

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Executive – 11 September 2024

Subject: Shopfront and Signage Design Guide

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth & Development)

Summary

The Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (SSDG) (attached as Appendix 1) is intended to provide guidance where works are proposed to signage and shopfronts across the City. It sets out best practice for new interventions to commercial premises across Manchester to promote positive change, set in the context of existing policy and guidance.

The principles and guidance detailed in this document are applicable to all locations across the City, including the City Centre, commercial centres, high streets and individual commercial premises. It covers historic and modern properties, deals with both traditional and contemporary shopfront design, and covers relevant matters of signage, security, accessibility and servicing.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Note the progress made to create a comprehensive guidance to Shopfront and Signage Design across the City;
 - (2) Endorse the Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (attached as Appendix 1) and ask the Planning and Highways Committee to treat as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
 - (3) Agree that the SSDG forms part of the evidence base for any future policy plan making as part of the review of the Local Plan.
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Wards Affected: All

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>Careful consideration has been given as to how the SSDG will make a positive contribution to the zero carbon agenda and support the Council with the achievement of zero carbon by 2038.</p> <p>By promoting the retention of existing shopfronts that are either historic or make a positive contribution to the City’s built environment, the use of sustainable and recyclable materials and encouraging new shopfront design to be flexible to allow for adaptation into the future, the guidance directly contributes to the MCC’s ambition to reduce greenhouse emissions across the City.</p> <p>Section 4.4 of the document focuses exclusively on sustainability.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	<p>The document sets out best practice to achieve the required standard of accessibility to commercial premises across the City, in order to promote inclusion and equality, and to support the MCC’s mission to be an Age-friendly City.</p> <p>The guidance and recommendations are in accordance with the current standards BS 8300-2:2018 and Part M of The Building Regulations, which set out statutory provision for minimum standards relating to access to public and commercial buildings</p> <p>Section 4.3 of the document focuses exclusively on accessibility.</p>

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	A successful economy must be supported by a well-designated, sustainable and valued built environment. The provision of good signage and shopfronts, that are both attractive and accessibility, can be key to economic success of individual businesses and whole areas under consideration.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	N/A
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	By ensuring accessibility is a key consideration when installing new shopfronts and altering existing, the document will help to deliver an equitable built environment across the City and to meet the needs of all of Manchester's communities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The guidance is expected to contribute to our zero carbon targets through promoting reuse, the use of sustainable and recycle materials and adaptable new design of shopfronts. By promoting good design and attractive new development across the City, it is also considered to promote its neighbourhoods as destination of choice to live, work and visit.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Good design and appropriate signage can have a direct positive impact on the success of a business, with high-quality placemaking and attractive streetscene beneficial for growth and investment.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

There are no direct revenue consequences as a result of the proposals in this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no direct capital consequences as a result of the proposals in this report.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Core Strategy (2012)
Places for Everyone (2024)
Extant Unitary Development Plan Policies

1.0 Background

1.1 There are a range of design related policies in the existing Local Plan and the Guide to development. These all set out clearly the ambitions for quality design to be at the heart of our decision making. As shop fronts and associated signage are an important feature of our city, helping to define the character of neighbourhoods and centres. The Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (SSDG) is intended to provide a more granular detail on how to apply the principles of good design embedded in policy.

1.2 Nationally, paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that

“the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed”

highlighting the importance of appropriate signage design, location, form and appearance for placemaking and quality of the City’s built environment. Section 12 otherwise highlight the importance of the creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, and sets out an expectation for any new development to function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history.

1.3 The recently adopted Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) (2023) has sets out a requirement for local planning authorities to prepare and adopt design codes with respect to design that relate to development, or development of a particular description, which the authority consider should be met for planning permission for the development to be granted. The recently revised NPPF has provided further clarity on the scope and application of the design codes. It is unclear whether the new government will uphold the requirement for new design codes to be compulsory, the revised policy and other national guidance, including National Model Design Code (2021) and National Design Guide (2021), highlight the importance of adopting new guidance for new development in general.

1.4 At present, the Policies within the Local Plan specifically relevant to shopfronts and signage are in saved UDP Policies 14 and 15. Other policies encompass heritage, design and new development. As part of the local Plan review notwithstanding any new requirements for a design code, the aim is to refresh our own design related policies and guidance to ensure the ambition for an attractive and well-developed city remains.

1.5 The signage and shopfront guide will be part of the emerging new guidance building on existing policy and in the interim will provide internal and external guidance.

2.0 Aim and Progress

- 2.1 The guidance is intended to help enhance the City's built environment, stimulate positive change to shopfronts and signage, assist officers in decision-making and positive management of change to commercial premises, help set a quality benchmark for new applications and manage the expectations of owners, developers, applicants and shopkeepers. It would also support consistent decision-making across the City.
- 2.2 The importance of setting out clear expectations for good shopfront and signage design across Manchester is particularly important in light of the fast-changing commercial landscape, quick turnaround of businesses and frequent changes of use.
- 2.3 To date, external engagement with the Civic Societies, the Shopfront Design has been welcomed and supported.

3.0 Content

- 3.1 SSDG sets out key principles of good shopfront design, comprising Context, Definition, Access and Sustainability. It also sets out the existing policy and guidance context to the advice and the permission regime and introduces the history of shopfronts.
- 3.2 The document illustrates best practice examples of shopfronts and signage to encourage new development of comparable quality and positive impact on buildings and places, alongside specific and clear advice on the installation of new shopfronts and works to existing shopfronts. Matters covered include individual shopfront elements (frame, pilasters, fascia, stallriser and doors & windows), finishes, security, lighting, awnings and ventilation. Where relevant, the document refers to specific regulations, legislation and guidance, including Building Control Regulations, British Standards and the Equality Act (2010).
- 3.3 Both traditional and contemporary shopfronts and modern and historic buildings are discussed, with clear design recommendations based on context. Specific guidance is provided for listed buildings, conservation areas and other non-designated heritage assets. A separate section on signage addresses different signage types, locations and form of illumination.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Executive is recommended to:
 - (1) Note the progress made to create a comprehensive guidance to Shopfront and Signage Design across the City;
 - (2) Endorse the Shopfront and Signage Design Guide (attached as Appendix 1) and ask the Planning and Highways Committee to treat as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

(3) Agree that the SSDG forms part of the evidence base for any future policy plan making as part of the review of the Local Plan.

5.0 Appendices

5.1 Appendix 1 Shopfront and Signage Design Guide