Chapter 1: Introduction

What is the purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document? 3

Chapter 2: Policy Context

National policy 4
Local policy 5
Design and planning applications 7
Do I need permission? 7
Further advice and contacts 7

Chapter 3: Importance of Good Shop Front Design

Importance of good shop front design 8

Chapter 4: Shop Front Components and Proportions

Basic shop front components 10
Other shop front components 12

Chapter 5: Shop Front Style

Shop front style 14

Chapter 6: Materials

Materials 15

Chapter 7: Shop Front Colour

Shop front colour 17

Chapter 8: Signage

Fascia signs 20
Hanging and projecting signs 22
Signage on shop windows and doors 23
Chapter 9: Security

Security 24

Chapter 10: Lighting

Lighting 27

Appendix 1: Permissions and Consents 28
Appendix 2: National Planning Policy, Guidance and Contacts 30
1. Introduction

What is the purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document?

1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared to support and provide additional guidance for the national and local planning policies such as the Local Plan that relate to design of and alteration to shop fronts and signage. This SPD complements the Design Quality in New Development SPD which provides the overarching design guidance for Knowsley and applies to all new development affecting shop fronts and associated signage within the Borough including changes of use.

1.2 The status of this Shop Front and Signage Design document as SPD means that it is a material consideration in planning decisions. Its aim is to support local and national design policies by giving guidance on how proposals can achieve good design that is appropriate to its context.

1.3 The full range of documents comprising the Local Plan is available online at www.knowsley.gov.uk/localplan.

1.4 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 do not require a Sustainability Appraisal to be carried out on SPDs. However the potential requirement for a Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) and/or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA based upon any environmental concerns introduced or influenced by the SPD must be considered. In response, SEA / HRA screening documents were prepared to accompany each of the draft SPDs, and concluded that a full HRA and / or SEA assessment is not required in each instance. This conclusion has been subject to consultation with Natural England and Natural Resources Wales as the appropriate statutory nature conservation bodies.
Chapter 3

2. Policy Context

2.1 This Supplementary Planning Document has been guided by planning policy at national and local level as set out in this section. It seeks to guide planning applicants in understanding how Knowsley MBC interprets this policy for individual development proposals.

National Policy

2.2 National government planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This places design quality at the forefront of the national agenda for planning as the following paragraphs demonstrate:

“The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”

(NPPF para. 56)

“Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit; ...
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

(NPPF para. 58)

“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

(NPPF para. 64)

“Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment. Control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning authority’s detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.”

(NPPF para. 67)
2.3 The NPPF was published in 2012. It can be viewed at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

2.4 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) complements the NPPF in providing general design guidance relating to planning objectives and the principles of good design. The NPPG is a ‘live’ on-line document. Its guidance is subject to periodic update. The NPPG was published in 2014 and can be found at: http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/

Local Policy

2.5 Knowsley’s spatial planning strategy is set out in a number of different documents which together make up the development plan.

2.6 The Local Plan includes a ‘Policies Map’ and a ‘Core Strategy’, which sets out a vision, key objectives and strategic planning policies, as well as a range of other documents including ‘Supplementary Planning Documents’. The Council’s Local Plan: Core Strategy is timetabled for adoption in 2015.

2.7 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to complement the Local Plan and is consistent with policies set out in the emerging Local Plan: Core Strategy, in particular policies CS2, CS19, and CS20.

2.8 The diagram on the following page indicates how the design requirements of the Local Plan policies are translated to a range of different SPDs and best practice guidance.

2.9 This SPD also supports policies from the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which was adopted by the Council in 2006. It includes "saved" policies CP3, S1, S9, S10, DQ1, and DQ2 that relate to shop front design and security. This SPD is intended to complement these UDP policies until they are replaced as part of the Local Plan.
Chapter 3

Overarching Design Objectives

- Increase connectivity and accessibility
- Tackle crime and antisocial behavior
- Reduce carbon emissions and waste
- Protect and enhance green spaces/increase leisure opportunities
- Improve the quality of the built environment
- Strengthen community cohesion
- Improve the quality of shopping and the leisure economy
- Encourage employment generating development
- Creation of a health promoting environment

Local Plan Core Strategy Key Design Principles

- Select locations that reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and enable people as far as possible to meet their needs locally (CS 2)
- Include safe, convenient routes of movement with priority for walking, cycling and public transport to meet the access needs for all users, particularly less mobile people (CS 19)
- Recognise environmental limits, protect and enhance environmental assets, enhance local character and promote quality of place (CS 2)
- Respond to and integrate positive characteristics of immediate surroundings, including materials, scale, mass, form, layout, alignment and density (CS 19)
- Maximise opportunities for regeneration of previously developed land, including derelict or unsightly areas to improve the image of Knowsley (CS 2)
- Maintain a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, whilst minimising crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour (CS 12)
- Make the most efficient use of available resources and infrastructure (CS 2)
- Integrate effectively with existing development and link to existing shopping and service provision (CS 19)
- Sustain and promote biodiversity, whilst preserving the character and function of historic environments and valued landscapes (CS 6)
- Address the challenges of climate change and future changes in social, economic and environmental priorities (CS 19)
- Consider provision of landmark buildings and additional detailing at and adjacent to main gateways, movement corridors, town centres and strategic regeneration opportunities (CS 19)
- Create spaces and places as a focal point, accommodating social interaction and active lifestyles, including high quality public realm and open spaces, public art and landscaping which promotes biodiversity (CS 19)

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

- Design Quality in New Development SPD
- Getting the movement framework right
- Promoting a positive image
- Placing buildings
- Mixing uses
- Density and form
- Landscape and public realm
- Sustainability in design
- Designing out crime
- Public art
- Built heritage and conservation
- Importance of local assessment

Development Specific SPDs
- Householder Development SPD
- New Residential Development SPD
- Shop Front and Signage Design SPD
- Trees and Landscaping SPD
Design and Planning Applications

2.10 Since 2006 planning legislation has required planning applicants to include a design and access statement with many types of planning application. Design and access statements explain the thinking behind a proposed design. Detailed guidance on the documentation required when submitting planning applications, including details of when a design and access statement is necessary, is available on the Council’s website at www.knowsley.gov.uk. Guidance on the content of design and access statements can be found in ‘Design and access statements - How to read, write and use them’, available from www.designcouncil.org.uk/publications.

Do I need Permission?

2.11 New shop fronts will require planning permission. Depending on the nature of the works, you may need planning permission (and potentially a building regulations approval) to alter a shop front. Any alterations to listed buildings which go beyond "like for like" repair and general maintenance are likely to need listed building consent. Further guidance on whether or not works to a shop front will need permission is summarised in Appendix 1.

2.12 Where new or replacement signage is proposed, advertisement consent may be required, depending on the nature of the new or replacement signs. Further guidance on when advertisement consent is required is summarised in Appendix 1.

Further Advice and Contacts

2.13 Further national guidance that relates to shop front design and signage is listed in Appendix 2.

2.14 Advice on forms, fees, how to complete forms and who to contact at Knowsley Council with regard to planning, building control and advertisement applications are provided in Appendix 2.
3. Importance of Good Shop Front Design

3.1 The Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy aims to ensure that the Borough’s town and district centres are vibrant and welcoming focal points where people choose to shop or use other facilities and services. In addition, throughout the Borough, the quality of the built environment will be protected, managed and enhanced where appropriate. The design of new or replacement shop fronts and signage, whether in a town centre, local parade or at a corner shop, will play important roles in achieving these aims of the Local Plan.

3.2 Well-designed shop fronts and signage are important to perceptions of both the business behind the shop front and the place the shop front or signage is in. For the business the shop front and its signage give potential customers an indication of the quality of the goods and services on offer. If it is well-proportioned, well-designed and harmonious with its surroundings, the shop front and associated signage are more likely to make a positive first impression.

3.3 Town and district centres and neighbourhood shops are natural community focal points. The appearance of the shops and their signage can send out messages about the character of the town or place it is in. Brash colours, oversized or over-lit signage or shops hidden behind solid shutters most of the time will all make a place feel less welcoming and attractive. The focal points of a town or neighbourhood should be its most pleasant and attractive places. If they are not, they can give a strong impression that the wider town or neighbourhood is not a pleasant place to be.
3.4 Nationally, problems have been experienced with the quality of shop front and signage design. Shopping areas can be frequently blighted by bland, poorly designed shop fronts; external roller shutters; and overbearing signs. As local and town centre shops face increasing competition from edge-of- and out-of-town shopping, plus the rise of internet shopping and home delivery, it has become even more important for shopping areas to be attractive and pleasant places. This applies equally to traditional or historic shopping areas and town centres or shopping precincts that date from more recent times.

3.5 Through its design policies, particularly Policy CS19, the Local Plan: Core Strategy seeks to:

- enhance local distinctiveness, identity and accessibility of places;
- minimise crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- ensure that new development responds to and integrates positive characteristics of immediate surroundings.

3.6 Policy CS19 complements the design principles of Policy CS2 that include “understanding and respecting the character and distinctiveness of places” and “promoting good quality design”.

3.7 The Knowsley UDP includes specific saved policies on shop front design (Policy S9) and advertisements (Policy S10). Although the UDP will in time be superseded by the policies of the emerging Local Plan, they remain material considerations in determining planning applications.
4. Shop Front Components and Proportions

4.1 Regardless of their age or style, shop fronts are likely to incorporate similar basic features. Each shop front should form a well-proportioned composition that relates well to the building and the wider street scene in order to satisfy Local Plan Policy CS19. Under this policy there is no 'one size fits all' solution to shop front design. However, each shop front and its signage must respond to its context or surroundings, and itself be of high quality design.

Basic Shop Front Components

4.2 The basic components of a shop front are listed below. Getting the proportions of the different basic components of a shop front right is more important than small details or decoration. The fascia, pilasters, window(s), doorway, and stall risers are the basic ingredients of the shop front. If they are out of proportion with each other, the overall design will never look right, even if care is given to the details and materials of the shop front. The main components of a shop front are:

- **FASCIA**: this is the horizontal band at or near the top of the shop front where the main sign is usually located. The fascia should be no more than 20% of the overall height of the shop front from top to bottom, otherwise it will look out of proportion with the rest of the shop front, making the windows below look squashed, and the overall design top-heavy. For these reasons a fascia should be no deeper than 400mm, but will frequently need to be much shallower than this to stay in proportion with the rest of the shop front. The fascia should not be wider than the rest of the shop front.

- **PILASTERS**: these are the vertical features that ‘frame’ the left and right hand edges of the shop front. Pilasters can also be found either side of the shop doorway or between windows. They should generally be 150mm to 200mm wide, but where the shop front is particularly large, they can be as much as
300mm wide. Pilasters which are along the left and right hand edges of the shop front should either extend the full height of the shop front or should look like they ‘carry’ the fascia or cornice if one is present.

- **WINDOW(S):** the window(s) should be the dominant feature of the shop front. They should account for the majority of its height and in most cases the majority of its width. It is key that the windows, in particular the largest panes of glass, have a vertical emphasis by being noticeably taller than they are wide. This means that shop windows may require mullions to divide up the glass and achieve vertical proportions. Without vertical proportions, the windows (and the shop front as a whole) can look squashed and dumpy. The window frames and mullions should be as slender and discrete as possible to maximise views of window displays and the inside of the shop.

- **DOORWAY:** the way into the shop should be clearly indicated and designed to be accessible by the less mobile and wheelchair users in accordance with current standards. Where there are changes in level between the pavement and shop floor, recessing the door would allow for the insertion of a ramp or steps, and would emphasise the door. The door should include glazing that is in proportion with the windows of the shop front. Doors without glazing are rarely acceptable. Glazing or additional signage could be accommodated between the head of the door and the underside of the fascia.

- **STALL RISER(S):** The stall riser is the low section of wall below the shop window. They should generally not be higher than 20% of the overall height of the shop front, unless the shop has a particularly high internal floor level. Extending the window down to a very low level is normally impractical from a safety and security perspective.

- **DEPTH AND SHADOW:** a shop front can look very bland if all of the features (windows, door, stall riser, sign, and pilasters) are all flush with each other, giving the entire shop front a flat face. By recessing doors and windows and bringing pilasters, window sills and cornice (where one is present) slightly forward, a simple design will instantly look more interesting. Slightly projecting pilasters and a tough, projecting shop window sill are also practical, as they protect the doors and windows from knocks. Similarly a strongly projecting cornice over the fascia will shelter the sign and any lighting from rain.

### Key Expectations: Basic Shop Front Components

C1: Unless the architecture of the building indicates otherwise, the design of all new or altered shop fronts will be expected to:

a) Include as a minimum a fascia, pilasters, stall riser(s), dominant shop windows, and prominent doorways;

b) Ensure accessibility for the less mobile and wheelchair users in accordance with current standards;

c) Ensure that the fascia and stall riser depth are each no more than 20% of the total height of the shop front;

d) Ensure glazing retains a vertical proportion by being clearly taller than it is wide, and;

e) Incorporate recessed and/or projecting features to give depth and shadow. Shop fronts where all the features are flush or near-flush will inevitably appear bland.
Other Shop Front Components

4.3 While all of the basic shop front components should be present in any shop front design, depending on the character of the building or area the following components should be added to the basic components listed above. Many of the details would be applicable in conservation areas or on historic buildings.

- **CORNICE**: This is the top edge and highest part of the shop front. Cornices project further out than the wall above and provide shelter to the fascia and the shop front as a whole. They are often the furthest protruding part of the shop front. Depending on the architecture of the building the profile of a cornice can be square, simply moulded or richly moulded. They are often not found in Huyton and Kirkby town centres because of the modern styles of the buildings and there being projecting canopies over many of the shops in these town centres.

- **ARCHITRAVE**: This is a shallow, slightly projecting band along the bottom edge of the fascia. It should be far shallower and simpler than the cornice. The architrave provides a clear bottom edge to the fascia and helps to 'frame' the signage.

- **CONSOLE OR CORBEL**: These are sometimes found on the left and right hand edges of a fascia. The consoles or corbels are shaped brackets that offer support to the cornice above. They should line up with the pilasters along the left and right hand edges of the shop front and should be roughly the same width as the pilaster. Consoles and corbels are usually only found on traditional buildings.

- **TRANSOMS**: Where shop windows are particularly large or tall, or where there needs to be an opening window on the shop front for ventilation, there is
Chapter 4

sometimes a row of smaller panes just below fascia level. This row of smaller panes is called the transom. Transoms can also be found between the head of the shop door and the underside of the fascia. Transoms only tend to be found on historic style shop windows.

- **DECORATIVE PILASTERS:** In most cases the pilaster can be a simple strip along the left and right hand edges of the shop front. For more decorative or traditional style shop fronts, the pilaster can be divided into three parts: a ‘foot’ that projects slightly forward and is no taller than the stall riser, a ‘shaft’ that runs from the window sill to the head of the window, and a capital. A capital is a moulding or detail connecting the pilaster to the feature above it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Expectations: Other Shop Front Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policy CS20, the design of all new or altered shop fronts at historic buildings or within conservation areas, will be expected to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Include additional features where appropriate, such as a cornice, architrave, consoles or corbels, transoms and decorative pilasters;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Maintain a traditional format and proportions of shop front details; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Retain in situ existing shop front components, features or details that contribute to the building’s historic or architectural significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 As outlined in the preceding paragraphs, the fascia should be no more than 20% of the overall height of the shop front, and similarly the stall riser should be no more than 20% of the overall height of the shop front. In many cases the fascia and stall riser(s) may need to be even shallower.

4.5 This leaves at least 60% of the height of the shop front to be taken up by the windows and their frames. The window panes themselves should be noticeably taller than they are wide and so may need mullions to give a vertical proportion.

4.6 Where the shop front has extra features or details (compared to the normal basic components of a shop front) these extra features should line up with each other where practical. For example the bottom edge of the glazing of the shop door should roughly line up with the shop window sills. Corbels or consoles should be the same depth as the fascia. The transom over the shop door should usually line through with the transoms over the shop window (if these are present).

4.7 In some cases the structure or internal layout of the building can place limitations or constraints on the design of the shop front. In these cases the design of the shop front should respond positively to these constraints while still incorporating basic shop front details in aesthetically pleasing proportions.
5. Shop Front Style

5.1 The aim of this SPD is not to make every shop front look the same or look like they are all from a particular time in history. The intention is to encourage high quality design that is mindful of its context, which includes the building the shop front forms part of, and the general character of the area. These are the requirements of Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20 of the Local Plan: Core Strategy and saved UDP Policy S9.

5.2 Across the Borough, shops occupy buildings dating from the 1600s through to the 2010s. While Huyton and Kirkby town centres mainly consist of post-1945 modern-style buildings, Prescot’s shops are in a mixture of Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco buildings. The design of the shop front must respond to the architectural style and overall character of the building it is attached to, so that it looks like a coherent part of the building.

5.3 Generally the design and detailing of the shop front should make it look the same age as the rest of the building. If the building is traditional (for example Victorian or Georgian), the shop front design could look like it is from this era or respond to a later phase of the building’s history.

5.4 Where a single building incorporates several shop units or there is a terrace or parade of identical units, the design of the shop fronts should match with each other as far as is practical in order to reinforce the original design or character of the building and shop fronts.

5.5 Where differently designed buildings or buildings of different styles or eras stand side by side, the use of different shop front designs is encouraged.

Key Expectations: Shop Front Style

C3: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the design of all new or altered shop fronts will be expected to:

a) Respond positively to the design or architecture of the building they are attached to;

b) Respond positively to the context provided by the wider terrace, parade, street or area.

c) Promote uniformity where shops are in uniform pairs, terraces or parades; and

d) Promote a diversity of style in areas where the buildings themselves are in a range of architectural styles or date from different eras.
6. Materials

6.1 Generally, shop fronts on 'traditional' (pre-1945) buildings are made of painted timber. A small minority of these traditional shop fronts have stone stall risers or pilasters and fewer still have traditional cast iron columns, tiling or steel framed windows. On this basis, on historic buildings or in conservation areas the use of any material other than painted timber would in almost all cases be difficult to justify.

6.2 In the case of buildings constructed after 1945 steel and aluminium windows and doors set in bare brick, concrete or rendered pilasters and stall risers became the standard shop front materials. This is still the case today. Virtually all of Huyton and Kirkby's town centres were built after 1945. In most cases modern shop front materials like aluminium, steel, bare brick and concrete will be acceptable in post-1945 or modern shopping precincts or parades.

6.3 uPVC is highly unlikely to be an acceptable shop front material because uPVC frames cannot be made as thin as aluminium, steel or timber, giving the shop fronts a chunky, clumsy appearance, particularly if there are opening windows.

6.4 The tradition of tiled shop fronts has changed from the interesting architectural tiles of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, to plain flat tiles more suited to a bathroom floor than an external wall. Tiling will only be acceptable where it is part of a high quality shop design that relates well to the architecture of the rest of the building.

6.5 A shop front is only as good as the materials it is made of. If poor quality, fast grown softwood is used, it will quickly soak up rain water, warp or crack, giving the shop front an untidy appearance and requiring more maintenance or complete renewal. Slow grown softwood such as Douglas fir has far greater resistance to rot and warping than fast grown softwoods. In the same vein, uPVC or extruded plastic is prone to fading and discolouring and cannot be repaired. It can soon go from looking fresh and new to tired and untidy.

Aluminium framing and glass have been used in a creative manner to provide a bespoke contemporary shop front on a 1960s building.
6.6 With modern materials like concrete and powder coated aluminium it is easy for a shop front to look very basic, even stark and ugly. Thought should be given to using these materials creatively to give the shop front a bespoke, rather than off-the-shelf appearance. For example, depending on the specification, aluminium frames can be sleek and discrete or square and chunky. Many shop fitters and suppliers of signs, lights, doors and windows pride themselves on being able to handle bespoke commissions.

**Key Expectations: Shop Front Materials**

C4 To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the design of all new or altered shop fronts will be expected to:

a) Be constructed of timber in most cases where the building is located in a conservation area or is a historic buildings;

b) In post-1945 buildings and in modern shop front design, use materials like steel, aluminium, timber, brick or render in a bespoke rather than ‘off the peg’ manner;

c) Use materials that respond positively to the materials and design of the rest of the building; and

d) Use a choice of materials which considers longevity, sustainability and the ability to repair or replace components that break or fail.

In traditional buildings, shop fronts should be made of timber in most instances. Good quality timber will last much longer than fast grown softwood.
7. Shop Front Colours

7.1 The choice of finishes and colours of shop fronts can have a big impact on their overall appearance and the character of the street. Each shop should have its own identity, but this should not be at the expense of the overall visual harmony of the street scene.

7.2 Colour should be limited to the shop front itself, including the window frames, door, pilasters, fascia and other shop front features. Brick, stone, tiling or render should not be painted or otherwise covered over to match the shop front’s colour scheme.

7.3 The colours of a shop front should have a coherent, co-ordinated appearance. In most cases, but particularly in historic areas or ‘gateway’ locations the use of vivid, garish or strongly contrasting colours should be avoided in the interests of amenity and respecting the character of the place. Dark or muted colours are preferable.

7.4 Corporate colour schemes that are based on bright colours may need to be altered or muted to suit the appearance of the shop front and/or the character of the building, parade, street or area the shop is in.

7.5 Higher quality shop fronts tend to use two or three colours only. These are typically a dark or muted ‘background’ colour and two other lighter colours to pick out

Left: co-ordinated shop front and signage colours using a mixture of dark, light and mid-tones.
Right: The use of black and silver signage and a black shop front is a sympathetic match for this new black and white building.
details like the signage or window frames. The colours used on the signage should match or harmonise with those used on the shop front.

Key Expectations: Shop Front Colours

C5: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the following is expected with regard to shop front colours and finishes:

a) Colours should be applied to the shop front itself and not to surrounding brickwork, stonework or render, to avoid the shop front dominating the building;

b) Vivid, garish or highly contrasting colour schemes should be avoided in order to respect amenity and to avoid the shop front dominating the building, terrace, or parade;

c) The co-ordinated, coherent use of two or three shop front colours is supported provided the rest of the criteria of C5 are met; and

d) Corporate colour schemes may have to be altered or muted to suit certain locations like conservation areas or ‘gateway’ locations or other locations where amenity and townscape are of particular importance.
8. Signage

8.1 The best looking signs on shops are designed as an integral part of the overall shop front instead of being ‘tacked on’ to the shop front. When designing new shop fronts or altering existing ones, thought should be given to how the shop signs can complement the overall appearance of the shop front or street.

8.2 Inappropriate signage can clutter buildings and detract from the overall street scene. In most cases signage should be limited to the fascia of the shop front, the shop windows and, where appropriate, hanging signs. Sign boards above the fascia level will be unacceptable. In most cases hanging signs should be no higher than the shop front. Fascia signs to gable ends or side walls will be unacceptable unless the shop front also wraps around the corner.

8.3 All signage should be of materials and colours that match or complement the design and colours of the shop front. Different types of signage (e.g. to the fascia, on the window or on hanging signs) should have a co-ordinated appearance. Corporate colour schemes may have to be adapted to suit the building or area.

8.4 A lot of modern buildings are simply detailed and have many flat surfaces. The lack of constraints make it easy for large and out of proportion signs to be erected or for more signs to be put up. With modern buildings in particular, restraint is needed to make sure that signage is of a scale and proportion that does not dominate the building.

8.5 There are now more signage options that ever before with the rise of adhesive graphics and high quality sign printing. Unfortunately this technology can sometimes be used to create signs that are either cluttered with different logos, lettering and font
styles, or the signs (or shop windows) become ‘mini billboards’ with large photo-quality graphics. When these types of sign are put up, they can harm amenity and the character of the area. The impact can be worse when several neighbouring businesses cover the outside of their premises with information about their products and services. While the Council has no objection in principle to high quality printed signage, these signs should not be out of scale or proportion or look overly ‘busy’ due to the use of lots of colours, text, logos or graphics.

8.6 A-boards are not permitted to be erected on the public highway as they constitute an obstruction. The Council has legal powers to remove such obstructions, and recover costs in doing so from the owners.

### Key Expectations: Signage

**C6:** To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the following is expected with regard to shop front signage:

- a) Signage should be limited to the fascia and, where acceptable, the shop windows and hanging signs, and signage above fascia level, on the sides of buildings will not be acceptable in most cases;
- b) Signage should be both in scale with the rest of the shop front and building elevation;
- c) Signage should not clutter the elevation by virtue of the number of signs and/or their positions;
- d) The use of ‘busy’ signs with a proliferation of logos, graphics, lettering styles and font sizes will not be acceptable; and
- e) The cumulative impact of signage on a building, terrace, parade, street or area will be taken into consideration by the Council.

### Fascia Signs

8.7 A fascia sign is usually the main sign on a shop front and is usually the largest single sign. There is therefore the temptation to make this sign as deep and as wide as possible in order to maximise its visual impact. The impact of doing this is that the fascia ends up being badly out of scale and proportion with the rest of the shop front and the rest of the elevation of the building. Where several shops have oversized fascias there is a particularly harmful impact on the amenity of the area and the character and appearance of the street scene. The Council will therefore only approve fascia signage that is in scale and proportion with the rest of the shop front and the wider elevation of the building.

8.8 Once the scale and proportion of the fascia is established, the next consideration should be the size and layout of the lettering and logos. The temptation is to fill the fascia with large lettering and logos. This however usually gives the fascia a cramped, busy appearance that detracts from the character or appearance of the building. Generally there should be a comfortable blank ‘breathing space’ above
and below the lettering of the fascia and to the left and right. The lettering of logos of the fascia should not extend over the pilasters.

8.9 As with the rest of the shop front, the materials and colours of the fascia sign should match or at least harmonise with those of the wider shop front.

In this example three neighbouring businesses all ‘shout’ for attention and harm the character and appearance of the area. On the left the fascia is stretched across a double frontage and is a big projecting box. It dominates the row. The text and logos are right up against the edges of the fascia. Next door, every inch of the sign and windows is used for signage in garish colours. Next along is an overly deep, bright red fascia that has been built as a projecting box that overlaps the white pilasters. The last sign on the far right can still be read despite being further away and appropriate in scale.
Chapter 8

Key Expectations: Fascia Signs

C7: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the following is expected with regard to shop front signage:

a) The fascia sign should be in proportion with the rest of the shop front and elevation and standard sign sizes or proportions should not be imposed on a building;

b) In most cases the fascia should be no more than 400mm deep, but in some cases it will need to be much shallower than this to keep it in proportion with the shop front or building design;

c) Fascia signage should not project outwards or take the form of a box sign, and should sit as flush as possible with the external face of the building elevation;

d) The lettering and logos on the fascia should fit comfortably within the fascia, not extend the full height or full width of the fascia and leave a blank ‘breathing space’ within the perimeter of the fascia;

e) The lettering of logos on the fascia should not extend above the pilasters;

f) If the shop front has a cornice, architrave, consoles or corbels, the fascia sign should not overlap or conceal these features and the fascia should sit as flush as possible behind these features;

g) The materials and colours of the fascia should match or at least harmonise with those of the rest of the shop front;

h) If the fascia is particularly shallow, individual letters or in-scale adhesive signs can be fitted to the glass of the shop window, provided the window does not become overly obscured or cluttered with signage; and

i) Where fitting a fascia board is unsuitable due to the design of the building (for example if the business occupies a converted building), individual letters of an appropriate scale and design fixed to the elevation would be acceptable in most instances.

Hanging and Projecting Signs

8.10 In some cases there might be space to fit a projecting or hanging sign in a manner that harmonises with the design of the shop front and the overall design of the building. These signs should generally be at fascia level and should be the same depth as the fascia. Any projecting or hanging sign should have at least 2.4m clearance between its lower edge and the pavement level in the interests of highway safety. Projecting signs which overhang the public highway require a licence (under Section 177 of the Highways Act) from the Council for which a small charge is made for administration.

8.11 Projecting box signs will be unacceptable, as will hanging signs at first or second storey level in most cases. The bracket or fixing for the sign should be of an
appropriate design and style and be fitted where it does not damage or obscure architectural detail.

Signage on Shop Windows and Doors

8.12 As outlined in Expectation E7, the glass of the shop windows and doors could be used as the site of additional signage, particularly if the existing fascia is shallow or small. The fixing of individual letters of logos to the glass in a manner that does not overly obscure views into and out of the window will normally be acceptable.

8.13 Any signage adhered to a window or door should not dominate the window: the signage should be secondary to the windows display. For this reason, large panels of glass-mounted signage will be unacceptable, as will cluttering the window with many small notices.

These projecting signs align with the fascia and are appropriate in scale.

Logos and lettering applied to glass without obscuring the window display
9. Security

9.1 Successful shop security should make the premises safe, make people in the street feel safe, and maintain or enhance the character of the shopping area.

9.2 In recent decades shopkeepers have installed solid external roller shutters as a means of crime prevention. These shutters make the inside of the shop secure, but they make the street outside feel dead and unsafe. This increases the fear of crime for pedestrians, particularly at night when most shutters are down. The roller shutter, its external steel box and its runners all obscure the details of the shop front and can squash the proportions of windows and signage. It is for these reasons of fear of crime, deadening the street and the visual impact that solid external roller shutters are unacceptable in virtually all cases.

9.3 There are alternative ways of making the shop secure that can also make the street feel safer and look more attractive. These are:

- SECURITY GLASS – this can have no impact on the appearance of the shop. Toughened and laminated glass can give high levels of security and there are different strengths of glass available.

- ROBUST LOCKS – a simple way of making doors and open-able windows more secure.

- REINFORCED STALLRISERS – adding structural strength and impact resistance to the stall riser provides greater security. The outside of the stall riser would look the same – it could even be timber clad and traditional-looking.

❌ Just after closing time, all of the roller shutters are down creating an unattractive, uninviting street scene
• INTERNAL GRILLES OR INTERNAL SHUTTERS – these have no impact on the exterior of the shop, but provide a high level of security to the interior of the shop. The space between the internal grille of a shutter and the shop window can contain an illuminated display that adds life to the street even when the shop is closed, making the street feel safer. The internal grille or shutter should be an open link type so that there is a clear view into the shop from the street.

![Image of internal link-shutter with illuminated display]

This internal link-shutter coupled with good internal lighting permits views into the shop, adds life to the street and allows window shopping outside of opening hours.

• REMOVABLE EXTERNAL SHUTTERS – these were traditionally used before roller shutters were widely used and are still used at some shops. There is no reason why they cannot be used in modern shop fronts. Removable external shutters should be made of a material and design that suit the overall shop front, such as painted timber. Steel framed meshes with heavy gauge wire can be an acceptable alternative. The removable nature of these shutters or grilles means that there is no impact on the appearance of the shop when the shutters are removed. The grille-type shutters allow views into the shop.

• OPEN GRILLE ROLLER SHUTTERS – these will only be allowed in exceptional cases. Even where these are allowed, the shutter box should be hidden behind the fascia rather than be fixed to the outside of the shop. The runners would need to be discretely hidden in the design of the shop front. This way there would be far less of an impact on the appearance of the shop front, and the open grille design would allow views into the shop when closed.

• GATED DOORWAYS – Where shops have the doorway set back from the pavement, additional protection can be provided by providing gates that fold out of the way when the shop is open. The gates can be timber or metal and can be attractively designed as well as being robust.
9.4 The above measures could be complemented by improved lighting within the shop and the use of alarms or other intruder detection equipment. The street should be better illuminated and more attractive to walk along at night. If the inside of each shop is lit up after dark and security measures allow light to spill from the shop onto the pavement, the street will feel safer. This in turn should attract more people to the area at night because rows of shutters give the impression of a ‘no go area’. If there are more people in the area after dark, this will reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour. Where feasible, returning any vacant floors above shops to use ensures that someone is likely to be at or in the vicinity of the shop at all times of day. This in itself is a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Key Expectations: Security**

C8: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, shop front security measures will be expected to:

a) Be considered at the outset of the design of a shop front so that they form an integral part of the design rather than an afterthought.

b) Avoid creating a ‘dead frontage’ or a less safe-feeling environment outside opening hours; shop front security measures that maintain an open frontage and spill light into the street will be encouraged;

c) Use internal or removable grilles or shutters in preference to external roller shutters which will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances;

d) Be discrete and avoid influencing the proportions of the shop front or its signage, and features like external roller shutter boxes or prominent shutter runners will not be accepted under any circumstances; and

e) Make the street feel safer, for example by having illuminated internal window displays that enliven the street scene at night and make the shopping area feel more inviting after hours.
10. Lighting

10.1 Well illuminated shopping streets are more attractive and feel safer than those that are lit by street lights alone. An attractively illuminated shop window or sign provide a way of advertising a business. The type and design of lighting will need to complement the building and the shopping area’s character and appearance.

10.2 The most effective lighting of shop fronts and signage is considered at the design stage rather than ‘tacked on’ as an afterthought. Light fittings should be incorporated into the design of the shop front in a discreet manner to avoid cluttering the shop front with light fittings and wires.

10.3 The most effective lighting is targeted by for example lighting up the display window or giving subtle ‘halo’ lighting to fascia lettering. With the advent of LED lighting it is possible to get long-lasting small lighting fixtures which work well on shop fronts. The use of fittings which are bulky, indiscriminately throw light across the elevation, or clutter the elevation due to their size, siting or number will not be permitted.

10.4 Internally illuminated signage will be subject to restrictions on the brightness. External sources of illumination must be directed away from the highway and/or fitted with cowling, to prevent dazzle to road users. Signs must also not interrupt the visibility of road signs, etc.

Key Expectations: Lighting

C9: To accord with Local Plan: Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS19 and CS20, the following is expected with regard to the illumination of shop fronts and signage:

a) Lighting (and any wiring required) should be considered as an integral part of the shop front design and be as discrete as possible;

b) Swan neck lights, traditional style lanterns and other ‘feature’ lighting fixtures will in almost all cases not be permitted as they almost always look out of place and clutter the shop front rather than enhance it;

c) Discrete lighting to the principal sign and shop window will usually be accepted;

d) Internal illumination to signage will not be permitted, but discrete halo lighting may be acceptable in some cases;

e) Where the shop front has recesses or projections that can provide shelter for discrete modern light fittings, these should be used in preference to siting lights where they would clutter the elevation; and

f) Lighting should consider amenity, and where appropriate, highway safety, by not being too bright, indiscriminately casting light or being animated.
Appendix 1

Permissions and Consents

a) Planning Permission and Building Regulations

I am repairing a shop front on a like for like basis, matching materials and detailing.
You do not need planning permission for this. Depending on what the works are you may need Buildings Regulations approval.

I am altering a shop front so that it looks different to how it does now
You must apply for planning permission. You will also need Building Regulations approval.

I am restoring a shop front: I am changing it back to how it used to be.
You must apply for planning permission. You will also need Building Regulations approval.

I am adding a shutter or grille to the outside of the shop
You must apply for planning permission. You will also need Building Regulations approval.

I am adding a shutter or grille to the inside of the shop.
You may need planning permission for this. You will need Building Regulations approval.

I am re-painting the shop front.
You may need planning permission if the paintwork materially affects the building's character and appearance. In most cases planning permission is not required. You do not need Building Regulations Approval for this.
b) Listed Buildings, Shop Fronts and Signage

Any works to the shop front of a listed building other than the like for like repair in matching materials and details will need listed building consent first.

Any new signage (illuminated or not) on a listed building will need listed building consent, unless it is a like for like replacement of the same size and similar appearance.

Repainting the shop front in a different colour(s) will normally need listed building consent. Painting over stone, tiles or brick will need listed building consent. Staining or varnishing painted timber will need listed building consent.

c) Advertisement Consent

I am replacing existing signs with new ones that are the same size as the existing signs or are smaller. The new signs are generally similar appearance to the existing.

You do not need to apply for advertisement consent if the new signs are non-illuminated.

I am replacing existing signs with new ones that are bigger than the existing signs.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.

I am putting up new signs where there aren’t any now.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.

I am going to light up an existing sign or I am putting up new illuminated signs.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.

I am replacing a flat sign with a box sign or projecting sign.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.

My new signs will change the character and appearance of the shop front or building.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.

I am putting signs inside my shop window.

You may need to apply for advertisement consent.
Appendix 2

National Planning Policy, Guidance and Contacts

A) National Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) The NPPF should be read as a whole, so individual policies will not be quoted here. However, the policies relating to design and local distinctiveness are all relevant to planning applications to alter or replace shop fronts or signage. The policies on the conservation of the built environment may be relevant where heritage assets like conservation areas or listed buildings are involved.

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG, 2014) The NPPG replaced all of the existing planning guidance. It should be read alongside the NPPF. This document only exists online and is updated as and when the Government reviews or updates its planning guidance. Like the NPPF it has sections on design and conserving the historic environment, plus it has a section on advertisements.

B) Other National Guidance


C) Contacts and Information

Useful planning links:
Pre-application planning advice
How to make a planning application
Planning application forms and fees

Useful building control links:
Frequently asked building control questions
Do I need building regulation approval?
How to apply for building regulations approval
Building control forms and fees

For planning and/or building control advice, forms, applications and pre-applications:

Planning Services, Knowsley MBC,
Tel: 0151 443 2380, E-mail: planning@knowsley.gov.uk
For more information log on to
www.knowsley.gov.uk/LocalPlan

You can also get this information in other formats. Please phone Customer Services on 0151 443 4031 or email customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk

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