

A Guide to Shopfronts and Signage

Supplementary
Planning Document



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL

Contents

Foreword	4
1. Introduction.....	5
2. A Brief History of Shopfronts in Worcester.....	6
3. Policies	10
3.1 National Planning.....	10
3.11. National Planning Policy Framework	10
3.12 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	11
3.13 Advertisements.....	11
3.2 Local Planning Policy.....	11
3.21 South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR)	11
4. The Elements of Good Shopfront Design	13
4.1. Part 1 - Specific building types.....	13
4.1.2 Shops that occupy more than one building.....	13
4.1.3 Buildings designed to have a uniform appearance	14
4.1.4 Contemporary buildings.....	16
4.1.5 Developing Shopfronts within Railway Arches.....	18
4.2 Part 2 – Component elements of a shopfront	19
4.2.1 Materials	22
4.2.2 Colour	24
4.2.3 Shopfront fascia signs	25
Not Permitted	29
Permitted.....	29
Internally illuminated signs, swan-neck, and other projecting lights	29
Upward shining lights	29
Boxy, deep fascia signs which dominate a shopfront or sit proud of the fascia board, pilasters, or console brackets	29
Fascia signs made of shiny plastic.....	29
Oversized/acrylic/plastic lettering.....	29
Fascias coloured in overly bright or garish shades that would not normally be considered acceptable in the historic setting of a conservation area	29
Signs constructed from timber with hand-painted lettering.....	29
Lettering to detail business name and street number	29
Signs of a size that sits comfortably on the building between corbel brackets	29

Signs with a satin or matt finish.....	29
Signs lit by individual halo illumination	29
Signs illuminated by trough light if concealed within fascia/blind box.....	29
4.2.4 Projecting signs and hanging signs	29
4.2.5 Illumination of signs or advertisements	31
4.2.6 Windows, signs and stickers	32
5. Shopfront Security	34
5.1 Acceptable examples of shop security	34
5.2 Unacceptable examples of shop security	35
6 Blinds and Canopies	37
7 Cash Machines	38
8 Banner Advertisements	39
9 Access for all.....	42
10 Alarms, CCTV, Satellite Dishes & Antennae	43
11 Historic Shopfronts	44
11.1 Listed Buildings	44
11.2 Locally Listed Buildings.....	44
11.3 Conservation Areas.....	44
11.4 Conservation Officer Advice	44
12 Applying for Permission.....	45
13. Appendix – A Glossary of Terms	46

Foreword

Worcester is a wonderful place to live, work and visit. Both in the City Centre and beyond the many and varied shops and businesses trading here cater for all needs and contribute to its overall economic vitality.

However, like many other places, Worcester needs to adapt to an increasing move towards online shopping, the demise of many well-known business brands, and the closure of shops: the result has been vacant premises.

Shops in Worcester still offer an eclectic and vibrant mix. Some have traded in the same location and premises for generations; other shop units change their nature and offer regularly. These changes are often accompanied by proposals to replace or alter shopfronts to suit the needs of a particular tenant. However, a shop with an overly adapted frontage can appear incongruous and be more difficult to let, to future occupants.

It is important to attract shoppers and encourage them to return. One important way in which this can be achieved is by maintaining attractive shopfronts and streetscapes to encourage shoppers and visitors to Worcester.

Shopfronts play a key role in achieving this by improving the appearance of the streets, either by protecting the City's historic character or by complimenting it through sympathetic alteration and adaptation. This Shopfront Design Guide aims to ensure that traditional shopfronts are preserved and where lost reinstated to a better design quality. The design guide has been produced to provide clarity and guidance on the principles and practice surrounding the change of use of shops and the replacement or adaptation of shopfronts in Worcester.

This design guidance should ensure that forthcoming schemes are well designed to safeguard the City's unique and distinctive historic and architectural character and appearance is preserved and enhanced for all to enjoy.

"As Heritage Champion at Worcester City Council, I welcome this Shopfronts Design Guide and hope others will too. Well-designed shopfronts play a vital role in shaping the local character, vitality, and economic success of our streets, particularly within the historic areas of this very special city. They have a positive impact on both the individual businesses, and the wider collective identity, creating attractive commercial areas.

This design guide provides clear, practical advice to both applicants and decision-makers so that appropriate high-quality contemporary design can be delivered alongside appropriate respect for the historic character of the city. It strikes an effective balance between conservation and creativity, encouraging shopfronts that enhance heritage assets, respond sensitively to their surroundings, and meet the needs of modern businesses. I commend this guide to business owners, designers, and decision-makers alike, and encourage its use as a positive tool to achieve shopfronts that are distinctive, sustainable, and rooted in local character."

Councillor Adrian Gregson, Worcester City Council's Heritage Champion

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The city of Worcester has a rich history evidenced by the variety of historic buildings that continue to stand in the city today. The commercial centre contributes a vital element to the story of Worcester's development. It is essential to preserve the character and integrity of these buildings, while ensuring that they can meet the needs of current and future generations.
- 1.2 Worcester's heritage, along with its diverse communities, marks what is unique about the city. How heritage is managed, presented, and connected with, has a crucial impact on the perception of the city locally, nationally, and internationally. It is central to Worcester's civic pride, status, sense of place and continuity in times of change.
- 1.3 An attractive and welcoming commercial shopping area that is rich in heritage and architectural interest can help boost a city's economy. Worcester City Council recognises that many retailers in Worcester are facing increased competition due to a rise in online shopping – recorded at over 25% of all transactions – and the effects of the economic downturn. It is therefore more important than ever to attract shoppers and encourage them to return. However overall, the city centre continues to provide a good range of leisure facilities, food and beverage outlets and a strong and varied retail offer.
- 1.4 Shopfronts have a key role to play in making the city centre and other commercial areas, attractive and welcoming places to live, work and visit. They can promote the image of a business and should be designed to entice shoppers and visitors inside particularly if shop windows are used to effectively display goods or promote services and the display changes on a frequent basis. Shopfronts that allow views into the shop itself can also help to improve the overall appearance of the street, providing natural surveillance and attracting shoppers to the area. A well-designed shopfront integrates well with the established street scene, introducing a sense of variety, strengthening character and reinforcing local distinctiveness.
- 1.5 It is essential to have a high standard of shopfront design, construction, and maintenance to provide an attractive and pleasant environment for workers, residents, and visitors. This will not only protect the history and heritage of the city but can help make Worcester more attractive and prosperous for the future and resistant to pressures brought about by economic cycles, fluctuating investor confidence and decline. High quality design plays an important role in helping to maintain viability and vitality of shopping areas.
- 1.6 This shopfront guide has been produced to help anyone wishing to make changes to a shopfront in Worcester, understand some important design principles, help explain what the city council considers to be key design and place making objectives and how the various stages of design and regulatory approval should be approached. Information is included later in the document on what planning permission or other consents might be required, the component parts of historic shopfronts, and the key elements of good shopfront design.
- 1.7 This guidance applies to shopfronts throughout the city but should be particularly helpful in relation to those buildings in conservation areas and those which are designated heritage assets, e.g., statutory, or locally listed buildings.

2. A Brief History of Shopfronts in Worcester

- 2.1 Worcester has been a busy commercial centre for centuries and has its origins in the Roman period, although traces of settlement date back before this time. From early times the settlement was a strategic crossing point of the River Severn, a quality that saw it emerge as one of the most powerful and wealthy cathedral cities in England. The High Street in the city centre once formed part of the main road to London, a name its southern extension still carries. Moving off High Street, passageways link through to Trinity Street and The Shambles at many points. They follow the lines of Medieval burgage plots, ancient parcels of land consisting of a building on a long thin plot with a narrow street frontage. On a broader scale, the blocks that make up the city centre also have early origins. Many of the roads that define them were laid out in the Roman and Medieval periods.



Images 1-2 Well preserved Shopfronts within Worcester City

- 2.2 Until the early 18th century, many structures on the main streets were timber buildings. Later, a considerable number were either rebuilt or re-fronted with brick. Also, several imposing civic buildings were built and others, seen as obstructions, demolished, notably in the High Street. By the 1850s, a lot of the buildings in the City Centre no longer had timber fronts. They had been replaced by brick and stucco ones, and many had large shop windows. From the end of the 19th century through to the First World War, the city centre was transformed through many new additions, including public buildings, banks, shops, and electric tramways; a trend that continued in the interwar period.



Images 3-4 examples of existing timber framed buildings including shopfronts

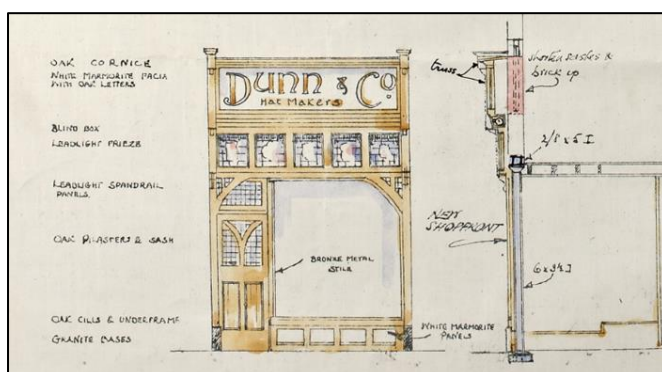


Images 5-7 Historic Worcester City shopfront photographs, from the [Worcester City Council Historic Environment Record](#) which includes further historic shop front images from Worcester's past as a valuable archive resource.

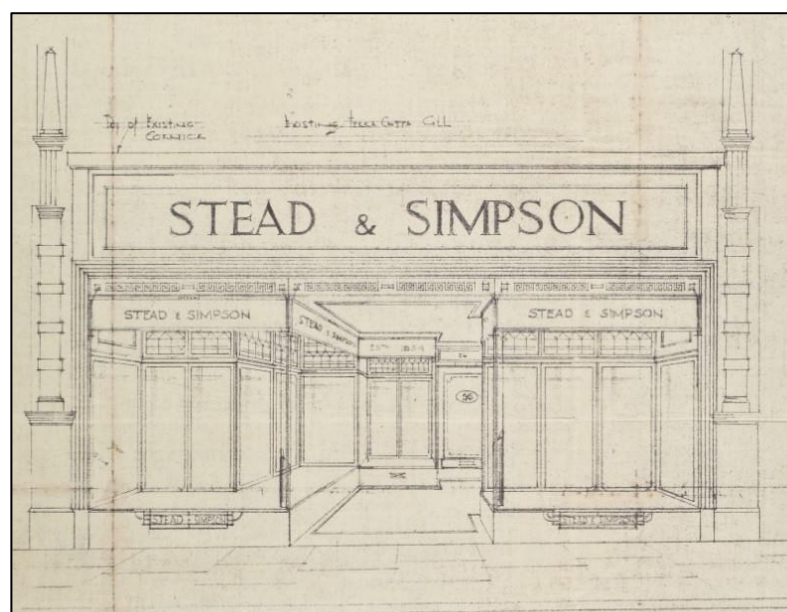
2.3 Throughout the 20th century, there was much redevelopment in the city centre, and many significant historic buildings were demolished because of this. From the 1960s onwards, there were four major shopping centre developments: -

- Lichgate Shopping Centre – Opened in November 1967; largely closed by May 2007. Since redeveloped to create Cathedral Square between 2014 and 2017. Notably, in 1963 this had required the demolition of the City's Lich Gate – the last remaining example of a cathedral lichgate in England.
- Blackfriars Market & Shopping Centre – developed from 1967, opened April 1969, redeveloped into Crowngate c.1989-1991.
- Reindeer Court – opened 1990.
- Unicorn/Chapel/Friary Walk – developed 1989-1992, refurbished 2010.

2.4 Into the 21st century, the focus has remained upon regeneration in Worcester, and 2012 saw the opening of the St Martin's Quarter development, and in 2017 the new layout in Cathedral Square was completed. However, the same period also saw the closure of many well-known stores, each leaving large empty premises behind them for which new uses needed to be found. These closures re-emphasise the need to preserve existing historic shopfronts and to restore newer ones so that they are historically sympathetic.



Images 8 - 9 Historic shopfront design, from Worcester City Council - Historic Environment Record



3. Policies

- 3.1 This Shopfront Guide conforms with, and is underpinned by, both National and Local planning policies.

3.1 National Planning

3.11. National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) first published in 2012, was revised in December 2024 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 3.3 Section 7 of the NPPF refers to the vitality of town centres. Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the local communities by '*taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaption*', paragraph 90.
- 3.4 Section 12 'Achieving well-designed and beautiful places' in paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site, and to create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.
- 3.5 Section 16 of the NPPF covers conserving and enhancing the historic environment. In proposals affecting heritage assets paragraph 203 states that in determining applications local planning authorities '*should take into account... of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable use with their conservation*'.
- 3.6 In the case of designated heritage assets, such as listed buildings, paragraph 212 states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight it should be. Paragraph 216 states the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, such as a historic but unlisted building should be considered when making decisions.
- 3.7 Paragraph 220 refers to heritage assets in conservation areas. The loss of a shop front or an element of a shopfront that makes a positive contribution to the significance of an area should be treated as either substantial or less-than-substantial harm, considering the relative significance of the shopfront or element affected and its contribution to the conservation area.
- 3.8 Additionally, the NPPF promotes the requirement for superior design throughout the document, particularly section 12 Achieving well-designed places. This is also consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.
- 3.9 Regarding shopfronts, paragraph 141 states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. '*A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient, and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.*'

- 3.10 Within paragraph 125 (d), 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.
- 3.11 In section 8 promoting healthy and safe communities, planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, and safe places which promote social interaction through active street frontages, to enable and support healthy lifestyles through the provision of local shops, plan positively for the provision of shared spaces such as local shops, and to ensure that established shops are able to develop and modernise and are retained for the benefit of the community.

3.12 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 3.12 [The Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act of 1990](#) contains laws relating to the granting of planning permissions for building works, with a specific focus on conservation areas and listed buildings. Within the section 16 and 66 of the Act it places a statutory duty on local planning authorities in the exercise of their planning function to *'pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'*. Additionally, section 72 states that special attention shall be paid *'to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.'*

3.13 Advertisements

- 3.13 The [Advertisements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), has guidance on advertisements, which was last updated in July 2019. The display of advertisements is subject to a separate consent process within the planning system. The [Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) principally sets this out. Worcester City Council's Planning Services can advise upon shop signs and their lighting. They can be contacted via: - planning@worcester.gov.uk.
- 3.14 Many kinds of shop signs do not require formal consent. The guide – [Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers](#) (June 2007) sets this out

3.2 Local Planning Policy

3.21 South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR)

- 3.15 The three South Worcestershire Councils – Worcester City, Malvern Hills District, and Wychavon District Councils – started a review of the SWDP in 2017, called the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR). This review will provide an updated plan covering the period up to 2041 and will upon adoption replace the existing SWDP.

The SWDPR was adopted on the 25th of March 2026. The relevant emerging policies to shopfronts are outlined below: -

SWDPR 28: Design

A. All residential, employment and retail development will be expected to be of a high design quality. In terms of form and function it will and to integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforce a sense of place and local distinctiveness, and conserve and enhance cultural and

heritage assets and their settings. New and contemporary designs will be encouraged and supported where they enhance the overall quality of the built environment.

B. xi. Advertisements – Illuminated signage will only be permitted where lighting is unobtrusive or not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the site and surroundings or have a detrimental impact on the natural environment. Consent may be granted for outdoor advertisements (including poster hoardings) provided the display will not adversely affect the amenities of the area, natural environment, or impact on public safety.

And within the reasoned justification (28.15) of the policy- Advertisements on shopfronts, commercial and industrial buildings, including fascia and projecting signs and brackets, both illuminated and non-illuminated, canopies and awnings, grilles and fixing of alarm boxes, should all comply with the Shopfront Design Guide SPD (Supplementary Planning Documents).

SWDPR 35: Amenity

A. Development proposals must be designed to create a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

B. Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on the proposed development in its vicinity (in respect of noise, light, odour or effluvia) suitable mitigation will be required.

Within the reasoned justification, 35.1 - Developers must consider whether existing or future residents, businesses, or land uses may be subject to any adverse environmental effects. Protection is to be provided to existing businesses and community facilities in line with the “agent of change” principles as set out within the NPPF.

35.2 - Where nuisances are anticipated from a proposal, then sufficient information and assessment along with any proposed mitigation having regard to the most appropriate guidance will be required, including Worcestershire Regulatory Services ‘Technical Guidance Note for Planning’. Such assessments must establish the likely level of exposure in terms of noise, light odour and effluvia and demonstrate the development is acceptable in the context of defined impacts.

35.4 Lighting Assessment will be required for - b. Proposals for any developments that include signs or advertisements that are illuminated internally or externally and could cause light nuisance such as shop/retail fascia or billboard advertising.

4. The Elements of Good Shopfront Design

4.1. Part 1 - Specific building types

4.1.2 Shops that occupy more than one building.

- 4.1 In order to retain the appearance of individual buildings and the street scene, shopfronts should correspond to only one building, even if the shop itself occupies more than one building.
- 4.2 Due to many buildings in Worcester being tall and often narrow fronted, shops sometimes occupy more than one building, for example in Friar, High, New and St Swithins streets.
- 4.3 To maintain and distinguish the separate buildings from its neighbours, shopfronts should be divided to correspond with each individual building. As an example, this can be achieved through the use of pilasters, columns or, where appropriate, a change in fascia level so that the individual buildings are still apparent, however this will not be appropriate in all circumstances.
- 4.4 The merging of shopfronts across more than one building can have a detrimental impact visually, which can have a negative impact not only on the buildings involved but the street scene more generally. Interest and variety that is provided through individual buildings should be maintained in instances where a shop occupies more than one unit, it is preferred for fascia signs and canopies to be repeated rather than to extend them across the whole of the shop frontage. Facias and canopies that are overly large, often results in the loss of original features such as corbels and capitals and can affect the balance going across the buildings. This can lead to the street scene taking on a horizontal appearance rather than the correct vertical one.



Graphic 1 Bad example (left) and good example (right) of signage on shopfront across more than one building



Image 10 Shopfronts that extend across more than one building

4.1.3 Buildings designed to have a uniform appearance

- 4.5 Uniformity was designed into the construction of some areas in Worcester, these areas were built at the same time, and it was intentional for the buildings to have a uniform appearance. Examples of this are on Shaw Street, The Butts, and Fish Street. Shopfronts in these areas should retain the intended uniformity of design.
- 4.6 This does not block shopfront design taking an individual approach; however fascia levels, corbels and pilasters should be similar in all units, and design proportions maintained.



Images 11-12 uniform appearance of different shop fronts

4.1.4 Contemporary buildings

- 4.7 The approach taken to shopfront design should respond to the building within which they form part. Where this is a modern building, reproducing traditional shopfront design is unlikely to be considered appropriate as they generally ignore the character of the building. Modern buildings can, however, present a good opportunity to add examples of the architecture and styles of our own period into the townscape.
- 4.8 For modern shopfronts any pilasters should be placed in line with solid wall, be of a simple and clean appearance and be of the same colour of neighbouring shopfront where the pilaster covers the boundary line. For any stallriser where the window meets the ground, the stallriser height should balance with the rest of the shopfront.





Images 13-15 Contemporary shop fronts

- 4.9 It is essential that modern style shopfronts have high quality design, materials, and workmanship. This is as of equal importance to the modern style than to traditional shopfronts. This becomes particularly important if the building is located within a Conservation area or is adjacent to other heritage assets such as listed buildings. Where a historic shop frontage has been lost, a high-quality contemporary design may be supported. This should include open window displays clearly displaying products for sale within the shop, sympathetic lighting, well-proportioned signage and an active frontage where window display areas are provided at a suitable depth to allow for creative displays. Modern buildings and shopfronts offer more scope for innovation and creativity in their design; this can create a valuable contribution to the variety and interest of the city as a retail and tourism destination.

4.1.5 Developing Shopfronts within Railway Arches

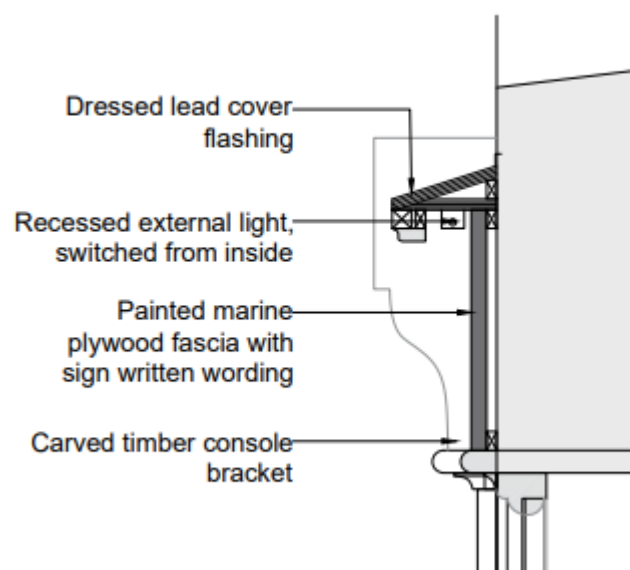
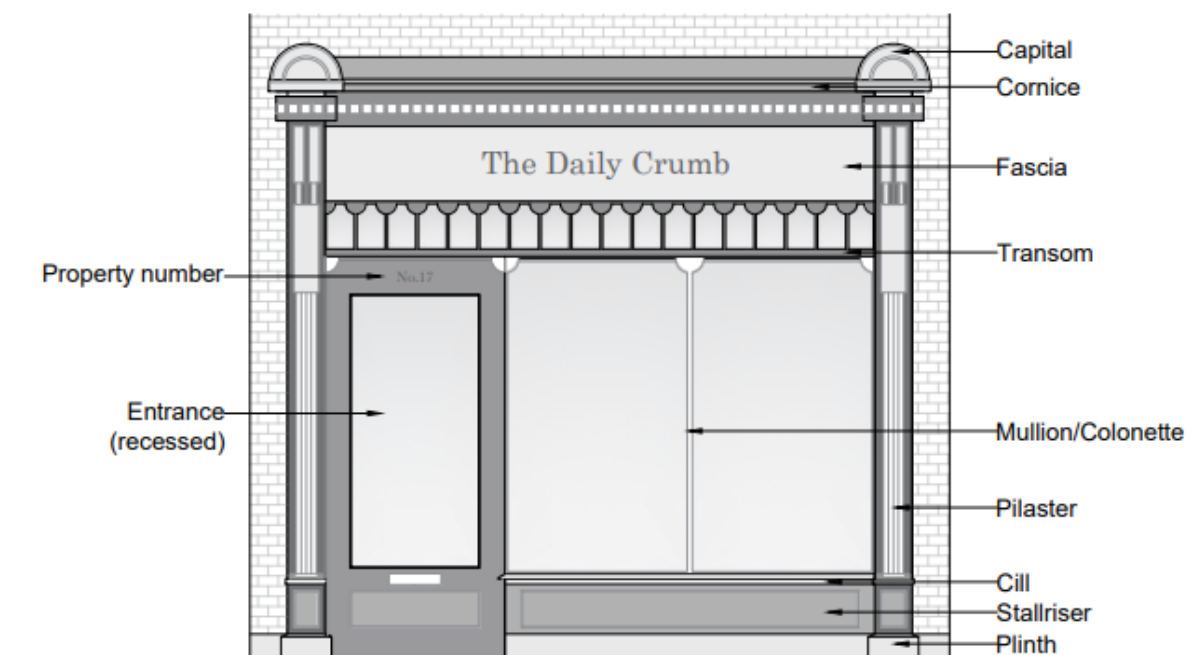
- 4.10 Worcester City Council supports the principle of developing shopfronts within the railway arches located within the city centre. This is consistent with paragraph 125 of the NPPF in that planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings in areas such as railway infrastructure and regeneration on the principles of sustainable development.
- 4.11 Any new shopfronts and signage within the railway arches should aim to retain the character of the arch overall, and to be visually sympathetic and not to detract from the arches. New or altered frontages should be recessed and of a lightweight, glazed style to maintain the expression of the arch, to activate the frontage and allow views into the retail premises during trading hours. Where possible, a cohesive design approach should be followed that ensures that shopfront proposals are sympathetic to the design of neighbouring arches.
- 4.12 Additionally, any Air Conditioning units, flues and Mechanical and Electrical plant should be designed to be concealed within the internal environment of the arch, with external ventilation grills sensitively located and designed to avoid visual dominance of these features.



Image 16 Shop frontages within Railway Arches

4.2 Part 2 – Component elements of a shopfront

- 4.13 Traditionally a shopfront contains some key architectural elements and features that when taken as a whole, form an attractive design framework. The following section looks at each of these in turn, and these are highlighted in the following diagram:



Graphic 2 A Traditional Shop Front

- **Blind Box** – Originally used to conceal a roller blind, now used to hide lights within a fascia.
- **Console/Bracket** – Sometimes the pilasters are topped by a console or bracket. These frame the fascia and the blind box.
- **Fascia** – The fascia is the primary place that a shop displays its sign.
- **Pilasters** – Frame the shopfront vertically and are on either side of the windows providing visual support to the fascia.
- **Mullion** – Vertical pieces of timber that divide the window into smaller panes of glass.
- **Cill** – This tops the stallriser and both protects it and throws rain from it.
- **Stallriser** – The panel below the window that not only raises the window from the ground but also provides a visual base for the rest of the shopfront.
- **Transoms** – The horizontal divisions used to divide large expanses of glass.
- **Cornice** – Provides a horizontal divide between the shopfront and the upper floors.
- **Pilaster** – Provides vertical framing to the shopfront and provide visual support to the fascia and upper floors. They are a traditional building feature designed with a base and capital and can also establish a visual division between neighbouring buildings.
- **Threshold** – The recessed entrance lobby leading to the door that allows for more window display area. Often these areas have floor tiling, sometimes in a mosaic pattern.

- 4.14 When considering upgrading a shopfront, looking at the potential opportunities that already exist within the current design is strongly recommended. The re-use of existing features is often more sustainable and can be more cost effective than completely renewing the shopfront. It is also less likely that planning permission will be required for this type of upgrade.
- 4.15 Worcester does have some modern shopfronts, however it also retains many historic shopfronts which give the area identity and character, especially where original features have been retained such as pilasters, capitals, corbels, and cornices. If the building has these historic features they should be retained and not removed, damaged or obscured. These elements create an appropriate architectural frame that results in a well-proportioned design. Where needed, these features should be repaired and retained as part of any proposed alteration in order to preserve the character of the shopfront.
- 4.16 Many traditional shopfronts had recessed entrances which should be retained. These entrances served the purpose of providing increased window display areas and lend greater visual interest to the façades of these buildings. Some also had floor tiling, often in mosaic patterns, and bearing the names of former owners. Where such tiles and mosaics exist, they should be retained, and new shopfronts in the traditional style should incorporate these details. Measures to enclose recessed entrances out of hours to deter rough sleeping and antisocial behaviour should be well designed. The use of roller shutters in such instances is inappropriate, but gates can be used in some locations.



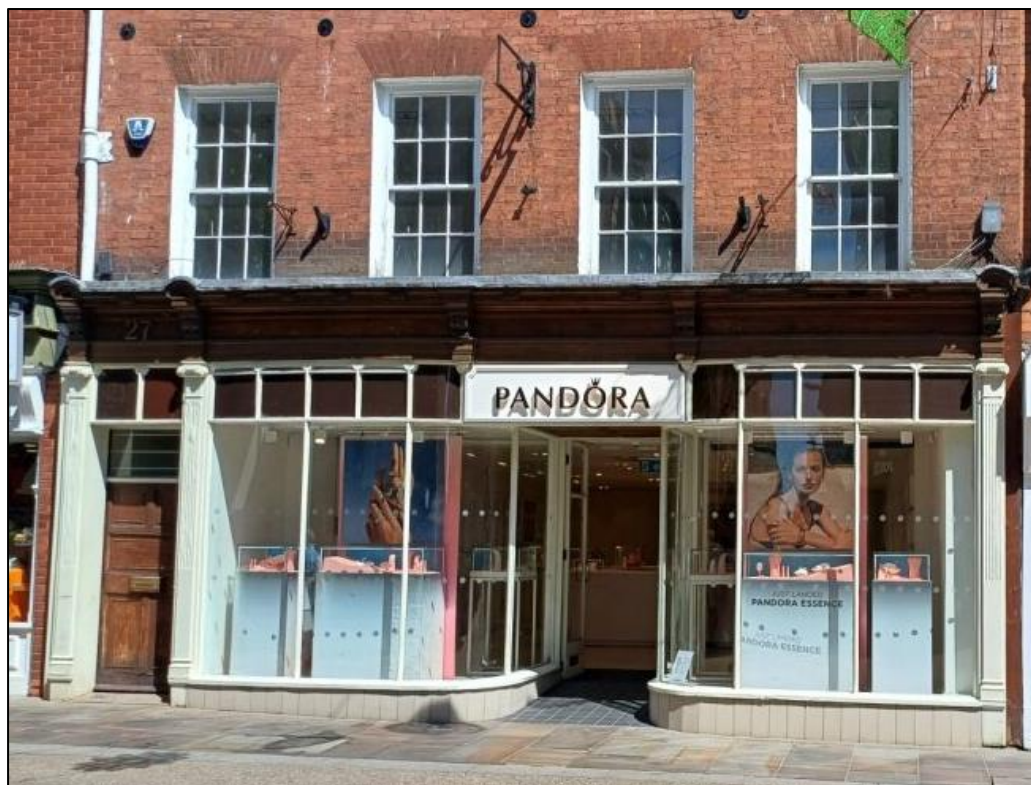
Images 17-18 Recessed entrances

- 4.17 Where there is an original shopfront, the City Council's preferred approach is refurbishment rather than replacement. It is likely that the original shopfront was manufactured from quality materials, and the proportions of the design were likely used to create balance across the shop and building as a whole. Replacement designs often lack detail, identity and character and therefore can have a negative impact on the building and the area as a whole. It is for this reason that the City Council will seek their retention and recommend repair rather than replacement when planning applications come forward.

4.2.1 Materials

- 4.18 Where shopfronts are located within historic or traditional buildings, construction materials should be sympathetic to those used within the building and the use of traditional and natural materials is strongly encouraged. This could include timber, stone, marble, slate, brass or cast iron. The materials will be informed by the age, style, and location of the building, but they must be appropriate to the building and show careful consideration to historical accuracy, local tradition, and be responsibly and sustainably sourced.
- 4.19 Historic shopfronts were usually constructed from hardwood and were painted. Some materials that are used in replacement shopfronts are not appropriate to historic shopfronts. These include modern materials such as plastic, aluminium, and acrylic sheeting.
- 4.20 The Council would expect modern shopfronts to also be constructed using high-quality materials. These materials may be timber, stone, brass, marble, stainless steel, or chrome, where this is appropriate. Staining of shopfronts should be avoided as it rarely achieves a quality finish. Modern materials such as perspex, aluminium and stainless steel should only be used where appropriate to the style of building and the surrounding location and informed by a HER search.

- 4.21 The sustainable sourcing of timber is encouraged, especially when it is used for shopfront replacement or repair. The general use of sustainable materials is encouraged, but it is important that whatever material is used that it corresponds to the overall character of the building. Quality materials should extend to the choice of architectural iron work such as that used in letterboxes, nameplates and kick plates. Inferior quality or inappropriate designs can lead to a negative impact on the overall appearance of the shopfront.





Images 19-22 Use of sympathetic materials within Shopfronts

4.2.2 Colour

- 4.22 Colours used in shopfront design should also be historically sympathetic and if possible accurate to the pallet of colours used historically. A wider consideration of adjacent buildings and the colours used is required so as to avoid any clashes and visual jarring. It is preferable that paint work is completed in a matt finish. Colours should normally be selected from a fairly traditional palette, but this still allows for a wide variety. Here are a range of colours that could be suitable: -

					
RAL 3004 Purple Red	RAL 5001 Green Blue	RAL 5020 Ocean Blue	RAL 6021 Pale Green	RAL 7037 Dusty Grey	RAL 5007 Brilliant Blue
					
RAL 9005 Jet Black	RAL 6034 Pastel Turquoise	RAL 3016 Coral Red	RAL 1020 Olive Yellow	RAL 1015 Light Ivory	RAL 1002 Sand Yellow

- 4.23 Many other colours are also considered historically sympathetic. The [RAL](#) range of conservation or heritage colours is particularly relevant for Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts and several paint companies provide a variety of colours based upon a heritage range.
- 4.24 There is no standard formula for shop front paint schemes. However, it is recommended for shopfronts to be painted a single colour, a secondary colour can sometimes be used to highlight decorative elements. Overly bright or garish colours are unlikely to be acceptable

within conservation areas or on heritage assets such as listed buildings, especially where these appear incongruous and detract from the historic character of a building or area. Restrained dark colours often work well as they can act as a good foil and strong frame for window displays

4.2.3 Shopfront fascia signs

- 4.25 Signs are an important way for businesses, old and new, to declare to the public that they are open for business, trading, and to communicate what goods or services they offer. However, over dominant or too brightly lit signage can be harmful to the character and appearance of the city and adversely affect its overall attractiveness. The use of LED dot matrix fascias are not considered acceptable and should be resisted. The size, design and style of lighting used on shopfronts should be carefully considered and the hours during which shops signs may be illuminated, may be controlled by condition, when planning permission is granted.
- 4.26 Fascia signs should appear as an integral part of the design of the shopfront and the building and should not dominate the façade. Fascia signs should not be overly large in comparison to the building and be of an appropriate scale and character with the rest of the shopfront. The fascia board should not be disproportionately deep with an excessive forward projection or conceal traditional features such as the first-floor windows or the corbel brackets; instead, it should sit comfortably on the building between the corbel brackets. As a guide, lettering should generally occupy no more than approximately three-eighths of the depth of the fascia. In most circumstances, individual letter heights should not exceed 300 mm. Larger lettering will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that it would not harm the character or appearance of the building or the surrounding area.
- 4.27 The depth of the fascia should not normally be greater than one quarter of the height from pavement level to the bottom of the fascia. The fascia should span the entire width of the shopfront. When the shop occupies adjacent units, the fascia should be divided with the use of pilasters on boundary lines.
- 4.28 In general, fascia signs in conservation areas should be constructed from timber with hand painted lettering, as this is the traditional material for shop fronts. These signs should not be made of glossy acrylic or plastic. Hand-painted fascia boards are usually appropriate for historic or traditional buildings, especially on listed buildings.
- 4.29 Fascia boards should contain the name of the business and preferably the building street number. Repetition of information or excess wording is to be avoided, as this creates a confused and cluttered appearance. Fascia signage should avoid large images as part of the advertisement. They should also avoid a combination of exposed fixtures such as wiring, telecommunication equipment, CCTV or intruder alarms.
- 4.30 For traditional shopfronts, the most appropriate fascia signs are likely to be hand-painted and should be created by an experienced sign writer in order to achieve a professional appearance and finish. The lettering used on these signs should be of an appropriate style and size to allow the sign to integrate into the overall design of the shopfront, and building as a whole.
- 4.31 An alternative approach is for individual letters to be mounted on to the fascia, fixed by spacers. The type of materials and the details of the lettering should be chosen according to the design of the shopfront and the historic nature of the building. The materials of the

lettering should be high quality and a matt finish. Glossy acrylic or plastic will not be acceptable on listed buildings or in a conservation area and should generally be avoided.







Images 23-26 Examples of well preserved and appropriately maintained shopfronts

Not Permitted	Permitted
Internally illuminated signs, swan-neck, and other projecting lights	Signs constructed from timber with hand-painted lettering
Upward shining lights	Lettering to detail business name and street number
Boxy, deep fascia signs which dominate a shopfront or sit proud of the fascia board, pilasters, or console brackets	Signs of a size that sits comfortably on the building between corbel brackets
Fascia signs made of shiny plastic	Signs with a satin or matt finish
Oversized/acrylic/plastic lettering	Signs lit by individual halo illumination
Fascias coloured in overly bright or garish shades that would not normally be considered acceptable in the historic setting of a conservation area	Signs illuminated by trough light if concealed within fascia/blind box

Table 1 Summary of fascia signs

4.2.4 Projecting signs and hanging signs

- 4.32 An important feature of historic high streets is traditional hanging signs, however they must be designed so they interact in a positive way to the age and style of the surroundings including the shopfront and building itself. Ideally, these signs should be symbolic trade signs that depict the business carried out on the premises.
- 4.33 Traditional signs should be constructed using timber and be hand painted. The use of glossy acrylic or plastic is not appropriate and should be avoided. There should be a focus on achieving high quality design and construction and the method of hanging should also be traditional with appropriate brackets that correspond with the building and the positioning of the sign should also be considered in the wider context of the building, but ideally the sign will be either adjacent to the fascia sign or be at the first-floor level.





Images 27-31 Examples of high-quality well-designed hanging signs

- 4.34 Only one hanging sign will be permitted on a single elevation.
- 4.35 In a traditional setting, the modern projecting box signs are considered to be visually obtrusive, bulky and are likely to have a negative impact on the streetscape, especially in historic areas. Projecting box signs will not be permitted in conservation areas or on listed buildings.
- 4.36 Traditional projecting signs were not illuminated therefore new projecting signs should not be illuminated. A depth of 50mm is considered appropriate and should not be exceeded. The wider context of the building and surrounding streetscape needs to be considered when

considering the size of the sign itself. The sign should sit comfortably on the building, the sign should not dominate the building and should not significantly stand out in terms of the streetscape overall. A maximum size of 600mm x 400mm is considered appropriate but a smaller sign may be required dependent on the wider context.

Projecting Signs – A Summary

To be Avoided	Likely to be Permitted
- Internally illuminated signs - More than one sign per building - Acrylic or plastic signs - Signs over 50mm deep - Box-style signs mounted directly on to the building	- One sign per building - Constructed from wood - Displayed on a metal hanging bracket - Size of sign is suitable scale with the building - Signs should be no more than 600mm x 400mm

Table 2- Summary of projecting signs

4.2.5 Illumination of signs or advertisements

- 4.37 Illumination of shopfronts and signs may be desired, especially when wishing to attract night-time economy, however some illumination may have a negative effect on historic areas. As mentioned above in the context of heritage assets such as listed buildings and within conservation areas, external illumination of signs and advertisements may be considered inappropriate and will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that this makes a positive contribution to the area.
- 4.38 Internally illuminated fascias, lettering and projecting box signs will not be permitted within conservation areas or on listed buildings. Illumination in the form of projecting swan necks, trough lights and spotlights can adversely affect the character of a historic shopfront by obscuring historic features and giving the façade an untidy appearance.



Image 32 Example of appropriate Illuminated signs

- 4.39 Creative design should be used in order to integrate illumination of signs and building facias in a more discrete and sympathetic way. The preferred method is high quality halo illumination which provides a lower-level wash of light around individual lettering.
- 4.40 Projecting trough lights are difficult to integrate satisfactorily into a shopfront design and should not be used if they cannot be sited unobtrusively. Trough lighting may be acceptable, but their acceptability will vary according to the type of shopfront and whether lighting can be hidden within the fascia blind box. The Council will not permit the illumination of signs where a high standard of design cannot be achieved.
- 4.41 Internally illuminated shop window displays may be a suitable alternative to illuminated signs. These types of displays can be an effective means of advertising goods or services during and outside shopping hours and can provide good levels of street illumination. Neon signs will not be supported where these require advertisement consent.

4.2.6 Windows, signs and stickers

- 4.42 Hand-painted signs on the inside of window glass can be an attractive means of providing signage and advertising, especially where the design of the fascia does not provide space for the name of the business. These should be carefully designed and created by an experienced signwriter so as not to give a cluttered, busy or untidy effect. Signage should respect the building on which it is set and should contribute positively to the street scene, and generally not extend beyond the fascia. Frosted window stickers with signage incorporated may also be a suitable option where advertising space is limited, but only if this is proportionate to the side of the shopfront display window and maintains some active frontage.



Images 33-34 Window glass signs

- 4.43 The window design needs to be carefully considered as bright window stickers, illuminated signs and posters in windows can make a shop look cluttered and unwelcoming, and can also have a negative impact in the wider context of the building and the street scene. De-cluttering the front of a shop can also significantly improve its appearance and attractiveness to shoppers.
- 4.44 Window signs will not be permitted on upper floors, except for businesses operating solely on upper floors.
- 4.45 Where adjacent shopfronts are of similar scale and appearance, a consistent height and scale of signage should be established across adjacent shopfronts where possible.
- 4.46 For windows, solid frontages will be discouraged, and shopfronts should be largely glazed to maintain a window display. The layout and subdivision of windows should correspond to the overall character of the building and neighbouring shopfronts and be original designs retained if possible. Shopfront design should also respect the character and relate well to neighbouring properties.
- 4.47 The excessive use of 'A' boards can create additional clutter in the street scene and should be avoided. Where they are permitted such signs should respect the building and street scene and use materials and colours which reflect those of the shopfront. "A" board signs should always be sited where they will not present a potential hazard to pedestrians.

5. Shopfront Security

- 5.1 The council recognises the need for shop owners to ensure the security and safety of their shops and staff, however the installation of some security grilles and shutters can have a negative impact both on the safety and the attractiveness of a street. In some extreme cases there may be a need for higher levels of protection, and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.1 Acceptable examples of shop security

- 5.2 The table below outlines the different types of shop security that can be installed and will be encouraged as acceptable use of security measures.

Security glass	This is laminated and can remain intact even when broken. Almost indistinguishable from ordinary glass, it is considered a desirable option to retain the historic character of shopfronts. Security glass can provide protection against theft and act as a deterrent against repeated vandalism. The City Council encourages the use of security glass rather than grilles or shutters, especially in relation to listed buildings and buildings in a conservation area.	
Internal grilles	These are less visually harmful to the streetscape and have many of the advantages of external grilles over solid shutters. Internal grilles can be fitted behind the shop window and are retractable. These are particularly useful in listed buildings and in conservation areas. When used in conjunction with security glass, these grilles normally provide a theft-proof shopfront security system whilst allowing visibility into the shop. This is the preferred security method and will usually be permitted, subject to the design and colour of the grille.	

Alarms or CCTV cameras	Although these may improve security and act as a deterrent, they can be unattractive and can detract from the appearance of the shopfront. They should be incorporated as unobtrusively as possible into the façades of the buildings. They should not be located on important architectural features.	
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5.2 Unacceptable examples of shop security

External Grilles

- 5.3 External grilles should be avoided as they will very often have a negative effect on the appearance of the building and the street scene, undermining the traditional character of the shopfront. If external grilles are considered to be the only practicable solution, they could be either demountable or on a roller. If the grille is on a roller, the box into which it retracts should be recessed behind the fascia board.
- 5.4 The grille and box should be installed and operated only within the shop opening and must not cover any part of pilasters, columns, or fascia. When intended for use on new shopfronts, the grille and box should form an integral part of the overall design and be hidden behind the fascia. Care must be taken to see that this does not end in overly deep or projecting fascia boards. External grilles will not generally be approved within a conservation area or on listed buildings.
- 5.5 Where a grille is considered suitable, the grille itself should be of high-quality material such as brass. Otherwise, the grille should have a suitably coloured, powder-coated finish rather than raw aluminium. These can be acceptable if they are open in nature, designed to complement the original façade's features and when the attachment brackets are designed sensitively. However, as they are removable, storage space will be required for them when the shop is open.



Image 35- Example of an external grille

Solid Shutters

- 5.6 These will not be acceptable where they would have a significantly harmful effect on the character of area, the street scene and the individual shopfront. Solid shutters often make window-shopping impossible outside normal shopping hours and make the streets darker by cutting out display lighting. Solid shutters can adversely affect the amenity of an area and lead to intimidating environments for pedestrians due to the lack of surveillance and lighting. External shutter boxes also add to the visual clutter of the streetscape. All effort should be made to ensure that the shop window display remains visible both during the day and at night as this adds to the vibrancy of a shopping and commercial area.
- 5.7 Solid shutters discourage pedestrian activity; they contribute to a sense of vacancy and can have a negative effect on the night-time economy by reducing active frontage and making places feel less safe.

6 Blinds and Canopies



Images 36-38 Examples of more traditional shop canopies

- 6.1 Traditional pull-out blinds are still in place on some older shopfronts within Worcester, and there is a preference that these are retained, rather than replacing them with more modern blinds or canopies. In a historic context the traditional pull-out blinds are considered to be more appropriate, they can also be attractive and functional.
- 6.2 Newly installed blinds should not obscure architectural features and ideally, the ability to be retracted into a blind box above the fascia is desirable. The canopies and blinds should enhance rather than detract from the character of a streetscape and to be of a proportionate size to the shopfront and considerate of the building as a whole. They should not act as the primary sign for the shop, with any lettering be kept to a minimum.
- 6.3 Modern plastic, balloon or Dutch style canopies are not appropriate on traditional buildings and shops within conservation areas.
- 6.4 Blinds and canopies should be made of canvas, not glossy plastic. The colour of the blind or canopy should correspond to the colours and materials of the shopfront and fascia. Overly bright and garish colours should generally be avoided. Colours should respect the character of the building which the canopy is set upon as well as the overall street scene and retain the shopfront's open character to avoid wholly enclosing the space.

7 Cash Machines

- 7.1 When considering the positioning of cash machines, it is more appropriate for them to be located in internal lobbies of buildings that feature historic shopfronts, however if this is unachievable the least obtrusive location on the façade is preferred.
- 7.2 When the machines must be located on a façade, they should be incorporated as much as possible into the design of the shopfront and not to detract from the character of the building. Cash machines in these areas should be simple in design and not have excessive advertising, signage, and illumination. Measures should be taken to ensure that they are mounted appropriately for use by individuals with disabilities. Although the use of cash is in a general decline, having available ATM machines within main retail centres is still an important facility for readily available use.



Image 39- Example of a Recessed ATM

8 Banner Advertisements

- 8.1 Advertisement consent is required for the installation of banners. Fixing or placing of banners on any building within a conservation area or listed building is not likely to be acceptable.
- 8.2 Banners may provide effective publicity for local charitable, cultural, and educational events and be erected for limited periods of time but will not be considered suitable and acceptable for commercial advertising.
- 8.3 Flag advertisement outside or attached to retail and commercial premises will not be considered as an appropriate method of advertising.



Images 40 Example of inappropriate banner advertisement

- 8.4 Vinyl displays within shop windows where these do not benefit from deemed consent under the advertisement regulations, will be resisted. The use of vinyl displays should be kept to a minimum; they can detract from the character and appearance of the area and appearance of the building. Advertisements, window transfers and posters should not obscure more than 20% of the overall shop window and display.



Images 41- Example of excessive use of vinyl advertisement.

9 Access for all

- 9.1 Wherever possible, entrances to shops should be at pavement level to allow easy access for people with wheelchairs and pushchairs. Design proposals for new shopfronts must take this into account, wherever practicable.
- 9.2 Widths and safety standards of doors and the positioning of door handles and letter boxes must be designed so that they be fully accessible and legible to everyone, including people with disabilities, older people and people with pushchairs. These should all comply with the provisions contained within the Equality Act (2010), which included those introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which it replaced. Doors should be visually distinguishable from the rest of the shopfront.
- 9.3 Where access cannot be provided at street level, a ramp should be provided if possible. The ramp could either be within an external entrance recess or within the shop itself. Handrails may also need to be provided.
- 9.4 Where appropriate, encouragement may be given to the alteration of existing shopfronts to meet the above requirements. However, if a shopfront is traditional or historic, it may not be appropriate or possible to allow these types of modifications. Any installation of elements to improve the environmental performance of the building must be designed sympathetically.
- 9.5 If alterations neither preserve nor enhance the character of a historic building or conservation area, then more creative solutions may be required. Listed building legislation may restrict such work and discussions should be undertaken with the council's Planning Department.



Images 42- Example of Pavement level shop entrance

10 Alarms, CCTV, Satellite Dishes & Antennae

- 10.1. Worcester is generally a very safe city. Where security is a consideration and intruder alarms are necessary, any alarm box should be located where it does not adversely impact on the design quality of the shopfront and the character and appearance of the street scene and be of a colour which is not visually intrusive.

11 Historic Shopfronts

- 11.1. Any harm or loss of an historic shopfront will require clear and convincing justification, as outlined within paragraphs 213-214 of the NPPF. Historic means those in, or close to, an 'as built' condition, and can include ones from the 18th, 19th, or 20th centuries. In Worcester City Centre such shopfronts will often be within a conservation area and may also be a listed building: in both instances the legislation governing these designations will be used to control any proposed historic shopfront loss or alteration.

11.1 Listed Buildings

- 11.2. There are 698 listed buildings in Worcester. Listed buildings are those that have been identified as being of special architectural or historic interest and have been added to the National Register compiled by the Secretary of State. If a building is listed, the entire building is considered listed, not just the façade. Further guidance can be found [on is my property listed](#) Worcester City Council webpage.

11.2 Locally Listed Buildings

- 11.3. Historic England note that identifying and managing those parts of the historic environment valued by local communities is an essential element of the heritage protection system. Local designation allows for the management of local heritage through the planning system and provides an opportunity to engage with local communities. It encompasses both individual assets identified by local listing right through to areas of local character represented by conservation areas. [Worcester's Local List](#)

11.3 Conservation Areas

- 11.4. There are [19 Designated Conservation Areas](#) in Worcester that cover the City Centre Foregate Street, St Johns, plus outlying areas.
- 11.5. Works to non-listed buildings within a conservation area may require planning permission if one or more of the following is involved: demolition, change of colour to external shopfronts, new shopfronts, installation of external fittings, or advertising boards.

11.4 Conservation Officer Advice

- 11.6. If proposals will require alterations to a listed building, locally listed building or a building within a conservation area, it is advisable to seek advice from the city council's Conservation Officer at an early stage. If this leads to the need for an application for planning permission and/or listed building consent and advertisement consent, please be aware that time will need to be allowed for this to be considered before work can begin. In this way, any danger of enforcement action or prosecution will be avoided. The city council offers a formal pre-application service and early discussions are advised with the Planning Department.

12 Applying for Permission

- 12.1. Most alterations to a shopfront will require planning permission. Owners of retail and commercial buildings are therefore advised to check with the city council before carrying out any work to an existing shopfront or the facade of the building.
- 12.2. If a building is Listed, Locally Listed or within a Conservation Area, an application for planning permission or listed building consent will need to be supported by a Heritage Statement that describes the heritage significance of any heritage assets affected by proposed alterations, and the potential impact of the proposals on that significance.
- 12.3. Separate applications may be required for Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent, Advertisement Consent and Building Regulation Approval, as appropriate.
- 12.4. The city council offers a [pre-application service](#) providing advice and guidance regarding applications within designated conservation areas and listed buildings, and it is recommended this is undertaken.
- 12.5. Application forms are available to download from the City Council's website, please see the Planning Application Process section at [Planning Application Process - Worcester City Council](#). Certain demolition work may also require Building Regulation Approval and Listed Building Consent.
- 12.6. Approval may be needed under Building Regulations to carry out many types of building work. Such approval is highly likely to be relevant for work to shopfronts, and advice should be sought from South Worcestershire Building Control.
- 12.7. If in any doubt, please contact the city council's [Development Management Team](#) and South [Worcestershire Building Control](#).
- 12.8. Further information can be found on the [Worcester City Council website](#).

13. Appendix – A Glossary of Terms

Architrave	A recessed plane of one or more horizontal mouldings whose function is to 'finish off' the bottom of the fascia
Awning	A sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a show window or doorway
Awning/Blind Box	An area integral to the shopfront surround often behind the fascia, but found elsewhere such as around the cornice, containing a retractable blind
Bressummer	A timber beam across a wide opening, with entablature in front. Steel girders are now used for this purpose
Canopy	A hood suspended or projected over a door or window
Cill (or Sill)	A horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame often timber but sometimes granite or bronze or with a brass cill plate
Clerestory	A high-level glazed panel above the transom
Corbel	A block of masonry or material such as brick or wood which projects from a wall and supports a beam or a feature. A corbel may be carved or moulded
Console (bracket)	A bracket which frames or contains the end of the fascia panel. Provides a key element in maintaining the vertical rhythm of the streetscape
Cornice	A decorative moulded projection above the fascia providing weather protection and giving a strong line at the top of the shopfront
Downlights	Lighting typically recessed into a projecting cornice to light a fascia board downwards
Dutch Canopy	A hooded shopfront canopy, popular in continental Europe
Edge-lit LED lighting	An edge-lit profile containing LED strip applied to optically clear materials such as glass, Perspex, plexiglass, or many other acrylics, framed by so that light travels through the clear material
Entablature	The upper part of a Classical architectural order, which rests upon the columns. Consists of an architrave, frieze (or fascia) and cornice
Façade	The whole frontage of the building including shopfront and upper floors
Fanlight	A window above a door
Fluting	Shallow grooves running vertically along a surface, on a column or pilaster
Frieze	The band or flat strip of an entablature, between the cornice and architrave
Glazing bar	A metal or wooden member in a window which form the framework dividing individual panes of glass
Grille	An 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	Used for back-lit letters to create a glow of light around the letters by illuminating the wall surface from within the letterform
Hanging sign	A double-sided sign attached by a bracket; visible from two directions
Jamb	A side face of any projecting element, such as a pilaster
Laminated glass	Two pieces of glass containing a plastic interlayer. If broken, the interlayer prevents a large entry from being created
LED	A Light Emitting Diode, a semiconductor device that produces light when an electric current is passed through it
Luminance	The amount of light emitted from, passed through, or reflected off an object. It is measured using candela per square metre: the concentration of luminous intensity per unit area in a specific path. Luminance is not brightness, it is something that can be measured with a meter; it is objective, whereas brightness is subjective, perceived by the human eye and cannot be measured
Manifestation	Markings indicating the presence of large uninterrupted areas of transparent glazing where a person might assume direct access between locations which are effectively separated by glazing. This can take the form of broken or solid lines

	or patterns at appropriate heights and intervals, typically at 850-1000mm and repeated at 1400-1600mm
Moulding	A continuous projection or groove used decoratively to throw shadow or rainwater off a wall
Mullion	A vertical bar that separates panes of glass in a window into sections
Oriel window	A style of circular window the use of which dates to the Georgian period
Pedestal	The projecting base to any structure, such as a pilaster or column
Pilaster	A traditional shopfront dividing column between adjoining buildings, designed with a base and capital, which supports the console and fascia
Plinth	Found at the base of the pilaster in a traditional shopfront often with a decorative moulding, or chamfer at the top
Projecting sign	A double-sided sign that protrudes from the side of a building and is visible from two directions. Also referred to as 'blade' or 'flag-mounted' sign
Reversibility	The concept of work to a building or artefact being carried out in such a way that it can be reversed at some future time, without any severe damage having been done
Soffit	The underside of an architectural structure
Stallriser	A vertical surface giving protection at ground level to the shopfront, providing a solid base. Typically, they are made of polished granite, marble, tile, or wood and provide a sill for glazing
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
Swan (neck) lighting	Curved single metal lights that shine light typically on to a fascia board
Threshold	A strip of wood or stone forming the bottom of a doorway. Maybe decorative with a mosaic showing the name of a previous occupant
Tracery	Ribs which divide the top of a stone window and are formed into patterns
Transom	A horizontal bar dividing the upper section of a window or panel which may be of wood, stone, or metal
Trough lighting	An enclosed lighting unit that is supported on brackets and shines light externally – typically on to a fascia board below
Ventilator	An aperture, typically a grill in traditional shopfronts, for ventilating a room or other space
Veranda(h)	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 veranda's face at the corners, which otherwise will be completely open at the front and sides. Structural posts often contain decorative capitals and ornamental brackets
Window	Glazing of a size appropriate to the design of the building. Over large expanses of glass are expensive to replace
Window graphics	Printed vinyl designs applied to the inside of shop windows. Also known as window decals/films/stickers or vinyl

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