

additional guidance for commercial schemes

section eleven



11 Additional Guidance for Commercial Schemes

378. The Borough has a number of industrial estates and commercial areas. Some of these areas are becoming outdated and are under pressure to regenerate to meet the needs of modern businesses and embrace new technology. All redevelopment or commercial buildings from large industrial buildings to small shops, should seek to create pleasant and sustainable places for their users and the wider community. Attractive places attract people, new businesses and wider investment.

Applications for new commercial developments will normally be required to submit a Transport Assessment outlining the impact of new workers and visitors on local infrastructure and a Green Travel Plan outlining the measures that will be introduced to encourage more sustainable forms of transport for their workforce and visitors.

For further information see Section 13 Making an Application.

11.1 Commercial Site Layout

379. From a design and operational perspective it is more desirable for commercial buildings to take the form of perimeter blocks round the edge of a site, rather than a single unit in the centre of the site. This type of development has a number of benefits:

- A perimeter building can present a more active public frontage than a fence.
- A perimeter building provides the



Industrial units should also be well designed especially where they have significant public impact.

business with more presence in the streetscene and the opportunity for an easily identifiable public entrance.

- A perimeter building provides a more appropriate location for signage rather than using free standing signage that adds clutter.
- A perimeter building does not require as much soft landscaping to provide an attractive setting for the building (although some landscaping will normally be required some to soften the impact of the building in the streetscene).
- A perimeter building increases security by enclosing and protecting storage and parking.
- A perimeter building can be used to screen unsightly open storage, servicing and car parking.
- A perimeter block can screen nuisance and noise from neighbours.

11.2 Extensions to Commercial Developments

380. The feasibility of extending commercial premises will be assessed on a site by site basis. Where space and character allows for an extension the following issues should be considered:

- Extensions will only be acceptable where they would not be detrimental to local townscape. Additional floors, for example, may not be considered appropriate for certain types of building or in areas where increased height would be out of character.
- Extensions that involve the loss of existing parking will only be considered acceptable in principle where sufficient parking spaces are left to serve the extended building.
- Extensions that involve the loss of landscaped areas will only be considered acceptable in principle where enough landscaping remains to soften the extended building.
- The design of the extension should complement the existing building
- Extensions should not cause adverse impacts (overshadowing, noise etc.) on neighbouring properties.

381. Where extensions to commercial buildings are required the applicant should consider trying

to acquire the adjacent site or incorporate adjacent buildings so that a more flexible design approach can be taken. In some cases it may not be possible to extend and alternative premises should be sought.

11.3 Signage and Advertising

Policy Link - Saved BLP Policy C8
- Advertisements

382. Advertisements, including illuminated signage are an essential part of commercial development, they can add vitality to an area but because they are intended to have significant public impact, care needs to be taken to ensure that they do not have a detrimental affect on townscape. Low quality, poorly sited or excessive signage can have an adverse affect on both the image of the business and the wider area. Over illuminated or poorly located signage could also have a detrimental affect on highway safety. Adverts should be well designed in themselves and have adequate regard for their setting. A well made attractive sign can be just as effective and project an image of quality to the customer. All signage must be integral to and compliment the design of the building / shopfront.

383. Where located on a building, signage must be related to the buildings proportions and not appear over dominant. They must not obstruct architectural features such as shopfronts, windows and cornices and they should be located below the cill level of first floor windows. The principle of signs above first floor level will be decided on a case by case basis.

384. The appropriate number and size of signs will depend on the scale of the building and its location. The size and amount of lettering should relate to the proportion and area of the fascia. Large numbers of adverts add clutter to the streetscene and will not be considered appropriate. Where upper floors of a building are utilised for separate businesses, simple lettering on the windows is to be used instead of a box or projecting sign. All signage should be appropriate to the context and not result in a proliferation of clutter in the streetscene. A proliferation of free standing totems and flag advertisements will be unacceptable. Particular care should be given to the impact of signage in Conservation Areas.

385. Applications for new advertisement will therefore be assessed on the following criteria:

- Prominence in the streetscene.
- Effect on the building and the wider townscape.
- Impact and relationship to existing architectural features.
- Cumulative affect in conjunction with other advertisements in the vicinity.
- The impact on any historic building designations in the area.
- Effect on residential amenity.

386. Box and hanging signs can add articulation to the frontage although such signage will be restricted to one per property unless it has a double frontage. They must not be over-scaled and should not obscure architectural detailing. Imaginative hanging signs add character and will be welcomed.



This fascia sign adapts the same principles but in a more traditional way.



Raised letters can give extra depth & articulation to a fascia sign.

Illuminated Signs

387. Illuminated fascia signs can have an impact on the character of an area and traffic safety. The acceptability of an illuminated fascia sign will depend on location and its appropriateness to the character of the existing building and wider streetscape. Other types of illuminated signage such as cut out illuminated letters or externally illuminated fascia signs are generally more appropriate and can be just as, if not more, effective.

Corporate Image

388. Corporate image should not be at the expense of design or imposed where it would be inappropriate for the context. Businesses should be prepared to adapt their regular signage and materials. It should be noted that breach of Advertisement Consent is a criminal offence. Advice should be sought from The Council as to whether deemed or express consent is required.

For further guidance on fascias and box signs see Section 13.6 Shopfronts.

Hoardings

389. Advertisement hoardings are unacceptable except on a temporary basis to screen development sites in predominately commercial areas.

11.4 Open Storage

Policy Link - Saved BLP Policy C18 - Open Sites Used for Commercial Purposes

390. Open storage should be shielded by perimeter blocks where possible. However, for large



A retractable canvas canopy in Alexandra Street makes a bold & attractive statement in the streetscene.



External illumination highlights the gold lettering on this fascia in Hamlet Court Road.

areas of open storage where it is difficult to enclose by the building, extensive soft landscaping should be employed to screen fencing which, on its own, can result in a dead frontage.

11.5 Servicing

391. Servicing arrangements for commercial development should be considered at an early stage to ensure that they become an integral part of the overall design. Where possible, servicing arrangements should be hidden from public view at the rear of the building or in the centre of perimeter blocks. Shared serving access arrangements should be considered for smaller plots. If there is no alternative to servicing from the public highway, deliveries should be timed to cause the minimum of inconvenience to other highway users and nearby residential properties. This may not be appropriate for some uses or larger developments.

392. Applicants for larger schemes will be required to demonstrate that the proposed service provision is sufficient for the development in their Transport Assessment and will not cause adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

11.6 Shopfronts and Shutters

Policy Link - Saved BLP Policy C7 - Shop and Commercial Frontages And Fascias

11.6.1 Shopfronts

393. Shopfronts contribute significantly to the quality of shopping centres. Attractive shopfronts can

create a pleasant shopping environment positively enhancing the shopping experience and boosting local businesses. Just one unsympathetic shopfront can destroy the character of the whole street, therefore to build high quality retail environments it is important that basic design principles and high quality detailing is applied to each and every shopfront alteration. Inappropriate shuttering can also give rise to the perception of higher crime.

394. Many of the Borough's original shopfronts have been replaced by unsympathetic facades, which can be detrimental to the character of the building and the streetscene. Shopfronts must always be designed to complement and enhance the rest of the building and the local environment.

395. Every building, old or new, will provide a framework into which a new shopfront can be inserted. This could mean either a traditional design or a contemporary solution which relates well to the surrounding townscape. Planning permission will be required for new or replacement shopfronts materially affecting the external appearance of the building.

396. In conservation areas development proposals for shopfronts will be carefully controlled in order to preserve and enhance the traditional character and appearance of these areas. The design should be compatible with the individual style of the building and with the local vernacular. It must seek to sympathetically incorporate or reinstate any original features such as fascia scrolls, and use traditional colours and materials.



A traditional shopfront in Leigh includes decorative fanlights, stall riser & a recessed doorway.

397. Any alteration to a shopfront which forms part of a listed building will require listed building consent if it affects the special character of the building. Even minor changes such as repainting the facade or alterations to the interior may require consent. The Council will normally expect original and existing shopfronts in listed buildings to be retained especially where they are part of the special character of the building or within a Conservation Area, Locally Listed Building or Frontage of Townscape Merit. However, proposals to upgrade unsympathetic shopfronts in historic buildings will be encouraged. In most cases an accurate replica of the original shopfront will be most appropriate.

For further information on shopfronts in historic buildings and areas see Section 9.4.2

398. Shopfronts must reflect the scale and character of the whole building and generally aim to enhance the streetscene. Whilst large garish signs and over proportioned shopfronts may initially draw attention to a particular shop, they impinge on and dilute architectural details and will be 'lost' when adjoining shops follow suite. The streetscene will then generally appear devoid of character and disjointed. Where a shopfront extends across more than one building, it should maintain visual separation between the buildings.

399. The following list outlines the points to be considered when designing new shopfronts:

Fascia Boards and Signage

- The size and proportions of fascia boards must reflect the scale of the overall building and correspond to the fascia's of adjoining shopfronts.
- They should not encroach on upper floors or obscure adjoining buildings or architectural features.
- Where possible fascias should be designed to sensitively incorporate, and where necessary restore, existing architectural features, such as decorative pilasters, corbels, cornices and mouldings.
- The use of highly reflective glossy materials should be avoided. Lettering on fascia boards should be painted, engraved, fixed or projected in a style and colour appropriate to the character of the building and the area.



A modern shopfront in Rectory Grove is a simple yet interesting and well articulated design.

- Frontages of adjoining buildings should be kept separate. Where a shop extends across more than one building fascias, advertisements should not extend across what was originally one building.

Shop Windows and Doorways

- Large expanses of glass appear flimsy and unsupported and should be avoided. Vertical subdivisions or mullions, which correspond to the proportions of the upper floors, should be used to reduce the scale and improve the appearance of the shopfront at ground floor level.
- Shaped or decorative mullions and panelling may, where appropriate, be used to give additional detail to traditional shopfronts.
- Recessed doorways should also be used to reduce the scale of shopfronts and to bring relief to the retail frontage. (This will need careful consideration and detailing to avoid anti-social behaviour.)
- Easy access for all users is an essential element any shopfront design. Entrances must be flush with the pavement and wide enough to allow easy access for pushchairs and wheelchairs.
- Access ramps to mitigate changes in level should be integrated into the shop (perhaps as part of a recessed doorway) and must not be an afterthought that adds clutter to the forecourt.

Corporate Image

- Firms with a corporate image or 'in house styles' should adopt a flexible approach to shopfront design and tailor their branding to complement the building features and its location.
- Stallrisers, Pilasters and Cornices
- Stallrisers improve the proportions of a shopfront by providing a solid visual base.
- Stallrisers also serve a practical purpose by providing a protective barrier between the shop and the street, and they raise the window display so it is more visible to the shopper.
- Pilasters and cornices provide a frame for the shopfront and give visual support to the upper floors.

Materials and Colours

- The materials used in all shopfronts must be high quality and durable and sympathetic to the overall building design and the wider streetscene.
- Traditional materials such as wood, brick, glass, stone or brass, or good quality modern materials chosen to compliment the building and the surrounding area, should be used.
- Garish or vibrant colours will not be permitted especially in conservation areas.

Canopies and Blinds

- Canopies and blinds can be used to add colour and variety to the streetscene as well as provide shade for shoppers and produce.
- Where installed, shopfront canopies and blinds should be made of canvas and be retractable.
- Where a shop is part of a parade, individual units need not necessarily be identical but they should have some regard to the character of the streetscene.
- Sufficient headroom should be maintained below the canopy to allow the free flow of pedestrians.
- Canopies and blinds must be free from advertising unless advertising consent has been granted. Each application will be assessed on its merits.
- See below for parasols and umbrellas.

Pavement Cafes

- External seating for cafes, restaurants and bars brings vitality to the streetscene and will be encouraged where it does not cause obstruction or impede the flow of pedestrians. A minimum of 2 metre width of unobstructed pavement should be maintained although more may be appropriate in certain cases for example in the High Street and other pedestrianised areas.
- In some cases it may be appropriate to segregate the seating area from the general pedestrian flow by using screen or barriers. Where these are proposed they should normally be freestanding, lightweight and removable and should be packed away at the end of the day, although in some cases, where it would not obstruct pedestrian flow, more permanent structures (e.g. planters) may be allowed.
- Where proposed, umbrellas should also complement the street furniture, business and streetscene. Larger more continental style umbrellas for commercial use should be considered where space allows. Advertising on the screens and umbrellas should be kept to a minimum and will require advertisement consent. Plain designs are preferred. Each application will be assessed on its merits.



This outside seating area on Western Esplanade enlivens this restaurant and takes advantage of the coastal outlooks.

- Proposals for pavement cafes should include a well co-ordinated range of attractive high quality furniture that makes a positive contribution to the streetscene. A co-ordinated style of furniture should be used and the design should reflect the business and enhances the streetscene
- Lightweight plastic 'garden type' furniture will not be considered acceptable. Wooden picnic benches will not be acceptable on the highway in built up areas, but may be more acceptable in parks, gardens and in seafront location where space allows. What is considered appropriate will depend on the type of business and the location.
- A Highway licence will be required before furniture can be placed on the highway.

For further information on licensing see Council Policy and Guidelines for Tables and Chairs on the Highway which can be viewed at www.southend.gov.uk

Forecourts

- External displays can also add vitality and interest to the streetscene (e.g. florists). They should be arranged in an attractive way which enhances the streetscene and does not cause obstruction. Displays should be retained within the forecourt are unless agreed in advance and licensed by the Council.
- A-Boards add clutter to the streetscene and will be discouraged especially where they are located off the forecourt. Almost all A-boards will require planning consent.

Further information on licensing see the Council's Policy for Advertising Materials on the Public Highway can be found on the Council's website www.southend.gov.uk

Shelters and Compounds for Smokers

- Where required, smoking areas should use high quality materials and be positioned in an appropriate and designed to complement the character of

the existing building. They should not overhang the highway.

- Adequate arrangements should be made for litter collection and reasonable steps should be taken to reduce noise pollution.
- Shelters and compounds should not be located where they adversely impact on visual or residential amenity

11.6.2 Security Shutters

400. In many areas security is becoming an important issue in the design of new and existing shopfronts. Whilst the Council recognises the need for such precautions, it is keen to ensure that security shutters become an integral part of the shopfront design and are not harmful to the wider streetscene.

401. Solid or micro perforation shutters in particular, have a detrimental affect on townscape, creating 'dead' frontages, attracting graffiti and fly posting, and generally destroying the appearance of an area. When shut, solid shutters also prevent internal surveillance of the building. This type of shutter will not be considered acceptable.

402. Punched security shutters or grilles which retain visibility into the window, and which are fully integrated into the design of the shopfront, are more acceptable. These must be installed so that the housing is hidden behind the fascia, not fixed on the outside. All shutters and grilles must be powder coated or painted if visible from the public realm.



Security shutters should be at an open style to allow views into the shop and maintain an attractive frontage when the shop is closed. Open shutters are just as effective against crime as closed shutters.

403. In some locations specially designed grilles can enrich the streetscene by providing an element of public art.

404. The installation of all roller shutters (solid or perforated), external folding shutters, external roller grilles and removable or demountable grilles will require planning permission.

Shutter Alternatives

405. Various design techniques can be employed, other than security shutters, to reduce the impact of crime and should be considered. For example:

- Dividing up windows with mullions and using smaller panels of glass can be less of a temptation to crime and are easier and cheaper to replace.
- Window panes can also be laminated for extra strength.
- Installing solid stallrisers at the base of the shopfront also reduces the risk of ram raiding.

See also Section 7.2 Secured by Design

11.7 Beach Huts

406. Beach huts add interest and vitality to the seafront are an important part of its character. Southend has two distinct types of beach hut - those on the beach in Thorpe Bay, have verandas and more detailed entrances and those on the promenade in Shoeburyness are much simpler in design. As with all buildings the design of new or replacement huts must have regard to context and draw reference from its neighbours, particularly in terms of scale, materials, entrance and roof design. They must be located to respect the established frontage line and to maintain a similar separation distance. Verandas are a key feature and must be included in the design where they are an important part of the local character. All shutters and windows should be opened inwards so as not to cause obstruction and be located where they will not cause loss of privacy to their neighbours.

407. Installing roller shutters on beach huts is not considered acceptable as it has a detrimental impact on the character of the foreshore. Where beach huts are subject to repeated vandalism heavy duty hinges and locks should be installed which can



Beach huts in Thorpe Bay bring colour and vitality to the foreshore.

be just as effective as roller shutters.

408. All beach huts should be constructed of timber ship-lap boarding which must be painted. Vibrant pastels and bold colours that add vitality to the beachscape and will be actively encouraged. Staining is not considered acceptable (except for the run of flat topped elevated beach huts in Thorpe Bay where it is part of their character and where their interest comes from colourful doors instead).