



# Wellingborough Town Centre Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document



## Regulation 17 Statement of Consultation

March 2009



## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the community to be involved in the preparation of a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Whilst there is no statutory process for involving the community prior to the publication of the draft SPD, the Council must set out details of any pre-consultation activities undertaken in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. The details, which should be published in the form of a 'Consultation Statement', should include:
- the names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the draft SPD;
  - how those persons were consulted;
  - a summary of the main issues raised in those consultations; and
  - how those issues have been addressed in the draft SPD.

## **2. Pre-Consultation Activities**

- 2.1 Prior to the formulation of this SPD a baseline study was undertaken in the form of a review of the main commercial and shopping streets in the town centre in order to establish the general quality of the existing shop fronts and to identify relevant issues to be addressed in the guidance. To help inform the baseline study, stakeholder workshops were held in October 2008 to discuss the issues with various interested parties and build on the findings of the initial review. A drop-in session, aimed primarily at retailers in the town centre, was held on 1st October 2008 from 5 -7 pm whilst an all day workshop took place on 2nd October 2008 from 10am - 4.30 pm.
- 2.2 The key themes that emerged from the drop-in session were as follows:
- Small businesses/independent retailers are struggling – upgrading or changing a shop front is not a priority for many.
  - It is expensive to set up a new business and financial assistance towards shop front improvements would help.
  - Security shutters – whilst their adverse visual impact is recognised, retailers view them as essential for protection. Shutters can also be an insurance requirement, especially where windows have been repeatedly broken.
  - Poorly maintained premises or signs of crime can deter new retailers taking on premises in such areas.
- 2.3 The all day workshop involved two exercises:  
*Workshop Exercise 1:*  
Attendees participated in a group discussion designed to draw out views on:
- trends relating to town centre shop fronts in recent years, both positive and negative;
  - the impact that the design and choice of shop fronts has on the quality and appearance of the town centre;
  - the strength of feeling concerning this issue and determine whether there is a desire to make positive changes to the shopping streets in terms of improving the quality of the shop fronts in the town centre; and
  - those elements of shop front design they consider to be positive and/or negative.



### *Workshop Exercise 2:*

- 2.4 Participants were invited to examine a large photo montage of part of Market Street and were asked to identify those shop fronts and details they considered to be of good quality, poor quality and indifferent quality using coloured stickers. Each group summarised its findings, which were recorded and reported back to the other groups.
- 2.5 The key issues emerging from the workshop are summarised as follows:
- Modern shop fronts are less appealing and described as 'ugly', 'cold', and 'unwelcoming';
  - Less popular premises also unattractive buildings which may contribute to these results;
  - There was a mixed responses where shop fronts in traditional buildings had retained many traditional shop front features, such as cornice, but which had been adapted e.g. with a modern fascia attached or excessive signage above the shop front. Modern additions appeared to be less appreciated;
  - A number of attractive Georgian premises (20-22a) received negative scores (unexpectedly, as these premises have been the subject of recent refurbishment). When questioned observers described them as plain or basic in appearance. The vacancy of 1 unit was also cited as a reason for it receiving a negative classification. Shop fronts are generally understated;
  - Generally, people valued attractive buildings; the retention of original details such as cornice's or decorative thresholds; shop fronts with good proportions; and traditional materials. Less valued were unsightly modern or plain buildings; insensitive modern additions, such as overly large fascia signs and shutters; and large modern fascia signs that dominate the building and the streetscene.
- 2.6 Overall, the events helped to establish a general recognition of the current condition of shops, the problems associated with shop fronts and an agreed consensus on the need to provide guidance on better shop front design in order to enhance the quality and appearance of the town centre.

## **3. Persons Consulted**

- 3.1 The drop-in session was advertised around the town centre and was aimed primarily at retailers. Appendix 1 consists of a list of those invited to the workshop held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 whilst Appendix 2 includes the names of organisations represented at the workshop and persons attending.

## **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1 The following table lists the range of issues identified through the baseline study and stakeholder workshops and indicates where these have been addressed in the draft SPD. In some instances reference is, however, made to either the draft Public Realm Strategy or the draft Conservation Area Appraisal which are being consulted on at the same time as the draft Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guide. Section 2 of the draft Guide includes a set of general principles whilst subsequent sections provide further guidance on particular aspects of shop front and advertisement design.



Issue	How has this been addressed in the draft SPD?
1. The building above the shop front is as important as the shop front itself.	See section 2 in particular
2. A3 uses perceived as low quality shop fronts (often in secondary/peripheral streets) and causing additional problems such as litter and decreasing footfalls for actual retailers.	See section 3 in particular
3. Garish signs, large signs (often out of proportion) and poor choice of materials e.g. cheap or inappropriate materials – plate glass and plastic.	See section 11 in particular
4. Visual impact of clutter located on both the shop front and the associated building, including signage, aerials etc.	See section 8 in particular
5. Security shutters appear ugly, and damage the street scene but there is recognition of the need for retailers to protect themselves. Can shutters be handled sensitively?	See section 5 in particular
	The Council has produced a Conservation Area Appraisal which includes a proposal for a building maintenance and enhancement grant scheme to assist with essential maintenance of historic buildings and raise standards of shop front design. The Appraisal is being consulted on at the same time as the draft SPD.
7. Thoughtful lighting could improve the appearance of the town at night (sustainability/energy efficiency should be a consideration)	See section 5. The Council has also produced a draft Public Realm Strategy which includes lighting proposals and design considerations.
8. Disabled access is a consideration	See section 6 in particular
9. Good shop front control and enforcement is necessary – individual decisions are having a collective impact. Is there potential for collective action, street by street; retailers working together; or a street code?	The Council recognises that a significant change is required in terms of the standards applied to shop front design and advertising. The application of the guidance will, over time, contribute towards uplifting the quality and appearance of the town centre.
10. Consideration should be given to the whole of the building and by extension, the street, rather than just the shop front/sign. Sensitivity to the building in new designs is required.	See section 2 in particular
Other associated signs, such as hanging signs, are generally of an acceptable size, but designs are often basic and unimaginatively handled. Posters and signs in windows obscure displays and detract from the buildings appearance.	See Section 11 in particular



**Appendix 1 –  
List of organisations and persons invited to the workshop held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008**

Ability Northants	Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service
Age Concern Wellingborough	Northamptonshire Health Authority
Alan Baxter Associates	Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Trust
All Saints CE Primary School	Northamptonshire Heartlands Primary Care Trust
All Saints, Earls Barton	Northamptonshire Learning & Skills Council
Alternative Health Centre	Northamptonshire Learning Partnership
Anglian Water Services Ltd	Northamptonshire Libraries & Information Services
Bassetts Close Community Association	Northamptonshire Police
Bowden Land	Northamptonshire County Council
CABE	Northern Trust Co Ltd
Camlin Lonsdale Landscape Architects	Nortoft Partnerships Limited
Campaign for Dark Skies	Nucabs
Capita Lovejoy	Pravasi Mandal
Castle Residents Association	Ram Sports
Castlefield Investments Ltd	Redwell Junior School
Churches Together in Wellingborough	Redwell Medical Centre
Co - Op	Rowlatt & Sons
Connexions	Savills Commericals Ltd
CPRE	Saxby Bros Ltd
Croyland Community Association	Sir Christopher Hatton School
Croyland Community Centre	Stagecoach in Northants
De Pol Associates	Steer Davies Gleave
DEGW	Swansgate Centre
Dentistry Association	Taxi Drivers Association
Derek Lovejoy Partnership Ltd	The Castle
Development Trust Association	The Finest Carribean Cuisine
Drivers Jonas	The Miracle Church of God in Christ
Duston Community Centre	The Natural Step
East Midlands Development Agency	The Prince's Foundation
East Northamptonshire Council	The Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire
Finedon Parish Council	Tradewinds
Forum for the Future	Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education
FPD Savills	Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust
Friends of the Earth	Underwoods
GOEM	University College Northampton
Gold Street Medical Centre	Victoria Business Park
Hallam Land Management Ltd	Wellingborough Black Consortium
Hankinson Duckett Associates	Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association
Harwoods	Wellingborough Archaeological & Histroical Society
Heartland Primary Care Trust	Wellingborough Black Consortium
Highways Agency	Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce
Hindu Association	Wellingborough Civic Society
Hope Centre Hemmingwell	Wellingborough District Hindu Association
Housing Corporation	Wellingborough District Scout Council
ING Real Estate	Wellingborough Heritage Centre
Irchester Parish Council	Wellingborough Library
Kettering General Hospital NHS Trust	Wellingborough Partnership
King West	Wellingborough School
Kingsway Methodist Church	Wellingborough Taxi Drivers Association
Lambert Smith Hampton	Wellingborough Town Centre Partnership



Lovell's	Wellingborough Volunteer Bureau
Matrix Partnership Limited	William Davis Ltd
Midland Mainline	Wollaston School
MLM	Wrenn School
NAACBA	Youth Forum
Natural England	Peter Bone MP
Nene Valley PCG ( Rushden & Irtlingborough)	Bruce Thomas
Network Rail	P Cass
North Northamptonshire Development Company	Lesley Chalmers
North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit	Mr Charles
Northamptonshire Business Link	Jenny Dixon
Northamptonshire Churches	P A Jones
Northamptonshire County Council including:	Mr J Barraclough & Ms L Craven
Education, Land Use and Transportation,	John Martin
Community Development, Regeneration.	Tim Pharoah
	Anne Toms

## Appendix 2

### List of attendees at the all day workshop held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008

Mrs P Cass	Northamptonshire County Council
Mr M Chislett	Redhill Grange Community Association
Mr D Cross	Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce
Mr S Toseland	Chair of the Town Centre Partnership
Mrs J Thompson	Wellingborough Civic Society
Mrs J Dixon	Wellingborough Partnership
Mr D Shears	
Mr T Hughes	North Northamptonshire Development Company
Mr H Liffen	Taxi Drivers Association
Ms K McDermott	Northamptonshire Police
Mrs A Toms	
Mr D Brooks	Wellingborough Library
Mr R Wilson	Northamptonshire Police
Mrs K Payne	Mears Ashby Parish Council
Mrs M Barker	Mears Ashby Parish Council
Mr G Simmons	Wollaston Parish Council
Miss A Burbidge	North Northants Joint Planning Unit
Mr C Hole	Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education
Mr L Morgan	Northamptonshire County Council

In addition, the workshop was attended by a number of Councillors and officers from the Borough Council.