

Subject:	Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Policy Overview and Scrutiny	Date:	13 June 2011
Report of:	Director of Business	Portfolio Holder:	Regeneration
Key Decision:	No <input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: Yes
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Policy Overview and Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document, the approval of the final document to follow a period of consultation and to be delegated to the Business Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
1.2	That Policy Overview and Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet that all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 For members to make comment and recommend to Cabinet the adoption, as a Supplementary Planning Document, of the Rossendale Shopfront Design Guide, the approval of the final document to follow a period of consultation and to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A clean and green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all.
 - **A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
 - **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

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

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

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

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- The lack of good 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 will remain.
- Addressing quality issues in the design of commercial frontages will not be addressed.
- 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.
- A lack of guidance for shop owners within the planning process leading to uncertainty in planning shopfront investment.
- Uncertainty in the planning process leading to appeals against planning decisions and associated costs for the council and applicants.
- The potential for a lack of certainty and consistency in the use of enforcement powers by the council to control the design of shopfronts.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 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).
- 5.2 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'
- 5.3 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.'
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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.

- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 Following consultation, any minor changes will be agreed by the Business Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. The guidance will apply for development control purposes from the date of adoption by Cabinet for all applications received from this date.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

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

7. MONITORING OFFICER

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

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

- 8.1 There are no specific human resource implications.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 9.1 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.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 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.

Appendices	
Appendix A	Shopfront Design Guide