mouldings, cornices and glazing bars;
- avoid overly reflective, garish or visually intrusive materials, including uPVC, high-gloss plastic laminates, mirrored or heavily tinted glazing and applied vinyl covering the whole of a display window; and
- retain and repair traditional materials where they survive.

Retention and reinstatement of historic features

- 4.2. Tamworth's centres retain a number of historic shopfronts and shopfront elements, some of them concealed behind later alterations. These make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the town centre and the conservation areas, and to the significance of the buildings of which they form part. Where a historic shopfront survives, in whole or in part, original materials and detailing should be preserved and repaired in preference to replacement.
- 4.3. The Council will **positively encourage and support the reinstatement of traditional and historic shopfront features** where these have been lost or concealed. Proposals which include reinstatement will be viewed

favourably and reinstatement may be secured as part of a wider scheme of alteration.

Encouraging reinstatement

The Council will support proposals which:

- expose, repair and reinstate concealed historic fabric, including original pilasters, console brackets, cornices, stall risers, glazing bars and tiled or mosaic entrance thresholds;
- reinstate a traditional shopfront to a building where the historic form is known from photographic, documentary or physical evidence, or can be inferred from surviving examples in the same terrace or of the same building type;
- remove later accretions that obscure or damage historic fabric, including oversized fascias, external roller shutters, applied cladding and redundant fixings and brackets;
- reinstate traditional proportions and materials where a modern shopfront is being replaced; and
- reinstate a recessed entrance where the original arrangement has been lost.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss proposals for reinstatement with the Council at pre-application stage. Where a shopfront scheme involves reinstatement, the Council will take a flexible and proportionate approach to other requirements of this Annexe in order to enable the scheme to come forward.

Where historic fabric is uncovered during works, the Council should be notified and the opportunity to retain and repair it should be taken.

- 4.4. Where a building is listed, or is a locally listed or non-designated heritage asset, proposals should be informed by an appropriate assessment of significance in accordance with Policies HE1 and HE2.

5. Relationship to the Host Building

- 5.1. Shopfront design must respect the architectural composition of the host building. Proposals will be expected to:
- align with existing architectural features such as string courses, lintels, pilasters and window lines;
 - respect the proportions and vertical rhythm of the building, including the relationship between the shopfront and the elevation above;
 - retain the solid-to-void relationship appropriate to the building, avoiding the removal of structural piers to create a wider opening; and
 - avoid spanning across multiple buildings where this would disrupt the architectural integrity of the street.
- 5.2. Where a single use occupies multiple units, the design should reflect the structure of the individual buildings rather than creating a continuous or uniform frontage. Pilasters and fascia breaks should be retained or reinstated at the party lines, and fascia heights should

follow the individual buildings rather than being levelled across them.

- 5.3. The two approaches are contrasted in **Figure C2**. Corporate branding will not justify a departure from these principles. National and multiple retailers will be expected to adapt their standard shopfront and signage to the character of the host building and the street.

[FIGURE C2 TO BE INSERTED – PHOTOGRAPH – to be sourced from Tamworth]

Comparative elevations of a terrace showing a single occupier expressing the individual buildings through retained pilasters, stepped fascias following the original datums and separate entrances, against a continuous levelled fascia spanning the party lines and obscuring the architectural divisions.

Figure C2: Shopfronts spanning multiple buildings

6. Active Frontages

- 6.1. Shopfronts play a key role in creating active and vibrant streets and in providing natural surveillance at ground floor level. Development proposals will be expected to:
- maintain clear glazing to display windows;
 - avoid blank, solid or obscured frontages, including the full covering of display windows with vinyl, applied graphics, posters or internal shelving and stock;

- ensure entrances are clearly defined and face the street; and
- provide internal display and lighting that contributes to the appearance of the street outside trading hours.

6.2. Where the use requires a degree of privacy or screening at ground floor level, this should be achieved through the design of an internal display area or a partial treatment retaining views into the unit at eye level, rather than by obscuring the whole frontage.

6.3. Proposals that would reduce activity or natural surveillance at ground floor level will not normally be supported.

7. Security Measures

7.1. Security measures should be carefully designed to minimise harm to the appearance of shopfronts and the wider street scene, while providing effective protection. Solid external shutters have a substantial deadening effect on the street outside trading hours, remove natural surveillance and attract graffiti and flyposting.

7.2. Preferred measures, in order of preference, are:

- laminated or reinforced glazing, which requires no visible apparatus;

- internally fitted removable grilles or demountable bars;
- internally fitted open mesh or lattice grilles, retracting into a housing concealed within the building; and
- alarm systems, CCTV and discreet security lighting, designed in accordance with Section 9 of Annexe A: Amenity Standards.

7.3. Where shutters are proposed:

- open mesh or lattice grilles, providing at least 70 per cent visual permeability, will be expected;
- shutter housings, guide rails and fixings should be integrated within the shopfront design and concealed from view, and should not be applied across the fascia or the elevation above; and
- solid external shutters that obscure shopfronts will not normally be supported.

7.4. The difference between an internally fitted grille and an external roller shutter, seen with the shopfront closed, is illustrated in **Figure C3**. Proposals for security measures on or affecting a listed building, or within a conservation area, will require particular care and will normally be expected to be internally fitted with no external apparatus visible.

[FIGURE C3 TO BE INSERTED – PHOTOGRAPH – to be sourced from Tamworth]

Comparative elevations showing an internally fitted open mesh grille with a concealed housing retaining views of the display window, against a solid external roller shutter with a surface-mounted box housing applied over the fascia.

Figure C3: Security measures

8. Blinds, Canopies and Awnings

8.1. Blinds, canopies and awnings should be designed to complement the shopfront and surrounding building. They will be expected to:

- be proportionate to the shopfront and contained within the width of the shopfront opening;
- use colours and materials appropriate to the building and area, with traditional canvas or woven fabric preferred over plastic-coated or high-gloss materials;
- be retractable where possible, with the housing integrated into the shopfront design beneath the fascia;
- avoid obscuring architectural features, including the fascia, cornice and console brackets;
- avoid "Dutch" or fixed barrel canopies on traditional buildings; and

- be positioned so as not to create hazards for pedestrians, with a minimum clearance of 2.4 metres above the footway and a minimum clearance of 600 mm from the kerb face.

- 8.2. Built-in or historic canopies that contribute positively to the character of a building should be retained and repaired.
- 8.3. Where an awning or canopy would project over the highway, the applicant should also confirm the position with the highway authority, and a licence may be required.

9. Accessibility and Inclusive Design

- 9.1. Shopfronts should provide inclusive and accessible entrances. Under the Equality Act 2010, service providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to access their services, and the design of the shopfront is central to this.
- 9.2. Development proposals will be expected to:
- provide step-free access where feasible, using a level threshold, an internal ramp or a discreetly integrated external ramp;
 - provide doors of adequate clear opening width, with door furniture and opening forces suitable for use by people with limited strength or dexterity;

- ensure entrances are easy to locate and use, with visual contrast between the door, its frame and the surrounding shopfront;
- provide manifestation to full-height glazing to make it apparent to people with visual impairments; and
- maintain clear and unobstructed circulation space, both within the recessed entrance and on the footway outside.

9.3. Where a level threshold cannot be achieved because of the form or significance of a historic building, applicants should demonstrate what alternative arrangements have been considered. The Council will take a proportionate approach in such cases, but the presumption is in favour of finding a solution. A well-designed access solution can normally be accommodated without harm to a historic shopfront.

9.4. External seating, A-boards, display stands and other items placed on the footway can present a significant obstruction to people with visual impairments and wheelchair users. Proposals should not rely on the use of the footway for display or seating unless the necessary highway consents are in place and a clear, unobstructed pedestrian route is maintained.

10. Advertisements, Signs and Illumination

10.1. Advertisements and signage play an important role in the visibility and function of commercial premises but must be carefully designed to avoid harm to the character and appearance of buildings and streets, and to avoid prejudicing public safety. This section sets out what the Council considers necessary in the interests of amenity and public safety for the purposes of the 2007 Regulations, and forms the detailed guidance referred to in Policy DE8.

General principles

10.2. Advertisements will be expected to:

- be proportionate to the shopfront and to the host building;
- be of a size and scale that does not dominate or detract from the building or the surrounding area;
- use high quality materials and appropriate lettering styles, with individually applied or hand-painted lettering preferred on traditional buildings;
- be positioned to avoid obscuring architectural features;
- avoid excessive clutter, including multiple, repeated or poorly coordinated signs on a single frontage;

- be limited to one fascia sign and one projecting or hanging sign per unit frontage in normal circumstances; and
- be located on the principal frontage of the premises where appropriate.

10.3. Appropriate and inappropriate approaches to fascia and projecting signage are illustrated in **Figure C4**. Signage on upper floors, on gable ends, on rear elevations visible from public vantage points, and on flank walls will be resisted where it would harm the character or appearance of the building or area.

Projecting and hanging signs

10.4. Projecting and hanging signs will be expected to:

- be appropriately scaled and positioned at fascia level, aligned with the fascia and not on the elevation above;
- respect the proportions of the building, and normally be limited to one per unit frontage;
- be of a traditional hanging sign or bracket form on historic buildings, rather than an internally illuminated box; and
- avoid creating hazards for pedestrians, with a minimum clearance of 2.4 metres above the footway and a projection not normally exceeding 1 metre from the face of the building.

Illumination

10.5. Illumination should:

- be discreet and appropriate to the character of the area;
- avoid excessive brightness, glare, light spill and sky glow;
- use external trough or spotlighting, halo illumination or individually illuminated letters in preference to internally illuminated box signs;
- be designed to minimise impacts on neighbouring occupiers and the wider environment, having regard to Annexe A: Amenity Standards, Section 9; and
- be controlled so that it is switched off, or reduced in intensity, outside trading hours where the premises adjoin or are close to residential accommodation.

10.6. Luminance should not exceed the levels recommended in the *Institution of Lighting Professionals Professional Lighting Guide on the Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements* for the relevant environmental zone and sign size. Applications for illuminated signage should specify the illumination method, the luminance in candelas per square metre, and the hours of illumination.

10.7. Internally illuminated box signs and other visually intrusive forms of advertisement will not normally be supported

where they would harm the character or appearance of the building or surrounding area, and will not normally be supported at all within the conservation areas or on listed buildings.

Signage in employment areas and retail parks

- 10.8. In employment areas, retail parks and other large-scale commercial developments, signage should be coordinated across the site through a signage strategy submitted with the application for the development itself, and designed to minimise visual clutter, with particular regard to cumulative impacts and to wider views. Individual tenant signage should then be brought forward within that strategy.
- 10.9. Free-standing totem and pylon signs should be limited in number, of a scale proportionate to the site frontage, sited to avoid obstructing visibility splays and located within the site rather than on the highway verge.

[FIGURE C4 TO BE INSERTED – PHOTOGRAPH]

Comparative elevations of a traditional shopfront showing a single hand-painted or individually lettered fascia sign, one projecting sign at fascia level and externally lit signage, against a deep internally illuminated box fascia,

multiple repeated signs, window vinyls covering the display glazing and signage carried over the first-floor elevation

Figure C4: Appropriate and inappropriate signage

11. Digital and Electronic Displays

- 11.1. Digital and electronic advertisement displays raise particular considerations of amenity and public safety because of their brightness, their capacity to change and the resulting potential for driver and pedestrian distraction.
- 11.2. Proposals for digital or electronic displays will be expected to:
- display static images only, with no moving images, video, animation, flashing, scrolling or transitional effects;
 - provide a minimum dwell time between image changes, with an instantaneous change rather than a fade, dissolve or wipe;
 - incorporate automatic dimming controlled by an ambient light sensor, and specify daytime and night-time luminance levels;
 - default to a blank or dark screen in the event of a fault; and

- be sited so as not to obscure or compete with traffic signs and signals, and not at locations where drivers are required to make decisions, including junctions, crossings and roundabout approaches.

11.3. Applications should be supported by details of luminance, dwell time, dimming control and, where the display would be visible from the highway, an assessment of the effect on road safety. The views of the highway authority will be sought.

11.4. Digital and electronic displays will not normally be supported within the conservation areas, on or affecting the setting of a listed building, or in predominantly residential areas.

12. Heritage Assets

12.1. Particular care is required where a shopfront or advertisement affects a designated or non-designated heritage asset or its setting. Proposals should be assessed in accordance with Policies HE1, HE2 and HE3 and with the statutory duties relating to listed buildings and conservation areas.

12.2. Applicants should note that:

- listed building consent is required for alterations to a shopfront on a listed building, and for the fixing of

most signs to a listed building, in addition to any planning permission or advertisement consent;

- works to a shopfront on a listed building carried out without consent are a criminal offence;
- within a conservation area, the character and appearance of the area as a whole is a material consideration, and the cumulative effect of successive shopfront and signage alterations will be taken into account; and
- the significance of the asset should be described and assessed in a proportionate heritage statement submitted with the application.

12.3. Where a proposal affecting a heritage asset includes the reinstatement of lost historic features in accordance with Section 4, this will be treated as a heritage benefit and weighed accordingly.

13. Application and Design Judgement

13.1. This Annexe establishes clear expectations for the design of shopfronts and advertisements. Development proposals will be expected to comply with the standards and principles set out.

13.2. A flexible approach will only be applied in the circumstances set out in the departure test at paragraph

1.11, where a robust justification is provided and a high quality design outcome is demonstrably achieved.

13.3. A balanced planning judgement will be applied in all cases, having regard to:

- the character and appearance of the host building;
- the wider streetscape and surrounding area;
- the significance of any heritage asset affected;
- public safety, where relevant; and
- the quality and design of the proposal.

Submission requirements

13.4. Applications for shopfronts and signage should be accompanied by:

- existing and proposed elevations at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20, showing the whole of the building elevation and the adjoining frontages, not the shopfront in isolation;
- a horizontal section through the shopfront and vertical sections through the fascia, stall riser and entrance where detailing is material;
- a schedule of materials, finishes and colours, with reference to a recognised colour system;
- details of any illumination, including method, luminance and hours of operation;

- details of any security measures, including the location of housings and guide rails; and
- a photographic record of the existing shopfront and the surrounding frontage, and a heritage statement where a heritage asset is affected.

13.5. Applicants are strongly encouraged to make use of the Council's pre-application advice service, particularly for shopfronts within the conservation areas, on listed buildings and on traditional shopping frontages.