

Subject: Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide **Status:** For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17th November 2010

Report of: Planning Manager

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: No

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the adoption, as a Supplementary Planning Document, of the Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Delivering quality Services to our customers
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Risks for the Council associated with adopting the Shopfront Design Guide include –

3.1.1 The possibility that existing and new businesses will be discouraged from investing by the perception that the guidance is too restrictive, or adds costs. This risk could be mitigated by providing appropriate advice.

3.1.2 Possible additional pressures on planning, conservation and enforcement resources within the Council.

3.2 Risks for the Council associated with not adopting the Shopfront Design Guide include –

- 3.2.1 The continuation of bad practice in the design of shopfronts across the Borough with consequent negative impacts on the appearance and, potentially, the value and attractiveness to new investors of commercial frontages.
- 3.2.2 Reinforcing negative perceptions about the Borough through failing to address quality issues in the design of commercial frontages.
- 3.2.2 Possible loss of investment to neighbouring councils which provide, through guidance documents, a degree of certainty in the planning system and a design standard for commercial establishments.
- 3.2.3 Continuing lack of guidance for shop owners within the planning process leading to uncertainty in planning shopfront investment.
- 3.2.4 Continuing uncertainty in the planning process leading to appeals against planning decisions and associated costs for the council and applicants.
- 3.2.5 Continuing lack of certainty and consistency in the use of enforcement powers by the council to control the design of shopfronts.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 The policy context for the proposed Shopfront Design Guide is provided by both national and local policy documents. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS 1) refers to the importance of the environment in determining quality of life and the role planning guidance can play: 'Planning should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space' (para 18).
- 4.2 PPS 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth refers, in Policy EC 4.1, to the need for local planning authorities to proactively plan the promotion of competitive town centre environments by (amongst other things) 'taking measures to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the established character and diversity of their town centres'
- 4.3 Policy DC1 of the Rossendale Local Plan (Saved Policies) sets out as a general requirement that '...all development proposals will be expected to provide a high standard of building and landscape design, to contribute to environmental quality, and not to be detrimental to existing conditions in the surrounding area.'
- 4.4 Policy HP.5 of the Local Plan provides the most comprehensive local policy position on shopfronts, stating that 'The Council will seek to retain shop fronts of architectural or historic interest and ensure that new shop fronts respect the character of the building to which they are attached and the townscape in general' The policy goes on to list basic design criteria.
- 4.5 Cabinet have approved a guidance leaflet on the 'Conservation Areas of Rossendale' which provides (page 11) limited guidance on appropriate

shopfront design approaches in Conservation Areas, including the design of security shutters.

- 4.6 The need for more comprehensive and consistent guidance on the subject of shopfront design was highlighted by an Inspector's comments following rejection of an appeal. The case (2009/0063) referred to an application for security shutters; in his comments the inspector draws attention to the possibility that poor advice may have been given by the council on previous occasions, contributing to the negative environmental effects resulting from inappropriate shutter designs.
- 4.7 The document proposed for adoption in this report, the 'Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide', responds to the need for clear, consistent illustrated guidance for owners and others with an interest in the design of commercial shop fronts. It is designed to apply to both designated heritage assets (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) and properties outside these designations. Where a greater degree of design control applies, this is made clear in the text.
- 4.8 The guide encourages good practice in the design of new shop fronts and the improvement of existing frontages. It provides advice on the principles of good design and recommendations on issues such as the detailing of fascias, signage and security measures. Its objective is to encourage design practices which meet the commercial requirements of local businesses whilst also providing shop fronts that are in keeping with the character, scale and appearance of Rossendale's townscape.
- 4.9 The guidance will apply for development control purposes from the date of adoption by Cabinet. It will not apply retrospectively to properties where planning permissions have been obtained prior to the adoption of the guidance. Where shopfronts have been installed and required permissions have not been obtained, or are being applied for retrospectively, the guidance will apply in those cases following its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.10 Following consultation, any minor changes will be agreed by the Business Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 Any financial implications are commented upon in the body of the report.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 Any legal implications are commented upon in the body of the report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 There are no specific human resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Although the recession places financial and competitive pressures on businesses, it is considered that there are compelling reasons to provide guidance to business owners on the design of shopfronts in the Borough. Improving the standard of design will enhance the shopping environment in Rossendale and provide more certainty in the planning system for investors. It will assist pre-application discussions and reduce the likelihood of appeals.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That the Cabinet approves the Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide for the purposes of consultation.
- 9.3 Following consideration of the comments received during the period of consultation, to authorise the Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document subject to minor amendments to the policy being delegated to the Business Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 In addition to the statutory officer consultees, council officers in Development Control, Regeneration, Planning Enforcement, and Forward Planning have been consulted on the draft document.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required No
Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No
Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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No background papers