

Kettering Borough Shopfront Design Guidance



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1 Introduction

1.1 This guidance provides potential applicants with an idea of the criteria used to assess applications relating to new shopfronts and shop signs and the principles of good shopfront design within Kettering Borough.

1.2 Although aimed primarily at existing and proposed shops within Kettering Town Centre and the 'A6 Towns' of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell, the basic design principles are relevant to all shopfront design proposals across the Borough.

1.3 This guidance should be read with saved policy 33 of the Kettering Borough Local Plan along with planning policies relevant to the geographic area of the proposal. Adopted Conservation Area Appraisals specific to the proposal site also offer additional design guidance.

Shopfronts: Design Principles

- Shopfronts should be in keeping with the rest of the building, taking into account its age, style and materials.
- If in doubt follow classic design principles or talk to Development Services for design advice.
- The shopfront should be in proportion to the host building.
- One of the most important considerations when designing a shopfront is that the detailing is correct.
- In modern shopping areas distinctive modern designs using modern materials should be used in an innovative and original way.
- In traditional areas traditional classical shopfronts should be used.

1.4 The images in this document are illustrative. They are provided to showcase examples of well-designed shopfronts. They are not intended to be prescriptive and innovative, well-considered design which incorporates high quality materials will always be welcome in Kettering Borough.

2 Kettering Town Centre Regeneration



This modern unit in Leicester uses modern materials with traditional proportions and minimal signage to create an attractive frontage

2.1 Good shop front design supports the aim of the regeneration of Kettering Town Centre in the creation of distinctive quarters as illustrated below.

2.2 To help turn this vision into a reality an ambitious programme of redevelopment is in progress outlined in detail in the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP).

2.3 This includes developing areas for new restaurants, high street brand shopping, both large department and chain stores and 'niche' retail outlets. Improvements to the look and feel of streets and transportation links are also in hand and there are plans for investment into new office space, capitalising on Kettering's ease of access to London's St. Pancras Station.

2.4 Every project delivered builds on the success of its predecessor and will provide the building blocks upon which future projects are delivered. The delivery of the overall vision will ensure the revitalisation and success of Kettering Borough, whilst maintaining the areas unique character.

2.5 This guidance should be read with the following key documents:

- Emerging policies in the Town Centre AAP
- Kettering Conservation Area Appraisal
- Saved policy 33 of the Local Plan and the policies contained within the emerging Site Specifics DPD.



Kettering Town Centre AAP map showing Kettering's Quarters

2.6 Also the Draft Urban Codes SPD which identifies the architectural and spatial characteristics of each quarter and will have a bearing on the scale and proportions of the shopfront.

We do not wish to stifle creative designs or approaches to shopfront and shop sign design. Instead we want to provide a framework for creating designs and ideas which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the shopping areas.

We want to present the best possible advertisement for businesses by providing an attractive and legible environment in which to shop. It is widely accepted that an attractive, well presented shopping street will provide people with a more pleasant shopping experience with the result of higher custom.

3 Kettering's Commercial Character

3.1 The buildings testify to Kettering's transformation from Medieval market town to Victorian industrial centre. Georgian frontages are combined with grand Victorian banks, public houses and the occasional smart 1930s classical or modern building. Although most shops have witnessed several changes of use and management, there is still a consistent urban character throughout the Town Centre.



An image of Market Place from the early twentieth century

3.2 Three particular street improvement schemes of the early 20th century revolved around the increased expansion of commercial activity highlighting the progress of development and change to the Town Centre. The widening of the southern end of the High Street on the corner of Market Street and the redevelopment of Market Street (and its Jacobethan style shops) were followed by the removal of the former buildings (Market Hill), which outlined the southern edge of the Market Place.

3.3 Later in the 20th century Kettering saw further redevelopment including the demolition of buildings on Bakehouse Hill and the construction of the Newlands Centre. This introduced a modern, precinct style of shopping to the town and moved the commercial heart from the Market Place and High Street to Gold Street.

3.4 This mix of commercial buildings has resulted in an assorted combination of shopfronts from the traditional to the modern plate glass and plastic frontages.

3.5 In recent years there has been a revival in commercial and shopping activity in the Town Centre. Like many UK towns, the growing use of mass-produced or inappropriately detailed design and materials is a contributory factor to a loss of distinctive character. In Kettering change has been particularly noticeable when compared with the photograph of Market Square in 1914.

4 Burton Latimer's Commercial Character

4.1 Burton Latimer's character as a historical communication link is still evident today. However, from an extensive programme of demolition and rebuilding much of the commercial character is now based on the records and history of several shops and their owners.

4.2 Around the original village settlement along Church Street there is still character in terms of the age and form of buildings while the High Street, in comparison, is a denser more enclosed environment, displaying a mix of building styles. In contrast to many other historic towns such as Kettering, the buildings are not all two and three stories. Instead the single/two-storey cottage style is more common.



Burton Latimer High Street

4.3 In recent years retailers have moved up the High Street towards the north leaving an unequal spread of shops to the mid and southern end. The character of the western side of the central High Street area has also changed, where it was once an 18th century farmhouse (Denton's Farm) it is now the Churchill Way retail development. The loss of the farmhouse is a result of the change from rural economy to major housing development with a supporting retail focus.

5 Desborough's Commercial Character



The George, Desborough. A traditional stone building

5.1 Desborough is not a typical small town and past decisions have significantly changed the appearance of the town centre, along with a general lack of investment over a sustained period of time. The town has several villages nearby that use it as a local centre for day to day activities and so it performs an important function in terms of helping to sustain local rural communities.

5.2 The major phase of Desborough's development occurred during the Victorian and Edwardian periods of the late 19th and early 20th century. During this period the boot and shoe industry and iron ore extraction triggered Desborough's transformation into a town and created much of the character we see today.

5.3 Station Road is the main retailing area of the town and while busy during retail hours lacks life and vitality at other times. Compared with the centre of Rothwell, of similar size to Desborough, there is a significant difference in town centre activity.

5.4 In general terms Station Road is characterised by building frontages up to the pavement edge creating an enclosed view up the street while the buildings are aligned parallel to the street and are mainly two storey. A few of the properties retain original features and some examples have interesting and unusual elements creating variety in the street.

5.5 However, the majority of buildings have been significantly altered with the neglect of the fabric of some buildings detracting from the visual quality. Where these have been altered in an insensitive way it detracts from a pleasant street environment.

5.6 The traditional materials in the area were red brick and natural slate, with stone window surrounds and sills. Sliding sash windows were typical on domestic buildings and above shops. Shop fronts would have been traditionally constructed in timber, although there are very few examples of buildings that retain this character.

5.7 During the 1970's the area in and around the High Street was severely affected by road improvements to the former A6. This led to many of the traditional buildings being demolished and in their place new buildings were erected in locations and of a style which did not contain the street in the same way. The materials, scale and design of the buildings also departed from those that were characteristic of the High Street. These changes drastically altered the appearance and feel of the area.

6 Rothwell's Commercial Character

6.1 Out of the A6 towns Rothwell has the greatest historic feel to its centre due to the number of remaining buildings that pre-date the 20th century.

6.2 Rothwell developed far earlier than Desborough, and by 1154 the town had acquired a Sunday market which flourished. The settlement grew substantially in population and size. However, by the 18th century the market was in severe decline. The market ceased to operate during the mid 19th century, but the town was able to retain its urban character and status as a commercial centre for the surrounding area.



Central Rothwell

6.3 The central shopping area (based around High Street, Bridge Street and Market Square) also developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, although a significant number of older buildings survive in the town centre. There was substantial development of the town during the course of the 19th century and a number of high status houses were erected in the centre of the town, many of which were later converted into shops. It was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that purpose built shops began to be erected - these included both small, corner plot developments and larger commercial enterprises.

6.4 There is a mixed range of shops in Rothwell, including small, low status corner shops, buildings with more elaborate frontages for specialist shops and the larger commercial constructions. The survivals are clearly outweighed by buildings which have had modern shop frontages inserted into them. Some of the older properties may have the Medieval frontage to the rear of the plot, rather than at the present frontage.

7 Character of Street and Building

7.1 Most traditional shopping streets contain a great deal of variety. The design of the shopfront should take into account the characteristics and pace of the street. As Kettering's shopping area contains a varied amount of style and ages of buildings there is variety in the height, width and style of properties. Therefore identical designs are not necessarily the ideal solution in terms of street scene with the exception of terrace properties, for example Piccadilly Buildings which have been designed as a single composition.

7.2 Shopfronts should not extend over more than one building. If adjacent properties are occupied by one business this must be shown by means other than a single shopfront spanning the two units.



Piccadilly Buildings in Kettering: an example of a row of traditional shops with well-designed and appropriate signage

In terms of traditional shopfronts, these or any other remaining features should be retained and repaired. It is often cheaper to repair an existing shopfront than to replace it. In a number of instances a traditional shopfront may have been covered by inappropriate frontage, if this is the case then the original shopfront should be restored to its former glory.

7.3 Replacement shopfronts in a traditional style should be accurately and correctly detailed in accordance to the age and style of the building. Carefully considered details and mouldings do not necessarily add much to the cost but can add to an impression of quality.

7.4 Existing shopfronts or any feature of a shopfront which is out of keeping with the street or building is not a valid reason for replacement with an equally inappropriate design. At the first opportunity the signage should be replaced to help improve the appearance and quality of the shop.

8 Modern Shopfronts



A modern shop development in Leicester with a glass canopy. Note the minimal use of signage to create an attractive unit

8.1 In modern buildings well designed shopfronts which incorporate distinctive materials will be suitable so long as the design does not detract from the surrounding area and the shopfront is in proportion with the building.

8.2 Innovative design will always be supported, but not to the loss of the Borough's distinct history and character. Modern shopfronts which include inappropriate materials or ignore traditional proportions are not appropriate for historic buildings. If in doubt classic design principles can be applied to modern shopfronts and still achieve designs that are both distinct and contemporary.

9 Principles of Shopfront Design

9.1 Purpose built shopfronts can be traced back to the 18th century when they began to appear on the ground floor of traders homes. The classical ideas of the time heavily influenced these shopfronts with architectural "orders" of antiquity. These were used to create a frame for the window, in much the same way a frame is used to display a painting, and to highlight the entrance to the shop.



This illustration identifies some key features of traditional design, but many modern designs follow the same principles and proportions

9.2 Providing a visual frame is important for the architectural appearance of the building frontage and providing a satisfactory relationship between the shop and building as a whole. The upper part of the building needs to appear to be supported by the ground floor and appropriate shop frames can provide this apparent support.

These components and principles can still be applied today for the reproduction of traditional style shopfronts or by creative interpretation as the basis for more contemporary shopfronts.

9.3 Traditional shopfront design and details vary across towns and regions, however, they generally all have the entrance door set back from the pavement, a stallriser at low level running the full width of the shop front, one or two vertical mullions and a transom rail at door level with transom lights over it.

9.4 Shopfronts were traditionally constructed from timber and sat within an architectural frame comprising of two pilasters at either side, a corbel, a cornice and a frieze or fascia generally with a hand painted sign.

Cornice

9.5 Cornices frame and protect the shopfront and can display simple or more decorative moulding. Traditionally the mouldings of the cornice or architrave are used to house and conceal the retractable blinds or awning.

Fascia/Frieze

9.6 The fascia sits below the cornice and provides advertising space, with typically hand painted signs fixed to the fascia.

There should always be a gap between the bottom of the first floor windows and the top of the fascia. The size of the fascia must be in proportion to the shopfront and to the building

as a whole. The proportions of the fascia should be long and thin rather than short and thick.

A cornice should be incorporated above the fascia to provide a visual break between the ground and first floor, while helping to protect the fascia and shopfront from the weather.

Pilaster and Corbel

9.7 Pilasters and Corbels help to distinguish the shop from those adjacent to it. Pilasters comprise of three elements; plinth, trunk and a capital (above the pilasters can also be the consul). The corbels sit on top of the pilasters and vary in decoration, with the pilasters providing the side framing of the shop. The pilasters define the overall width of the shop and are often formed in different materials for example, plaster, granite or terracotta.

Entrance Door

9.8 These doors are usually glazed and set back from the pavement into a recess with a kickplate at the base of the door incorporating the letter box. Door furniture is usually brass or iron.

In-go

9.9 Recessed entrances into the shop often have mosaic or tiled flooring. The recess allows for more display space and acts to invite the customer into the shop. The recessed doorway also adds interest and balance by giving the shopfront depth.

Glazing

9.10 Horizontal and vertical bars are used to keep the glazed panels of the shopfront in proportion to the upper floors. Large plate glass windows can give the visually unsatisfactory appearance of heavy buildings floating above insubstantial ground floors and are expensive if broken.

Window displays

9.11 Window displays are a traditional and important feature for the character of historic shopping areas.

The use of window displays is actively encouraged. In general posters, stickers and window vinyls should be avoided. If used they should be as part of an overall window display scheme and should not dominate the glazed area. An easy view into the shop or the window display should always be maintained.

As with other signage posters, stickers and window vinyls should be of good quality design and fit in with the character of the overall property.

Stallriser

9.12 Stallrisers provide a base to protect the shopfront at low level adding character. They provide a solid base for the display window above and can be reinforced to safeguard against

ram raiding, reducing the need for freestanding bollards in turn reducing street clutter. They also provide physical protection at ground level giving visual weight to the base of the building.

The stallriser should be considered as an integral part of shopfront design. Moulded timber panels are normally the best form of construction, however stallrisers can also be of plain timber or stonework construction depending on the building and street front. To achieve a consistent look, as a rough guide, the stallriser should not be less than 50cm high.

Signs

9.13 Traditionally signs were painted directly onto the fascia. This ensured that they were in proportion to the rest of the building and did not obstruct any of the architectural features of the shopfront. This is still the preferred method of application and will be actively encouraged in conservation areas and on Listed Buildings.

9.14 Some styles of lettering are more appropriate than others and in some cases, in place of a fascia, restrained lettering applied directly to the wall surface or shop window may be appropriate. However on modern buildings raised or block lettering can be effective providing they follow the same principles in terms of scale and proportion in relation to the fascia.

Lettering must not be too large. As a guide lettering should be no more than 65% of the height or 75% of the width of the fascia and should be centrally placed.

Take into account the distance at which the sign will be read. There is no point in overlarge lettering if the street is narrow. Raised lettering is difficult to read at an angle and will not be effective down narrow streets.

The writing on the fascia should be confined to the name of the shop and should not be used as an advertising hording. Avoid the use of sponsored fascia signs advertising other products in addition to the name of the trader or retailer. A single clear sign is better than several confusing ones.

9.15 Companies with multiple retail outlets will be expected to take a flexible approach to the design of shopfronts and lettering, particularly in conservation areas and listed buildings. The vast majority of house styles can be adapted to suit particular situations. The general principles of design will enable multiple retailers to find viable alternatives which still retain familiar identities.

Awnings & Canopies



Note the use here of a traditional retractable roller awning which does not obscure architectural detailing

9.16 The main purpose of shop blinds are to protect goods from sunlight or protect shoppers from the rain. Traditional blinds were canvas retractable roller awnings pulled down from the fascia (or more accurately either the cornice above the fascia or the architrave below) and did not obscure architectural detailing on the shopfront. These are appropriate for many of the traditional shops within the Borough.

9.17 Modern glass canopies are an attractive approach too. They do not obscure architectural detailing and allow the existing character of the building to dominate, while offering a modern approach to protecting shoppers from the elements.

Dutch blinds and balloon type plastic blinds however are not traditional streetscape features. These modern styles of bright, shiny canopies tend to dominate the street scene and are often used for additional advertising space. They are not traditional of the character of the Borough and are unsuitable for historic shopfronts.

Materials

9.18 Timber is the traditional material for shopfronts. It is the most versatile and appropriate material for all situations whether a historic building, conservation area or for a contemporary design project. The timber should be softwood and finished with paint. Stained hardwood tends to be unsuitable for shopfronts as it is not a traditional material, however in some circumstances it may be acceptable. Timber from unsustainable resources should be avoided.

9.19 The use of metal within traditional shopfronts is not acceptable however they can be appropriate for modern shopfronts. Aluminium should be powder coated rather than self-coloured or anodised. Powder coating provides a good finish and is available in a wide range of colours. Unfinished galvanised steel should be avoided; again powder coating is available and provides a suitable finish.

9.20 In areas where high quality modern design is used the materials in the shopfront should

reflect this. In these areas there is more scope for modern finishes and materials provided they are used in an innovative and original way.



Here a historic building has been reinvigorated by sensitive repairs that do not detract from its overall character

Disabled Access

9.21 Shop owners have a statutory duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to provide reasonable access for people with disabilities. Where existing shopfronts are of historic interest or are Listed but do not provide reasonable access cases will be looked at on an individual basis. Assessments will then be made to see how access can be improved without compromising the original appearance of the shopfront.

9.22 Generally access doors should be of adequate width to admit a wheelchair. Where doors have two leaves it should be possible for wheelchair users to obtain access without having to open both doors. Doors should be easy to open by people with limited strength; it is possible to install door opening mechanisms on heavy doors which do not affect the integral character of the shopfront. However automatic doors should not be used in traditionally designed or historic shopfronts.

9.23 Swing doors are often useful as some people find it easier to push a door than pull it towards them. Frameless glass doors are dangerous as the partially sighted and children may not see them, while wheelchair users may damage or break the glass. Features such as bells and door handles, where possible, should be situated one metre above the ground and for ease of use lever handles are preferable to knob handles. Self closers, if fitted, should not be so strong as to hinder access to people with limited strength.

9.24 Ramps to enable wheelchair and pushchair users access can be suitable in some instances. Internal ramps are preferable to external. It may also be possible to raise the access to the shop to eliminate difficult steps. For further advice please contact the Highways Authority at Northamptonshire County Council.

Security

9.25 The character and appearance of existing shopfronts can be damaged by badly designed

ill-conceived security measures. The Council appreciates the need for security and advise that security measures should be appropriate to the likely risk.

9.26 Before deciding what measures to take it is advisable to consider the security of the building as a whole taking advice from the Police, insurance company or the Police Crime Prevention Officer who operates the secured by design scheme. In many instances break-ins take place to the rear of the property while the front is more at risk from casual vandalism. With the advent of CCTV in town centres the need for serious measures to deter the casual criminal has been reduced. However, shop owners should still explore the need for additional security measures for individual properties.

The design and character of the area should be considered carefully when deciding on what security systems to install. If security requirements are included at the initial design stage for a new shopfront, innovative and attractive solutions can usually be found. Internal systems including alarms, special glass and in some instances internal grilles are the best form of security in terms of the character of an area.

9.27 The shopfront itself can be designed to contain security measures. A reinforced stallriser can protect from ram raiding and ground level attack. Smaller panes of glass and glazing bars can help to strengthen the shopfront making window breaking more difficult and less inviting for graffiti; they are also cheaper to replace than large expansive panes of glass.

9.28 Generally high footfall outside the shop is a deterrent to casual criminal activity therefore the more inviting the street appears the more likely people are to use it well into the evening. Another way of increasing general use of the street outside shopping hours is to encourage residential units above the shops. This provides natural surveillance outside shopping hours and again can be a deterrent for criminal activities.

Alarm Boxes

9.29 Care should be taken over the siting of alarm boxes. They should be visible without being obtrusive and sited to be inaccessible except with the use of ladders. Suitable locations depend upon the individual buildings, however just below eaves level is often the easiest and least prominent site. The boxes may be required to be a colour which suits the building or the setting.

Security Glazing

9.30 Toughened, laminated or anti-bandit glass can be used instead of ordinary float glass. The frame strength also needs to be adequate in relation to the strength of glass. Planning permission is not normally required to replace the glass, however if the building is Listed and may retain its old glass it is desirable to keep this. As such Listed Building Consent is normally required for any alterations.

Shutters

9.31 In some circumstances internal shutters may be suitable. These should be of an open mesh design to allow the shop window display to be visible and light to filter through. They should be the same colours as the shopfront. Internal grilles do not normally require planning permission, again Listed Building Consent may be required if the building is Listed.

9.32 On new shop developments shutters should be designed as part of the building and located internally to prevent retrofitting of security measures to the detriment of the property. Security measures should be incorporated at design stage to prevent the installation of shutter housing at a later stage.

External shutters which completely obscure the shopfront present a hostile, bleak street scene. They invite graffiti and fly posting and can deter people from entering these areas in the evenings when general surveillance is a good form of security.

9.33 The installation of shutters may damage historic shopfronts and any proposal affecting a historic shopfront or Listed Building should be discussed with a Development Officer before any work commences.

Illumination

9.34 Illumination on shopfronts should be kept to a minimum. The shopfront itself should rely on internal illumination visible through the shop window. Illumination for fascia signage should be concealed within the shopfront itself, for example within the architrave or the cornice. The best form of illumination is through strip diode lighting; this is easily concealed and gives good levels of illumination.

9.35 Internally illuminated box signs are not acceptable however individually illuminated or halo light lettering may be appropriate on modern shopfronts if used in an original manner.

10 What Consents Do I Need?

Planning Permission

10.1 Commercial units have virtually no permitted development rights therefore much of the work involved in constructing a new shopfront or replacing an existing one requires Planning Permission.

Advertisement Consent

10.2 The display of advertisements, which include features such as fascia, boards and hanging signs is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements Regulations 1992. Please refer to the Department of Communities and Local Government guidance “Outdoor Advertisements and Signs: a guide for advertisers” which is available on their website at: www.dclg.org.uk.

Listed Building Consent

10.3 Some buildings are deemed to be of sufficient special architectural or historical interest to be Listed. Listing does not preclude development but provides a building with protection to ensure that no changes are made, which would affect its historic character without first giving full consideration to any proposals. The majority of works to a shopfront on a Listed Building, apart from works of like for like repair, require Listed Building Consent.

Important

Please note that unauthorised work without the relevant permissions could result in enforcement action and may constitute a criminal offence.

Pre-application advice

10.4 Kettering Borough Council now runs a pre-application advice service. This enables you to get informal advice from an Officer on the relative merits of the proposal prior to an application being submitted. Applicants and their agents are strongly advised to take full advantage of this service. Details can be found on our website at www.kettering.gov.uk/planning or there are forms and leaflets available from the Council Offices.

Historic building grants

10.5 Kettering Borough Council has previously offered grants towards costs involved with the reintroduction of historic detailing and continues to do so. A grant may be available to help towards the costs involved in replacing modern, inappropriate signage or decoration with more traditional designs. Please check with Development Services as to the availability of such grants, as financial help may be available to help reinvigorate shopfronts in historic buildings in the future.