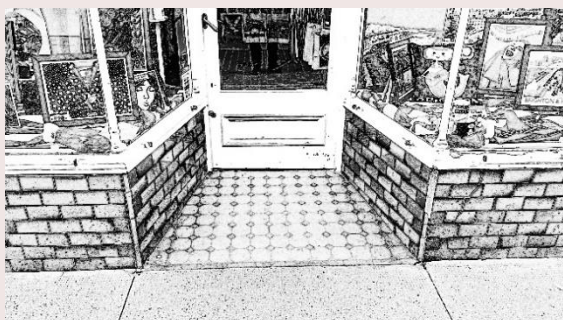


# DESIGN GUIDE FOR SHOPFRONTS

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

January 2022



[www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk)



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Planning Context.....</b>	<b>8</b>
When is planning permission required? .....	8
National Planning Policy .....	9
Local planning policies .....	10
Other local policy.....	10
<b>3. Historic Context .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Elements of a shopfront .....	13
Overview of shopfront design .....	14
<b>4. General Design Principles .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Frontages .....	26
Stallrisers .....	28
Advertisements related to shopfronts .....	29
Fascia .....	29
Other advertising considerations .....	31
Other considerations .....	33
Accessibility .....	33
Forecourts and verandahs .....	34
Materials .....	36
Fixtures.....	37
Security .....	38
Lighting.....	40
Cash machines.....	40
Periods of vacancy .....	40
Upper floors .....	41
Specific considerations for historic or traditional shopfronts .....	41
Materials .....	42
Doors and windows .....	43
Pilasters and fascias .....	44
Shutters and blinds .....	45
<b>5. Conversions from shopfront to residential .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>6. Glossary.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Blind box .....	49
Canopy.....	49
<b>Appendix 1: Design Checklists.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Design Checklist.....	51
Additional considerations for conversions from shopfront to residential .....	52
<b>Appendix 2: Relevant Local Plan Policies .....</b>	<b>53</b>
CC7: Design and the public realm .....	53
EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment .....	53
EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas .....	54

EN6: New development in a historic context .....	55
OU4: Advertisements .....	55
OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines .....	56
CR2: Design and central Reading .....	56
CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading.....	57
CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading .....	57
<b>References and further reading.....</b>	<b>58</b>

This document was authored by officers at Reading Borough Council with significant contributions from Purcell ([www.purcelluk.com](http://www.purcelluk.com)). Applications for permission to reproduce any part of this work attributed to Purcell should be addressed to Purcell at [info@purcelluk.com](mailto:info@purcelluk.com).

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 High streets define character and place, serving as the centre of the community. Individual shopfronts have a major impact on the streetscape and help to shape the daily experience of Reading for residents and visitors. Traditional shopfronts can contribute significantly to the locally distinctive character of a town.

*Figure 1: Castle Street (Source: RBC Library Archive).*



*Figure 2: 82 Oxford Road (Source: RBC Library Archive).*



- 1.2 As online retail sales increase and brick-and-mortar retail units are experiencing disruption due to decreased footfall, shopowners can improve their attractiveness by investing in physical improvements to shopfronts. Although this requires investment, the financial benefits are wide reaching:
  - Increased retail footfall and dwell time;
  - More usable floorspace;
  - Higher land values; and
  - Increased attractiveness for investment.
- 1.3 Other wider social benefits include:
  - Contributions to placemaking and vibrancy;
  - Greater levels of occupancy;
  - Improved community cohesion and social outcomes;
  - Enhanced sense of civic pride and higher levels of engagement; and
  - Achieving an appropriate mix of uses including residential, commercial and retail. In particular, historic shopfronts and high streets are correlated with better economic outcomes and prove to be more resilient in times of economic downturn<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.4 These positive effects may reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour or criminal damage, which can have a negative effect on footfall and spending. Customers may choose to shop locally if the visual appearance of shops is improved and a high-quality shopfront will likely result in better business. A well-designed shopfront is one of the most effective advertisements to residents and visitors. Physical improvements to shopfronts may be implemented incrementally and small changes over time can bring about significant positive change.
- 1.5 This supplementary planning document (SPD) is intended to serve as a useful guide for shopowners seeking to undertake works to improve shopfronts and signage throughout the Borough. It also applies to newly built retail units. The guidance seeks to strike a balance between high-quality shopfronts and successful businesses by recommending cost-effective ways to improve our high streets and individual shopfronts.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Policy Implications of Recent Trends in the High-Street/Retail Sector \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/policy-implications-recent-trends-high-street-retail-sector.pdf)



*Figure 3: Oxford Road (Source: RBC Library Archive).*



*Figure 4: Oxford Road (Source: RBC Library Archive).*



*Figure 5: Oxford Road (Source: RBC Library Archive).*



## 2. Planning Context

- 2.1 Once adopted, this [supplementary planning document \(SPD\)](#) will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It will apply to all shopfronts within Reading Borough, both historic and traditional as well as modern frontages. It will supplement the policies in the [Reading Borough Local Plan](#) (adopted November 2019).
- 2.2 For the purposes of this SPD, shopfronts include all ground floor premises with a [fascia](#) and/or window display. These may be located within or outside of high streets and may be newly-built or existing. This may include non-retail uses such as banks, estate agents, cafes, bars, restaurants, solicitors, opticians and hot food take-aways. This guidance does not apply to shopfronts enclosed within private premises, such as the Oracle or the Broad Street Mall.
- 2.3 All applications should clearly illustrate the plans, sections and elevations while including adjacent buildings and upper floors.
- 2.4 This SPD may also guide applications for advertising consent, but only in cases where advertisements are directly related to a specific shopfront including any signage such as fascia, posters, blinds displaying images or wording, banners or projecting signs.
- 2.5 This SPD is also to be used to guide applications for conversions of existing shopfronts to other uses, such as residential.

### When is planning permission required?

- 2.6 A new or replacement shopfront will always require planning permission. Alterations to an existing shopfront that involve a material change will also require planning permission. This may include:
  - Removal of a shopfront (either in whole or part);
  - Alteration or replacement of features such as doors, window frames, [cornices](#), [corbel](#) brackets or [mouldings](#);
  - Alteration of the existing building line;
  - Changes to the size, shape or materials of a shop window (includes installation of reflective or obscured glazing);
  - Removal or addition of [mullions](#), [transoms](#) or glazing bars;
  - Repositioning of the entrance;
  - Enlargement or reduction of the fascia, as well as changes to depth or bulk;
  - Changes to the facing materials;
  - Removal or installation of a permanent accessibility ramp;
  - Installation of [awnings](#), [verandahs](#) or security shutters; and
  - Some repair works and maintenance. (Repair works, interior redecoration or like-for-like replacement of features do not require planning permission, unless the building is statutorily listed. However, it is advisable to check with



the RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer before starting works to determine whether approval is required.)

- 2.7 [Listed building consent](#) is required when a new or replacement shopfront is within or attached to a listed building, as unapproved works to a listed building are a criminal offence. In addition to the items listed above requiring planning permission, the following works will require listed building consent:
- Removal, addition or alteration of entrance floor tiles;
  - Removal of an original blind and/or [blind box](#);
  - Installation of an extractor or ventilation fan outlet;
  - Painting any previously unpainted exterior walls;
  - Repainting in a markedly different colour or with a textured wall paint; and
  - Alterations to the interior of the shop.
- 2.8 Building regulations approval will likely be required for all new or replacement shopfronts and for some alterations. Applicants should contact [building control](#) before proceeding.

## National Planning Policy

- 2.9 [The National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) states in paragraph 86 that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should promote long-term vitality and viability of town centres.
- 2.10 Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and listed building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development.
- 2.11 Section 8 (promoting healthy and safe communities) emphasises that planning policies and decisions should achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:
- Promote social interaction through strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages;
  - Are safe and accessible with high quality public spaces;
  - Enable and support health and wellbeing through provision of local shops;
  - Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, such as local shops, and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities; and
  - Ensure that established shops are able to develop and modernise and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- 2.12 Paragraph 120 states that planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this

would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example, converting space above shops).

- 2.13 Paragraphs 189 to 208 state the requirements for applicants and local authorities when considering applications that affect heritage assets. Applicants must describe the significance of the asset and any potential impacts on their significance or setting.

### Local planning policies

- 2.14 This SPD provides specific guidance on shopfront design, but forms part of a wider planning policy framework and should be read in conjunction with other relevant planning policy documents, particularly the Local Plan (adopted November 2019). This SPD specifically supplements the following policies (full text is included in Appendix 1):
- CC7: Design and the public realm;
  - EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
  - EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas;
  - EN6: New development in a historic context;
  - OU4: Advertisements;
  - OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines;
  - CR2: Design and central Reading;
  - CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading; and
  - CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading.

### Other local policy

- 2.15 The three themes of [Investing in Reading's Future: Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan 2021/22](#) are:
- Healthy environment - making Reading a nicer, greener, more attractive place to live;
  - Thriving communities - embracing diversity and community and ensuring that everyone has an equal chance to thrive; and
  - Inclusive economy - a town where everyone can access education, skills and training, good jobs and decent housing.

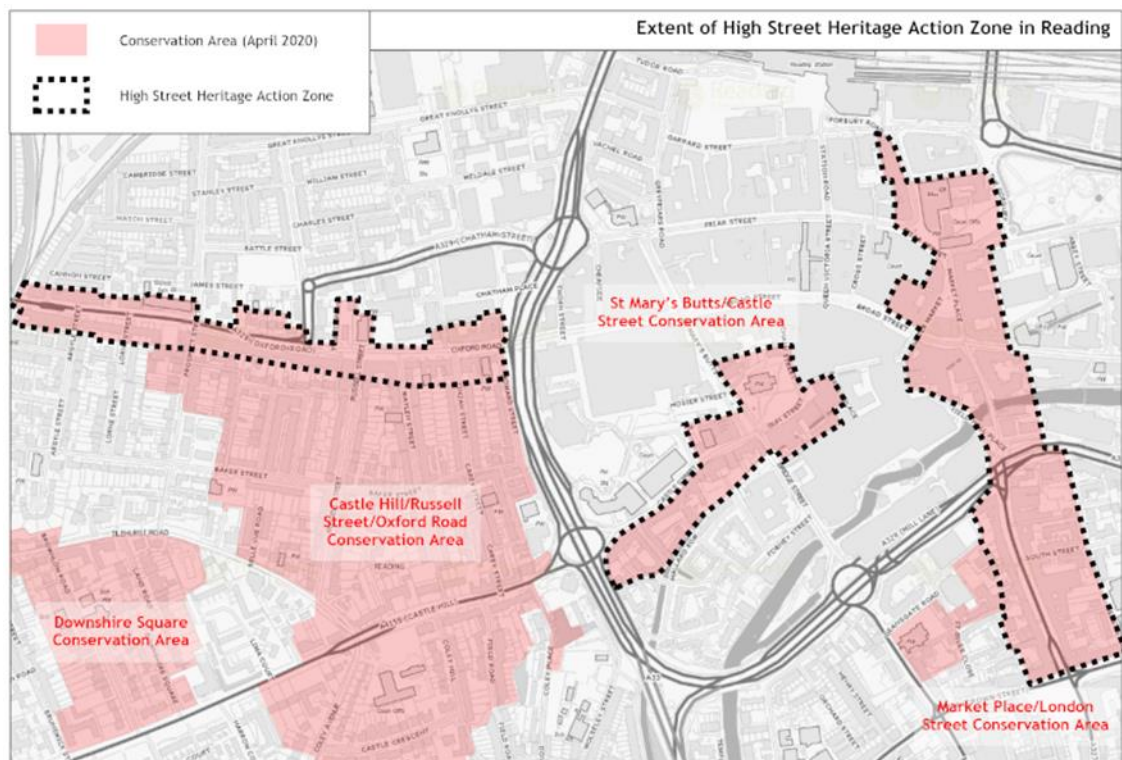
Delivering a vibrant town centre with shopfronts that contribute to the character of the area is a key part of achieving these objectives.

- 2.16 [Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030](#) aims to enhance Reading's identity as a cultural and historic destination. Restoration of historic shopfronts will serve to engage local businesses, attract and retain investment and promote Reading as a visitor destination.

- 2.17 [The Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone](#) (HSHAZ) programme is a heritage-led regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve our historic high streets through physical interventions, community engagement and cultural programming. The programme is based around areas on the Oxford Road, Castle Street, Gun Street, the southern end of St Mary's Butts and Market Place. One of the major objectives of the programme is:

*“To improve the physical condition and the viability of the high streets within the three conservation areas by identifying those properties most at risk and engaging with property owners to help them to restore the building, to show them how to maintain the building and to share best practice. We want to see premises viably and fully occupied and footfall and customer satisfaction increasing.”*

**Figure 6: Map of the High Street Heritage Action Zone in Reading (Source: RBC Planning).**



### 3. Historic Context

- 3.1 Reading is home to a variety of surviving historic shopfronts which together illustrate a rich history of our high streets.

*Figure 7: Broad Street, Reading in 1905 (Source: Reading Library Archive).*



*Figure 8: Broad Street, Reading in 2021 (Source: RBC Planning).*

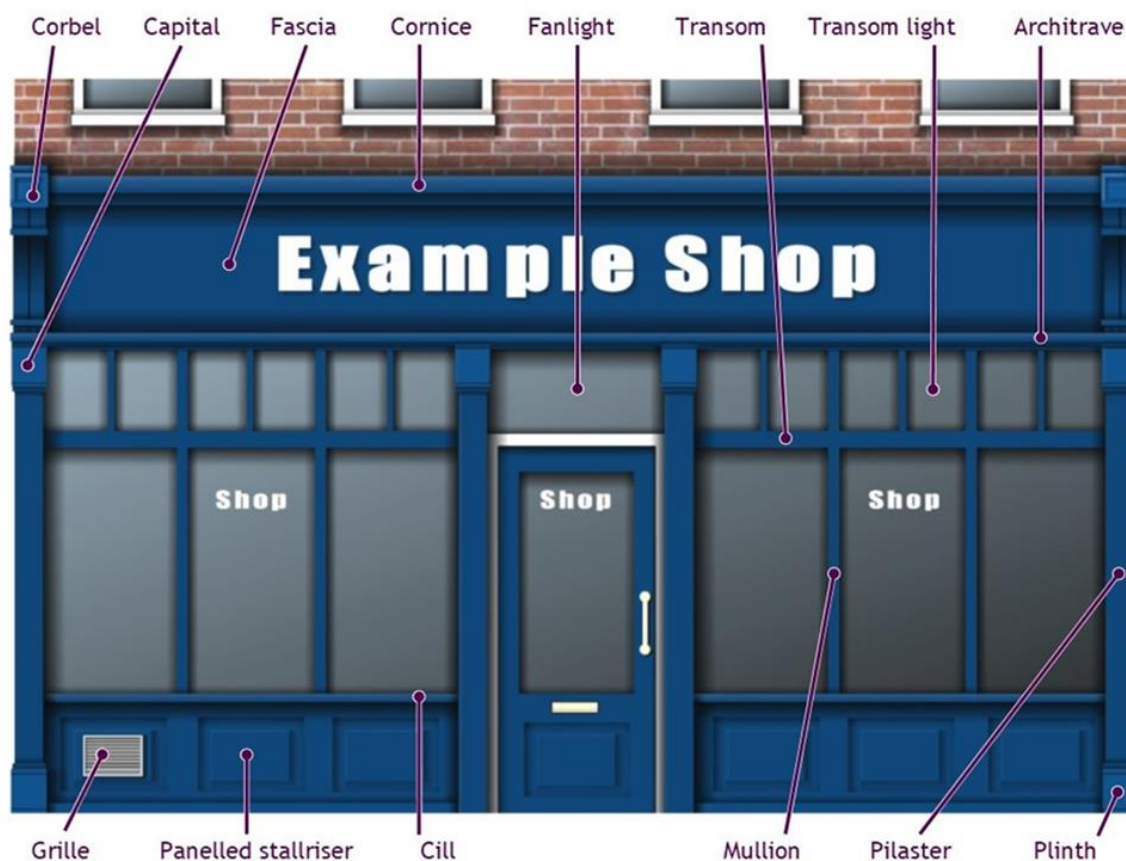




## Elements of a shopfront

3.2 The following elements of shopfronts are referenced in this document.

*Figure 9: Elements of a shopfront. This layout is indicative, representing one variation in design. (Source: RBC Planning).*



3.3 Shopfronts should reflect good proportions by relating in terms of scale and measurements to the existing building. Shopfronts should also:

- Follow the proportions established by the host building and high-quality surrounding shopfronts;
- Avoid spanning the entire width of the building, but should be contained within boundaries of the same material as the main elevation in order to provide visual enclosure and to integrate it with the host building;
- Be located clearly below the sills of first-floor windows; and
- Provide strong horizontal and vertical features that are neatly aligned to ensure overall architectural harmony.



## Overview of shopfront design

- 3.4 Medieval shopfronts (14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century), have rarely survived in Reading, but can sometimes be seen on the ground floors of timber-framed buildings. The work area or shops were usually on the ground floor, with residential on the upper floors. The ground floor usually consisted of a simple door and windows (originally shutters) sometimes open to the street. Although some medieval shopfronts did employ stallrisers, most did not resemble shopfronts as we recognise them today. Many shops were located in basements or undercrofts and several medieval undercrofts are believed to be preserved under buildings at the Market Place in the town centre.

*Figure 10: Example of a medieval shopfront on corner of London Street and London Road, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 11: Ground floor of Figure 10, showing front door (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 3.5 As times changed so the design of shopfronts evolved. After the great fire of London, generally buildings were designed in brick. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of original medieval buildings had their façades updated.

**Figure 12: Medieval rear (15th) / Georgian (18th) shopfront, London Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).**



- 3.6 Georgian shopfronts (c. 1710s - 1830s) established many familiar elements of shopfronts such as glazed windows to display goods with numerous panels divided by glazing bars, as well as decorative exterior elements such as [pilasters](#), [stallrisers](#) and [cornices](#).

**Figure 13: Georgian shopfront on London Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).**



- 3.7 Regency & mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian shopfronts had multi-pane, full-height windows with decorative cornices. In time as window glass was made bigger, the number of panes was reduced. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century full-height glazed shopfronts became the norm. The shopfronts were then placed in ornate timber frames with decorative columns, moulded panelling and cornices, sometimes with rows of [dentils](#).



**Figure 14: Example of a Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).**



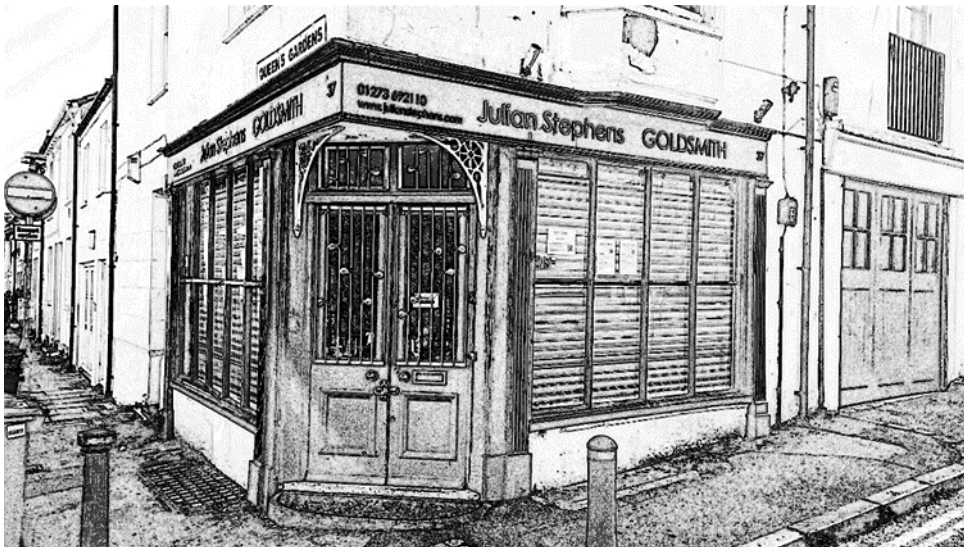
**Figure 15: Example of a Victorian shopfront dated 1846, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).**



*Figure 16: Example of a Mid-19th century shopfront, High Street, Oxford (Source: RBC Planning).*



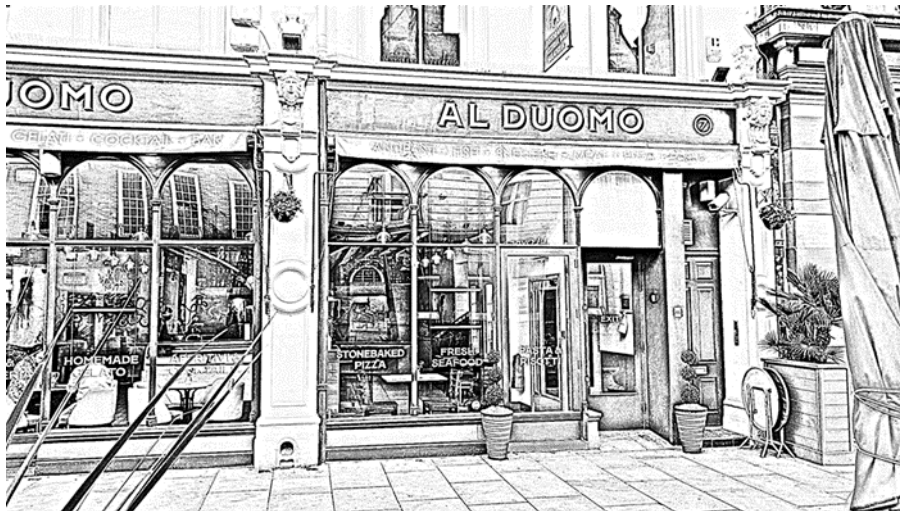
*Figure 17: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).*



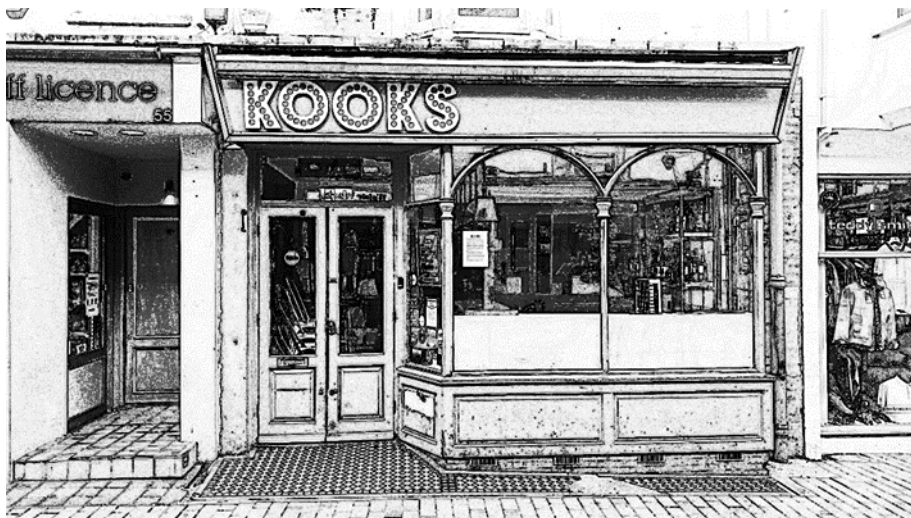


- 3.8 Victorian shopfronts (c. 1840 - 1900) exhibited larger single-paned display windows made possible for the first time by plate glass framed by decorative architectural elements and [fascias](#) displaying the shop name. Some were formed of two or four panes, including transom lights, and were less expensive to insure as smaller panes cost less to replace when damaged. A feature which became very common was a retractable canvas awning, traditionally with a timber panel on the exterior end. There was also the introduction of panels of stained or frosted glass. New materials included cast iron to create intricate detailing or slim profile framing, such as that at 141 Oxford Road.

*Figure 18: Regency/Classical motifs of the early 19th century, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 19: Example of a Mid-Victorian shopfront, the Lanes, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 3.9 During the Edwardian period (c. 1900 -1915) many [stallrisers](#) were lowered, fascias enlarged and doorways recessed. This was also a period of increased specialist shopfront design, such as butchers employing easy-to-clean glazed tiles with examples of products for sale or jewellers employing deeply recessed entrances to



increase the area of window displays. Many brands created their own shopfront styles at this time.

*Figure 20: Edwardian shopfront, Kings Road, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 3.10 The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the advent of new materials, such as chrome or vitrolite. This period saw a move away from classicism as shops become more focused toward “modern living.” A great example of an Art Deco building including from this period is located at the corner of West Street and Broad Street (73 Broad Street), although the shopfront itself has lost its Art Deco elements. Later shopfronts tend towards modernist principles of simplicity and maximised glazing, sometimes angled toward the street to draw customers to the door. Many national chains continued to develop distinctive styles (such as Marks and Spencers or Woolworths) and in many cases these distinctive buildings have outlived the brands themselves.

*Figure 21: Example of interwar shopfront, not within Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 22: Example of Art Deco or Modern interwar shopfront on Broad Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 23: Example of Art Deco entrance to the Harris Arcade, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 3.11 Today, contemporary shopfronts are often made of plastics, metal or stainless steel with large expanse of undivided glass and wide, level entrances.
- 3.12 High-quality modern shopfronts respond meaningfully to their surroundings and host building. Most have simplified, sleek designs with a lack of detailed features, giving a clean appearance. Many traditional elements, such as [pilasters](#), [consoles](#), [capitals](#) and [mouldings](#), may be simplified or omitted. High-quality modern shopfronts avoid ill-proportioned fascias and stallrisers, weak framing, superficially applied features or garish and cluttered signage.



**Figure 24: Modern shopfront with simplified, sleek architectural features. This shopfront fits within the host building and is well-proportioned but omits many traditional architectural features. (Source: RBC Planning).**



## 4. General Design Principles

- 4.1 Proposals for new or replacement shopfronts or alterations to an existing shopfront are expected to:

No.	Principle	Local Plan Policy Reference
1.	Respect or enhance key features of any historic interest, aiming to enhance and improve upon any original features through repair in the first instance, rather than replacement;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part A) EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
2.	Respect the character of the building and the wider area in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting and location;	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines CC7: Design and the Public Realm CR2: Design in Central Reading CR8: Small Shop Units in Central Reading
3.	Employ signage that enhances the street scene and does not detract;	OU4: Advertisements OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
4.	Provide safe and inclusive access for all;	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
5.	In the case of conversions from shopfront to residential or non-retail uses, retain original shopfront features to the greatest extent possible; and	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
6.	Present an active frontage to the street at all times and minimise any opaque coverings that obscure the shop window.	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines (Part E) CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading

- 4.2 Shopfronts of architectural and historic merit are expected to be retained and restored. Wherever possible, shopfronts should be restored to original designs, particularly if the shopfront is in an area of other traditional shopfronts. Applicants should identify a local example that has retained original details to guide design proposals. The town has a wealth of historic photos showing the changing faces of shopfronts over the last 150 years available through the Reading Library, Reading Museum or Historic England archives.

*Figure 25: 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront in Watlington Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.3 Shopfronts should not be designed in isolation. Applicants should treat the building as a unified whole, thinking carefully about upper storeys and neighbouring properties. Proposals are expected to relate to the scale, proportion and architectural style of the host building and wider streetscape by acknowledging common features that occur on surrounding shops.

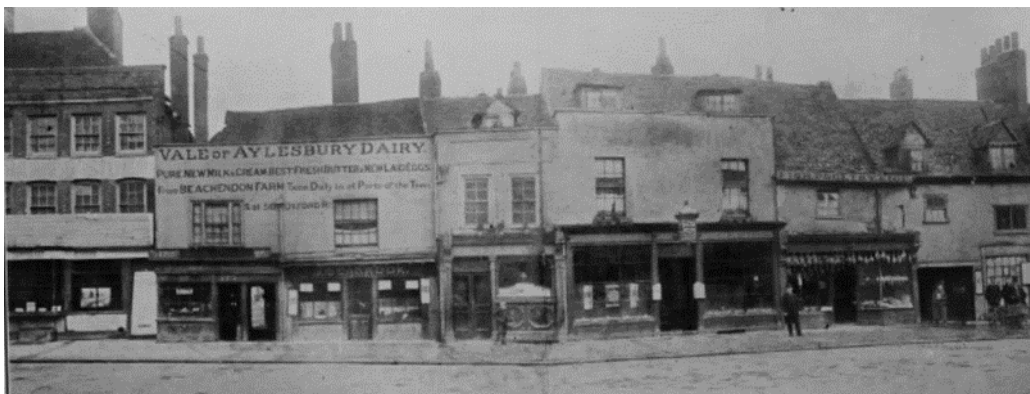
*Figure 26: Sketch proposals for the Oxford Road High Street Heritage Action Zone. Please note that these are indicative of examples that the Council would find acceptable. There is flexibility in terms of colour, for instance. Subdividing the street into individual shopfronts creates a rhythm to the streetscape and reflects appropriate scale, rather than having continuous facades which extend across several buildings. (Source: Purcell)*



GROUP 1: 158-184 Oxford Road



*Figure 27: Photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 28: Detailed photo of historic façades, showing the plot spacing and shopfront details (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.4 Modern shopfront designs and materials are often inappropriate as part of a historic building or within a conservation area where they detract from the character or appearance the area is designed to protect. In some cases, high-quality, innovative designs may be permitted as they can add immensely to the streetscene if well-designed. Chain shops or larger shops that wish to use a house style or corporate image must adapt these to fit within the historic environment.

*Figure 29: A newly-completed shopfront on corner of Friar Street and Station Road. This is a good example of a new shopfront that is designed appropriately to reflect the surrounding environment. It has an adapted corporate logo and employs red brick reflective of the historic surroundings. (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.5 Images and illustrations of particular designs in this SPD are indicative rather than prescriptive and represent one example of acceptable, high-quality design. Each application is considered on a case-by-case basis. Planning officers will seek to strike a balance between practicality and visual improvement.
- 4.6 Many shopfronts in Reading were not initially constructed as shopfronts. There is great diversity of other purpose-built building types in use as shopfronts, for example public houses, banks or residences. These shopfronts present an opportunity to reflect some of the original elements of the purpose-built use. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis and architectural features of the original use shall be retained or reinstated, where practical. Proposals should seek to reflect the age and initial style of the property as much as possible. Modern, purpose-built shopping parades are expected to reflect the era in which they were built.
- 4.7 In light of the Climate Emergency declared by Reading Borough Council in February 2019 and the publication of the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document, applicants should consider additional measures as response to climate change at the earliest possible stage. In shopfronts, for example, blinds, shades or canopies may increase resilience as the frequency of extreme heat events increases and retention of historic features will help to reduce new waste being generated during construction. Applicants must comply by the climate change policies of the Local Plan and the specific guidance set out in the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document<sup>2</sup> as well as

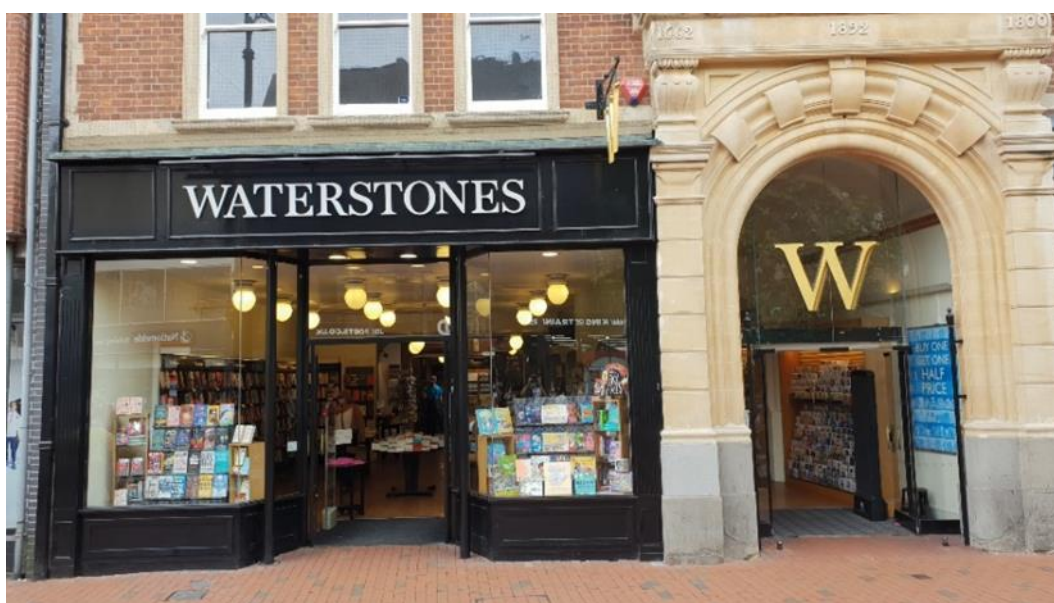
<sup>2</sup> [Sustainable-Design-and-Construction-SPD-Adopted-December-19.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://www.reading.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Sustainable-Design-and-Construction-SPD-Adopted-December-19.pdf)

national energy efficiency standards and all requirements set out in the Building Regulations<sup>3</sup>.

## Frontages

- 4.8 Display windows should avoid large frontages of undivided glass. Vertical and horizontal subdivision of the [façade](#) is preferred. Display windows and frontages should avoid clutter, as well as proliferation of advertising and/or posters or redundant wiring, satellite dishes, CCTV, alarms or other fixtures. Glazing should be clear glass.

*Figure 30: Broad Street. This is a relatively good example of a timber glazed shopfront. However, the silicone joining the corners of the glass would be improved by timber frames to reflect more traditional detailing. (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.9 Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint, films and temporary or permanent posters applied to the interior or exterior of the window should be minimised and should not obscure the shop window. The area of opaque coverings should not exceed 30% of the total area of glazing. Shopfronts should remain “active” by providing visibility into the space, rather than presenting a blank wall during both the day and night. Policy CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading provides more detail regarding active frontages and a definition is provided in the glossary in Section 6 of this SPD.

<sup>3</sup> [Approved Documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

**Figure 31: Oxford Road. Good example of sympathetic window display that provides visibility into the shop and avoids use of decals or opaque glazing (Source: RBC Planning).**



**Figure 32: Poor example of shopfront windows that are obscured by advertising with poor visibility (Source: RBC Planning).**



4.10 Natural ventilation via [grilles](#) or [transoms](#) should be considered.



*Figure 33: Photo of historic façade, with air grilles in Friar Street. (Source: RBC Planning).*



## Stallrisers

- 4.11 Applicants should retain or re-install existing [stallrisers](#) with a moulded and projecting [cill](#) at the base of the shopfront of at least 300mm (450mm to 700mm preferred) in height in order to form a solid visual base. This prevents damage to glazing and reduces cleaning and maintenance.

*Figure 34: Well-proportioned stallriser on a relatively new shopfront on Broad Street (Source: RBC Planning).*





*Figure 35: Historic tiled stallrisers in Hay-On-Wye (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.12 For contemporary shopfronts, polished granite is a good, hardwearing material. Glazed brick is also a good option. In Reading, red, grey or buff brick moulded terracotta cills and arches may best reflect Reading's distinct Victorian brick building traditions.

*Figure 36: Shopfront with no stallriser, Oxford. Proportions and maintenance would be improved with the installation of a stallriser. (Source: RBC Planning).*



## Advertisements related to shopfronts

### Fascia

- 4.13 [Fascias](#) should:

- relate appropriately to the scale, character and features of the building and the adjacent buildings;
- be located beneath the sills of first floor windows and above the highest part of the ground floor windows;
- span the entire width of the shopfront between the [corbels](#);
- not block or extend onto a [cornice](#) or [string course](#);
- be positioned evenly between corbels;
- employ discrete downlighting as the preferred choice, avoid lettering which is internally illuminated and comply with the illumination requirements of the Local Plan (Policy OU4 and paragraphs 4.7.24 - 4.7.31); and
- avoid excessive use of bright or fluorescent colours (bright colours and reflective materials such as mirrored lettering should be avoided entirely on traditional shopfronts and historic buildings).

*Figure 37: Good example of signage, on Oxford Road. Note a well detailed timber glazed black shopfront. This is also a good example of incorporating both a ground floor retail entrance and entrance to access residential properties on the first floor. (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.14 Best practice guidance regarding illumination can be found in the [Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements](#).
- 4.15 Multiple fascias should be avoided. On double or multiple shopfronts the dividing corbel and [pilaster](#) should be retained, and the fascia divided.
- 4.16 Fascias should be placed as to ensure that the first-floor window cills are visible from the pavement on the opposite side of the road. The bottom edge of the fascia should not extend over the edge of the ground floor windows.

- 4.17 Text should not occupy the entire fascia and should be well-proportioned. As a guide, text should occupy no more than half the width and half the height of the fascia. Fascias should clearly incorporate the house number according to the Council's Street Naming and Property Numbering Protocol<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.18 A modest logo may be included. Corporate images are expected to suit local characteristics and may need to be reduced in size. Contemporary designs may be acceptable provided they respect historic context. Please refer to Figure 29.

#### Other advertising considerations

- 4.19 'A-boards' should be avoided in order to avoid a cluttered appearance or obstruction of footpaths or pavements. These may be appropriate within a private forecourt but should be modest in size and colour and reflect the design of the shopfront itself. These are permitted by the Advertisements Regulations<sup>5</sup> subject to certain restrictions on size and content. Additionally, a [license](#) is required for any A-boards or other freestanding adverts, directional signs or information signs and inanimate characters on the public highway.
- 4.20 Estate agent boards on shopfronts should be avoided unless permitted under deemed consent in the national regulations. More information is available on the [Council's Planning Enforcement page](#).
- 4.21 Signage at high levels is often particularly prominent and should be carefully designed to avoid detrimental effects on visual amenity.
- 4.22 One projecting or hanging sign per shopfront may be acceptable. These should be appropriately scaled to reflect the premise's façade and should not give an appearance of bulkiness. Discrete external illumination will usually be acceptable. In some cases, a larger sign may be appropriate if it reflects traditional character (such as a larger, flat painted pub sign).

---

<sup>4</sup> [Street Naming and Property Numbering Protocol \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Advertisements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



*Figure 38: Good example of modest hanging signage and cash machine, Broad Street (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 39: Good example of hanging signage on Broad Street, Reading. The signage is modest in size and does not employ internal illumination. (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.23 Temporary signage, such as banners, should be avoided. Temporary signage applied to windows either internally or externally should never occupy more than 30% of the frontage.

## Other considerations

*Figure 40: 1979 The Horn, Public House. Historic image of fascia and modest hanging sign in St Mary's Butts, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).*



### Accessibility

- 4.24 Any proposed alterations to existing shopfronts or applications for newly-built shopfronts should result from a full consideration of accessibility at the earliest stage. Applicants must ensure that premises are accessible for a wide variety of users with different physical needs. For historic shopfronts, a pragmatic approach should be taken to ensure both accessibility and retention of historic interest. Historic interest should not be an excuse for avoidance of accessibility improvements. Although it is not specific to shopfronts, Historic England provides detailed guidance to help improve access to historic buildings ([Easy Access to Historic Buildings](#)). This guide contains many helpful images of appropriate elements, such as ramps and railings.
- 4.25 Access points should:
- be wide and level in order to be accessible for individuals with disabilities, elderly individuals and those with prams (or employ the use of a permanent or temporary ramp);
  - have entrance doors that are visually distinguishable from the rest of the shopfront (recessed doors, for instance, are useful for the visually impaired);
  - employ visual manifestation on glass such as small opaque decals to highlight the presence of glazing and to prevent accidents;
  - ensure that wheelchair access can be achieved without users opening double doors;
  - utilise doors that are easily opened by those with limited strength; and

- avoid automatic sliding doors (unless on large modern shopfronts). Automatic doors may be used in various forms, such as those with automatic openers or assisted opening on existing doors.
- 4.26 Permanent entrance ramps usually require planning permission and are preferred, but temporary ramps may also be useful provided they do not create a trip hazard, particularly for the visually impaired.

### Forecourts and verandahs

- 4.27 Forecourt seating or trading can invigorate the street scene but must avoid causing obstruction to pedestrians, nuisance to nearby residents or harm to visual amenity.
- 4.28 Forecourts must be clearly delineated from the pavement and provide adequate clearance for pedestrians free of street furniture. For primary routes with heavy footfall, 3m is required at all times. 2m is required for all other routes.
- 4.29 Forecourts must be kept uncluttered to avoid negative visual effects and obstruction. Forecourt trading must not obscure historic shopfronts or shopfronts within a conservation area. It is not appropriate to park vehicles on forecourts or pavements. This significantly detracts from the character of the area and obstructs pedestrian routes. In the first instance, bins should not be stored in forecourts. If this is not possible, bins must be stored as to provide adequate clearance for pedestrians and avoid harm to visual amenity.
- 4.30 Shopfronts may wish to make use of forecourts for displaying goods or providing additional space for dining. In many cases, it is considered that this can add vibrancy to the street scene and offer outdoor covered space during inclement weather. However, such extensions, if not carefully designed, may harm the amenity of the area, detract from the shopfront itself or obstruct footpaths. The property owner or retailer must ensure that they have secured all relevant permissions for using forecourts in this way (for example, planning permission and approval from building control). Many shopowners, for instance, do not own the land in front of their shops and therefore forecourt use may not be permitted.
- 4.31 Many premises, particularly traditional shopfronts, employ retractable or demountable canvas canopies. This is the preferred option. Shopfronts seeking to create covered forecourt space should reinstate or provide high-quality retractable canopies according to the guidelines in this SPD. Canopies should be retracted or removed when not in use to allow the shopfront's appearance to return to its original form when the canopy is not required or the premises is closed.
- 4.32 Where applicants seek a fixed covering, sometimes referred to as a verandah, a structure must:
- Retain the open character of the frontage and avoid resulting in a closed space;
  - Be proportionate in size and scale to the host building;
  - Avoid obscuring or detracting from any key design or architectural elements of the shopfront;



- Be designed to reflect the character of the host building, the character of the area and any other existing high-quality canopies or verandahs in the immediate vicinity;
- Be constructed of appropriate materials reflecting the character of the shopfront; and
- Reflect the existing level of the ground (elevated terraces which are not level with the pavement should be avoided).<sup>6</sup>

4.33 Verandahs may employ security grilles to prevent use of covered outdoor space outside of operating hours. These must allow visibility into the verandah and retain an open character. Opaque or solid security shutters should be avoided.

*Figure 41: Example of a verandah with open character and high-quality materials, not within Reading. The structure is supported from the building's face (above fascia level in this case but providing alternative signage at the opening of the verandah) with a sloping glazed roof extending. It is supported by stanchions to the front face at the corners of the structure and is open at the front and sides. Structural posts should contain decorative capitals and ornamental brackets. (Source: RBC Planning).*



<sup>6</sup> These guidelines have been adapted from information in a Flyde Council Design Note, "Canopies and Glazed Extensions On Commercial Forecourts."

**Figure 42: Shopfront with cluttered forecourt (Source: RBC Planning).**



### Materials

- 4.34 All shopfronts are expected to use high quality materials. Traditional hardwood, brick, glass or tile is preferred. The use of plastics, metal and reflective materials (high gloss finishes or reflective metals) is usually not appropriate, but may be acceptable if part of an innovative modern design. Weathered bronze or chrome with black vitriolite is often a good option for modern shopfronts. UPVC should be avoided. Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure a high level of craftsmanship that contributes to the host building and the surrounding area.
- 4.35 Applicants should consider the sustainability of materials. Hardwood and softwood sourced from sustainably managed forests is preferred. Traditional materials may, in some cases, require higher upfront costs, but with good maintenance can often outlast less-expensive, non-traditional materials.

*Figure 43: Good example of shopfront and entrance to residence above on London Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.36 Brickwork or stonework should not be rendered, gravel-dashed or painted. Removal of paint to restore original brickwork is encouraged, but must be done carefully to avoid damaging the face of the brick underneath.

*Figure 44: Historic tiled stallriser in Friar Street, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



## Fixtures

- 4.37 Canopies and shopblinds should:
- be fitted at the ground level only and should avoid spanning past [corbels](#);
  - be used to provide shading;
  - complement the design of the shopfront in suitable colours (avoid excessively bright or florescent colours);
  - use high-quality materials such as canvas or rayon, rather than acrylic or plastic;
  - be retractable and avoid bulky, curved or rigid framed blinds, such as Dutch blinds;



- provide 2.4 m headroom;
- cover the full width of the fascia; and
- avoid the use of side panels.

*Figure 45: Good example of a retractable canopy (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 46: Shopfront with bulky Dutch blind (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.38 Blinds with lettering will likely require advertising consent.

### Security

- 4.39 Shopfront security is expected to be carefully considered at the earliest design stage. Security measures should be limited to the minimum measures necessary and should be integral to the shopfront itself, appropriately reflecting the character of the building.

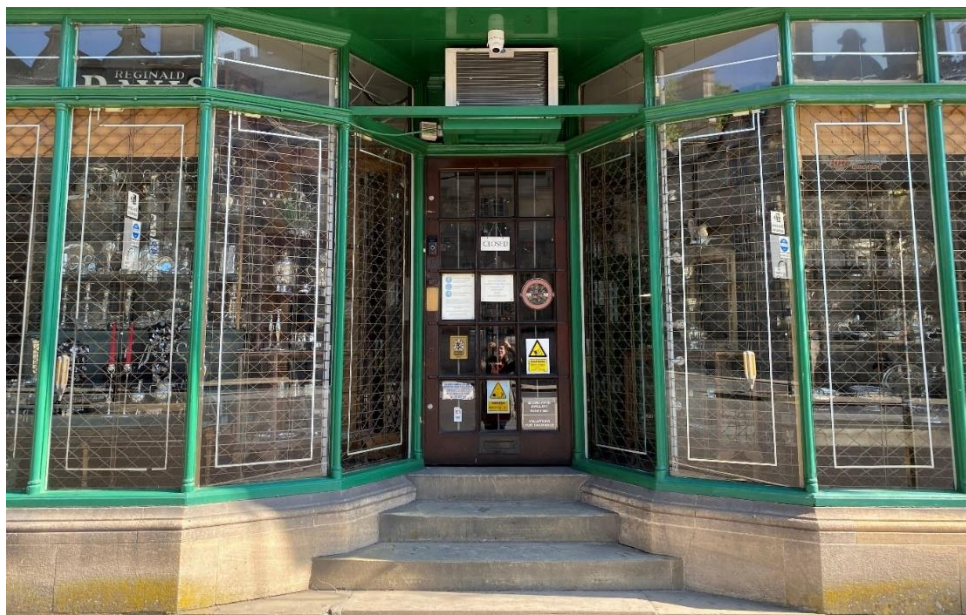
- 4.40 Security shutters detract from the character of shopfronts and should be avoided in favour of [laminated glass](#) as 10-15mm glass can often achieve the same level of security. If laminated glass is not possible, internal grilles should be used. Solid internal or external shutters are generally inappropriate. All effort should be made to ensure that the shopfront display remains visible both day and night. If necessary, demountable or removable grilles are preferred to external roller grilles. External shutters that prevent access to recessed doorways may be appropriate to prevent access outside of trading hours, but these should provide as much visibility as possible. Applicants should also refer to the Thames Valley Police guidance<sup>7</sup> for keeping businesses safe.

*Figure 47: Shopfront with solid external security shutters (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).*



<sup>7</sup> [Keep burglars out of your business | Crime prevention | Thames Valley Police](#)

**Figure 48: Shopfront with discreet, internal security shutters that allow visibility into the premises (not in Reading) (Source: RBC Planning).**



### Lighting

- 4.41 External lighting should only be used when shopfronts are trading after dark. Light-coloured writing on a dark background can be effective. In conservation areas or on listed buildings there should be particular caution with internal illumination, for instance face or [halo illumination](#) of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable. Evening lighting of shopfront window displays can contribute to a feeling of safety and activity, but will only be acceptable when energy-efficient LED lighting is used.
- 4.42 Illuminated projecting or hanging signs on the exterior of the building are usually not appropriate.

### Cash machines

- 4.43 Cash machines should be located within well-lit, busy areas and away from dark corners or deep recesses that obscure visibility.
- 4.44 Cash machines should be minimal in design, in keeping with the building's character and should avoid dominating the shopfront.

### Periods of vacancy

- 4.45 Periods of vacancy can have a significant impact on a building's appearance and the vitality of the area. Conditions may be imposed on planning permissions to ensure that the boarding of shops is limited to a specific period of time and may specify decoration to ensure the attractiveness of the area, such as painting a colour that matches the fascia or pilasters.



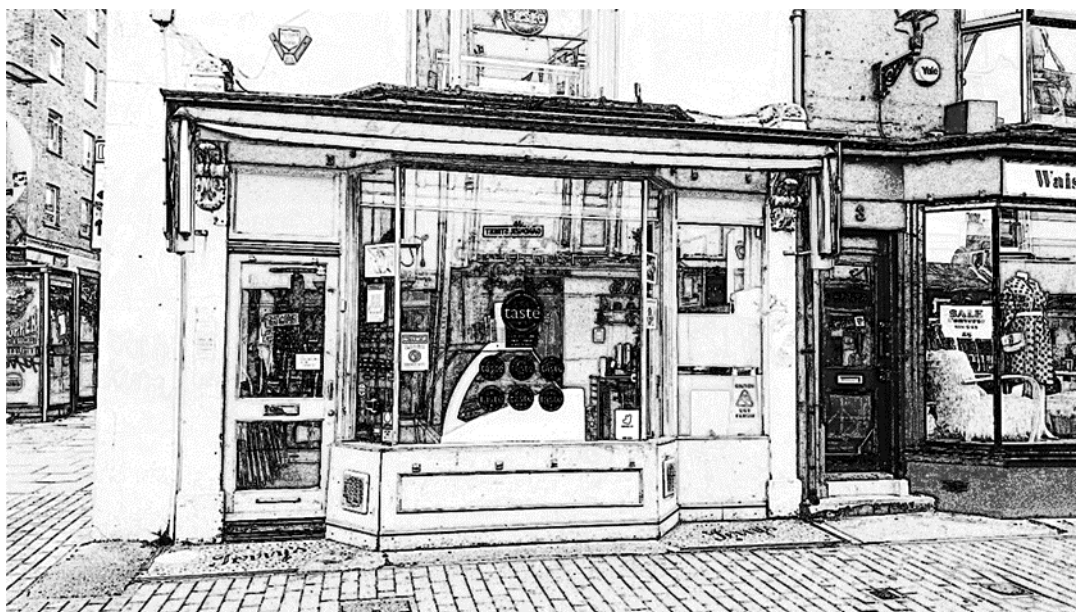
## Upper floors

- 4.46 Applications should consider the appearance of the entire building. Applications should seek to improve the appearance of upper floors, if possible. Removal or consolidation of wiring or exterior installations on upper floors should be considered, particularly within conservation areas.
- 4.47 Every effort should be made to keep upper floors in use, such as for ancillary storage or residential.
- 4.48 Upper floors fenestration and architectural style should be in keeping with the ground floor and overall character of the building.

## Specific considerations for historic or traditional shopfronts

- 4.49 Where a historic or traditional shopfront exists, consent will not be granted for its removal. All original elements and materials are expected to be retained and sensitively restored.
- 4.50 Applicants should use an accredited conservation architect and base designs in historic evidence, such as:
  - archival materials such as historic photographs;
  - original architectural drawings; and/or
  - physical evidence uncovered during works.
- 4.51 The architectural features of reinstated shopfronts should be influenced by nearby units which have been retained in good condition.
- 4.52 Many historic units featured a separate entrance to upper floors. These should be reinstated and employed to bring upper floors back into use. Upper floors should be sensitively restored and be in keeping with the ground floor shopfront. See Figure 37 (The Factory) for a good example of a dual access shopfront.

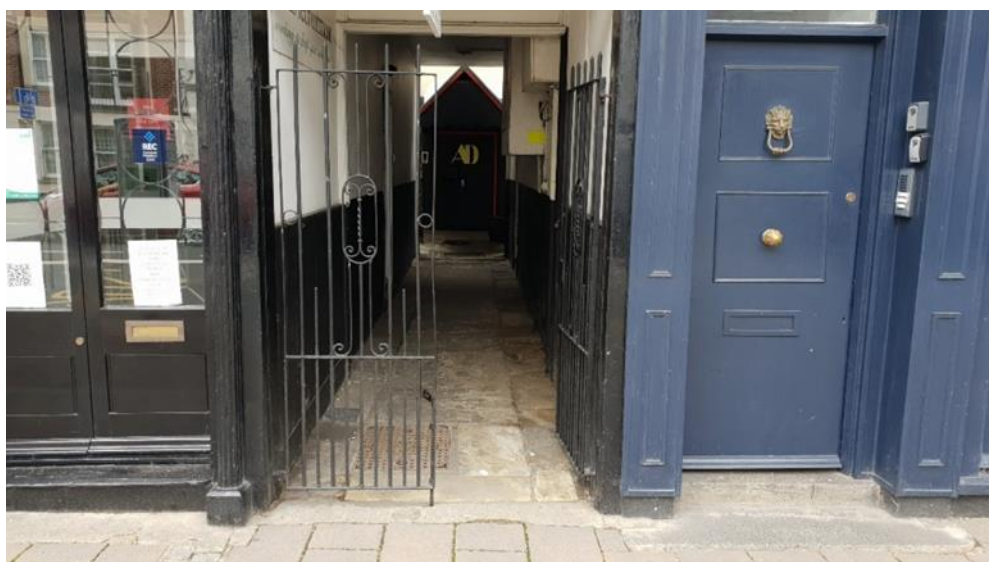
*Figure 7: Traditional shopfront with restored historic elements and retractable canopy, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).*



### Materials

- 4.53 Timber with lead capping is the most common traditional material, as well as stallrisers of stone, brick, glazed brick, render, iron, tile or bronze.

*Figure 50: Shopfront with traditional materials are part of the street's character and significance. Also of note is the stone paving in the passage. London Street, Reading. (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.54 Raised detailing (particularly timber detailing) often serves more than a decorative purpose and is often designed to help shed rainwater. Therefore, original raised details should be restored and application of superficial elements for decoration should be avoided.

- 4.55 Colours should reflect the character of the particular area. Typically, rendered areas (such as [stallrisers](#)) were painted to contrast to joinery. Where a single [pilaster](#) or [corbel](#) is shared by adjoining units, they should not be painted half one colour and half another. Any original brick, bronze, tile or hardwood should not be painted. Highly reflective materials should be avoided.

### Doors and windows

- 4.56 Proposals to adapt historic shopfronts for disabled access will be considered and encouraged, but proposals should remain sensitive to historic character.
- 4.57 A contemporary shop window and door can sometimes be appropriately inserted within an original framework, fascia and pilasters.
- 4.58 The design of the shop door should reflect the design of the shopfront and windows, with a bottom panel or kickplate to match the height and style of the stallriser.
- 4.59 Where they have been removed on historic shopfronts, recessed doors should be reinstated.

*Figure 51: Shopfront with traditional recessed entryway at High Street, Oxford  
(Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.60 Modern framing materials such as aluminium or UPVC will not be acceptable on historic buildings or within conservation areas.
- 4.61 Shopfronts with glazed folding doors which enable the frontage to be fully opened will only be acceptable in historic buildings if designs incorporate a stallriser.
- 4.62 Graphic window vinyl which obscures views into the shop will be discouraged. Vinyl is not permitted on listed buildings as this detracts from the character of the area.



## Pilasters and fascias

- 4.63 Original [pilasters](#) or [corbels](#) should not be altered or removed. Where a pilaster or corbel is missing or partially missing, it should be reinstated.

*Figure 52: Panelled, plain and fluted pilasters with decorative consoles, Brighton (Source: RBC Planning).*



*Figure 53: Good example of signage and cornice above shopfront, Oxford Road, Reading (Source: RBC Planning).*



- 4.64 New pilasters should have a [plinth](#) at the base and be treated with the prevailing material of the building.
- 4.65 A new [fascia](#) should avoid projecting further than the original fascia.
- 4.66 Fascias should have moulded [cornices](#) in timber with a lead flashing. [Marine quality plywood](#) is an acceptable alternative to timber.
- 4.67 High-quality materials should be used. Glossy, reflective or plastic/acrylic fascias are rarely acceptable and materials should employ a matte finish, where possible. In historic areas or on historic buildings, traditional materials are most appropriate.



- 4.68 In well-lit areas, there should be no need to light fascias (particularly if shops do not trade after dark). Should illumination be required, it should comply with Policy OU4 of the Local Plan and paragraph 4.7.26 which states:

*“Whole fascia internal illumination should be avoided. Care should be taken to ensure that illumination is in keeping with the character of the area, particularly where it would affect heritage assets, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable.”*

Policy OU4 also emphasises that “care should be taken to ensure that illumination does not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway.”

### **Shutters and blinds**

- 4.69 Any original blinds or awnings should be reinstated.
- 4.70 Roller blinds made of canvas or woven acrylic fibre with a matte finish are the most appropriate solution for listed buildings, historic buildings and shops within a conservation area. Blinds should retract into a timber box that sits flush with the [fascia](#). The colour should match the fascia and shopfront or be a natural canvas colour.
- 4.71 Exterior security shutters should be avoided on listed buildings or within conservation areas in favour of [laminated glass](#). Any original or traditional wood shutters should be retained and maintained.

## 5. Conversions from shopfront to residential

- 5.1 Applications to convert shopfronts to residential use will be expected to retain the shopfront's appearance to the greatest extent possible. This may require improvements to the existing shopfront in order to ensure that the frontage reflects the character of the area, particularly within conservation areas or on listed buildings. Each conversion will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Please refer to figures 37 and 43 for examples of entrances to upper floors.
- 5.2 Replacement of shopfronts with solid walls and windows is not acceptable.
- 5.3 Privacy should be provided by internal blinds and/or curtains, rather than opaque film.
- 5.4 If the proposal aims to provide a glazed opening for light to a basement, removal of the [stallriser](#) will not be permitted unless glazing is appropriately obscured for example by an iron [grille](#). A solid visual base should be maintained.
- 5.5 Changes made under permitted development rights should follow these guidelines, as well.

*Figure 54: Poor example of shopfront to residential conversion, not within Reading (Source: Purcell).*



**Figure 55: Good example of shopfront to residential conversion, Oxford. This residence was formerly a pub and has retained its traditional fascia and tiled stallriser. This façade provides sufficient privacy while retaining the shopfronts original windows (Source: RBC Planning).**



**Figure 56: Good example of a shopfront to residential conversion, Oxford. It retains the fascia and shopfront windows, as well as the distinct glazing above the former shopfront's doorway on the corner. (Source: RBC Planning).**





**Figure 57: Good example of a shopfront to residential conversion, Oxford. This conversion retains the shopfront's stallriser and display windows. (Source: RBC Planning).**





## 6. Glossary

**Active frontage** - a frontage that engages with passersby by creating visual interest.

Active shopfronts are welcoming and open, rather than unresponsive and expressionless. Solid roller shutters, for example, are an example of an inactive frontage.

**Architrave** - the moulded frame of a door or window, can also refer to the lowest member of an entablature.

**Awning or canopy** - a sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a shop window or doorway.

**Blind box** - storage located above to fascia to store retractable blinds or awnings.

**Canopy** - an attached outward projection from the building frontage which takes the form of a cantilevered structure without the vertical supports associated with a verandah.

**Capital** - ornamental feature at the top of a pilaster or column.

**Cill** - horizontal bar at bottom of a window frame.

**Console brackets** - located at the top of a pilaster and either end of the fascia.

**Conservation area** - defined areas of special architectural or historic interest which are worth preserving.

**Conservation Area Appraisal** - document that defines the special characteristics of defined areas of special architectural or historic interest which are worth preserving.

**Corbel** - a block of masonry or material such as brick or wood which projects and supports a beam or other feature (such as a cornice).

**Cornice** - flat topped ledge with moulded underside, usually found along the top or near the top of a building.

**Dentils** - in classical architecture, small rectangular blocks resembling teeth used as a decoration under the moulding of a cornice.

**Entablature** - collective name for the architrave, frieze and cornice which forms the upper part of a classical building below the roof.

**Façade** - the exterior face of the building, including the shopfront and upper floors.

**Fascia** - flat surface above a shop window on which the name of the shop is displayed.

**Fluting** - shallow grooves running vertically along a surface, usually on a column or pilaster.

**Grille** - opening of several parallel slits in a wall, metal sheet or other barrier intended to let air or water enter or leave while keeping larger objects out.

**Halo lighting** - back lighting for letters that creates a glow around a raised letter by illuminating the surface behind.

**Heritage asset** - A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decision, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> [Heritage Definitions | Historic England](#)

**Laminated glass** - two pieces of glass containing a plastic interlayer. If broken, the interlayer prevents a large entry from being created.

**Listed Building Consent** - Permission required before works that might affect the character or appearance of listed buildings can be undertaken.

**Marine Quality Plywood** - plywood that is more water-durable and performs better in high-moisture conditions.

**Moulding** - continuous projection or groove used decoratively or to guide rainwater off of a surface.

**Mullion** - vertical glazing bar that divides a window into two or more sections.

**Pilaster** - Flat representation of a pillar.

**Plinth** - moulded projecting base at the foot of a pilaster.

**Stallriser** - structural element that provides a solid base beneath a shop window between the ground and the glass window. These support the glazing and frame and provide protection.

**String course** - a projecting, decorative horizontal band on the exterior of a building.

**Supplementary Planning Document** - Planning documents which provide more detailed information than development plans, but do not have the same weight.

**Transom** - Horizontal bar dividing the upper section of the window.

**Trough lighting** - enclosed lighting unit that is supported by brackets and casts light, typically onto a fascia.

**Verandah** - A structure that extends from the frontage of a building at ground floor level, often over a forecourt. These are typically supported from the building above or below fascia level and have a sloping glazed roof extending from the building to the frontage. Stanchions support the verandah's face at the corners of the structure and would be completely open at the front and sides. Structural posts often contain decorative capitals and ornamental brackets.

## Appendix 1: Design Checklists

### Design Checklist

*Table A1.1: Design checklist*

Topic	Checklist item	✓/X
Heritage	Is the building or area a heritage asset? (i.e. listed, locally listed, within a conservation area)	✓/X
Heritage	Establish the building's history. Is the existing shopfront original? Are original features beneath a modern exterior? Can original features be retained and restored or an original shopfront reinstated?	✓/X
Heritage	Find any local historic records pertaining to the property, such as historic photographs. These should inform your proposals.	✓/X
Heritage	Are there any other material considerations to inform the proposal, such as a <a href="#">local listing description</a> or <a href="#">Conservation Area Appraisal</a> ?	✓/X
Local Plan Policies	Do the proposals comply with all relevant Local Plan policies, particularly those outlined in Appendix 2?	✓/X
Design	Is the shopfront divided vertically and horizontally to avoid large areas of undivided glass? Inactive or closed panels should be avoided.	✓/X
Design	Is signage and advertising kept to a minimum in order to avoid a cluttered appearance?	✓/X
Design	Is the fascia well-designed, positioned consistently with adjoining buildings and located as not to obscure architectural features?	✓/X
Design	Does the shopfront have no more than one small projecting sign?	✓/X
Design	Does the shopfront relate in scale, proportion and architectural style to the wider building and area?	✓/X
Design	Have high quality materials been used?	✓/X
Design	Are the materials complementary in colour and style to the existing building?	✓/X
Design	Are canopies, blinds or awnings integrated into the shopfront and consistent with the requirements stated in this document? Are the proportions appropriate?	✓/X



Topic	Checklist item	✓/X
Security	Are any roller shutters internally fitted?	✓/X
Security	Have security measures been considered as an integral part of the overall design? What impact do these measures have on the visual appearance of the shopfront?	✓/X
Accessibility	Is the shopfront accessible for all?	✓/X
Accessibility	Is the forecourt clearly delineated from the main pavement? Is it visually uncluttered with sufficient space for pedestrians?	✓/X
Illumination	Have internally illuminated fascias and signs been avoided?	✓/X
Illumination	Are lighting levels in keeping with the character of the area?	✓/X

## Additional considerations for conversions from shopfront to residential

*Table A1.2: Additional considerations checklist for conversions from shopfront to residential*

Checklist item	✓/X
Has the original shopfront been retained? If it is not possible to retain the original shopfront, have original features been retained or reinstated?	✓/X
Has adequate privacy been achieved without adverse visual impacts?	✓/X
Have windows been retained?	✓/X
Has a solid visual base, such as a stallriser, been retained?	✓/X

## Appendix 2: Relevant Local Plan Policies

### CC7: Design and the public realm

*All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

*will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -*

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity - meets a wide range of needs.*

*Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -*

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

*Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.*

### EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

*Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:*

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

*All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.*

*Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.*

*Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.*

*Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.*

*The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.*

*Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.*

### **EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas**

*The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:*

- *Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;*
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- *Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;*



- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *Sympathetic landscaping and planting;*
- *Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;*
- *Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;*
- *Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.*

*Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.*

## **EN6: New development in a historic context**

*In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;*
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.*

## **OU4: Advertisements**

*Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:*

- a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;*
- b) Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between the shopfronts;*

- c) *Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- d) *Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;*
- e) *Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and*
- f) *Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.*

## **OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines**

*Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.*

*For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:*

- a) *New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- b) *Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;*
- c) *Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;*
- d) *Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and*
- e) *Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.*

## **CR2: Design and central Reading**

*Applications for development within Central Reading should demonstrate the following attributes:*

- a. *Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
- b. *Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality*

*and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;*

- c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;*
- d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*
- e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and*
- f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.*

## **CR7: Primary frontages in central Reading**

*Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map will be within one of the following use classes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, and provide visual interest.*

*Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.*

*Proposals that would result in the loss of A1 or A2 use such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street in A1 or A2 use falls below 50% will not be permitted, unless the proposal introduces a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. 50% of new primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map should be in A1/A2 use.*

## **CR8: Small Shop Units in central Reading**

*Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.*

*Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.*

*Major new retail development (more than 2,500 sq m) for multiple units in the Primary Shopping Area should include some provision for a range of small shop units.*

## References and further reading

[Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing \(2021\) National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Historic England \(2012-2015\), Practical Building Conservation Series](#)

[Historic England \(2015\), Easy Access to Historic Buildings](#)

[Historic England \(2017\), Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading](#)

[Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(2020\), Statutory Guidance: Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M](#)

Morrison, K. A. (2003), English Shops and Shopping, English Heritage.

[The Institute of Historic Building Conservation \(2018\), IHBC Guidance Note on Alterations to Listed Buildings](#)



Planning Section  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU  
Tel: 0800 626540  
[Planning Policy e-mail](#)  
[Planning Policy website](#)