

# Shopfronts Design Guide



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## 1.0 Aims

- 1.1 The aim of this document is to provide a sound basis for occupiers and owners who are looking to undertake works to their shopfront. This guidance highlights typical features, details and materials found in the Borough and should be used as a reference point for any alterations or new/replacement shopfronts.
- 1.2 Whether new or historic, good quality, well-designed shopfronts play an important role in creating a sense of place, pride and contribute to a vibrant local economy. Unique styles, quality materials and features all reflect a local distinctiveness that results in an attractive environment and adds vibrancy and a sense of quality to a business attracting a wider range of customers. Attractive, well-designed and quality shopfronts have multiple purposes; they reflect a business' ethos and sense of quality, encourage trade, reflect the history of a town/village and its development, contribute to a viable sustainable economy and instil a sense of place and pride creating an attractive environment for both the daily shopper, visitors and shopkeepers. Where historic shopfronts remain these should be repaired and retained.
- 1.3 While a number of positive examples remain there has unfortunately been a trend for the replacement of shopfronts with unsympathetic alternatives that fail to respond to the character of the building or the wider area. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to reverse this trend and provide stakeholders with guidance to ensure a positive contribution to the unique character of the Borough.

## 2.0 Policies

- 2.1 The East Staffordshire Local Plan was adopted on 15th October 2015. This SPD provides detailed guidance on the application of Local Plan policies in respect of development proposals for shopfronts and associated commercial signage. The relevant policies are:
- SP21 – Managing Town and Local Centres
  - SP24 – High Quality Design
  - SP25 – Historic Environment
  - DP9 – Advertisements
- 2.2 **The Design Guide, adopted in 2008 included an appendix relating specifically to shopfronts. This document replaces that guidance.**
- 2.3 National planning policy comprises the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a small number of other policy documents and written ministerial statements, all supported by online planning practice guidance.
- 2.4 The Council's level of control over adverts is limited to their effect on amenity and public safety. Not all adverts need consent. Advertisement controls are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations, 2007.

- 2.5 A number of buildings within the Borough's centres are 'listed' as buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and works of alteration are likely to require listed building consent in addition to any planning permission or advertisement consent required.
- 2.6 There are a number of conservation areas in the Boroughs town and local centres. Conservation Areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place - in other words, the features that make it unique. In determining planning applications with respect to any building or other land in a conservation area, local planning authorities are under a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. In Conservation Areas shopfronts and parades make a significant contribution to their special character and appearance. Given the large number of shopfronts and businesses which are located in Conservation Areas it is key that applicants closely follow this guidance. Conservation Area Appraisals analyse the elements which together define the area's special architectural, historic interest and local distinctiveness. A link to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisals is set out later in this document.

### 3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The design of a shopfront should be guided by the following principles:
- Reflect the scale and proportions of the buildings within which they are located, particularly their vertical and lateral rhythms and fenestration;
  - Ensure consistent use of materials, colours and finishes, which should be sensitive and appropriate to the building and its context;
  - Ensure fascia boards, stallrisers, pilasters and other elements of the shopfront are sympathetic to the building and well-coordinated, creating an aesthetically coherent and pleasing effect;
  - Ensure fascia signage, branding, hanging signage and other forms of branding are carefully designed and sympathetic to the existing character and context;
  - Ensure colours for shopfronts and for signage are well coordinated and sensitive to the building and the context. Bold colours may be appropriate but garish and vivid colours should be avoided. Heritage colours will be preferred for historic buildings;
  - Ensure lighting is externally mounted and carefully designed. Internally illuminated fascia boxes should generally be avoided, although slimline lighting may be acceptable in some modern shopfronts;
  - Where a hanging sign is illuminated, discrete external illumination is favoured; either from a trough or from the use of small discrete spotlights. Lighting should be positioned and accessorised to eliminate lateral glare along the street.

- Standardised, crude shopfronts which are unsympathetic to the architecture and proportions of buildings will not be acceptable;
- Contemporary designs may be acceptable even in traditional buildings where the design language creates a simple and elegant feel utilising high quality materials and
- Security features should not dominate and security shutters should be avoided. Where there is an identifiable requirement for security shutters these will normally only be acceptable where they are internally mounted of perforated or latticed design and finished in an appropriate colour. The precise design solution will depend on a proper analysis of the context.

#### 4.0 Design approaches

- 4.1 The decision as to whether a shopfront should be contemporary or traditional will need to be made on a scheme by scheme basis.
- 4.2 In most cases both traditional and contemporary designs will work effectively in historic buildings. More modern buildings, particularly those of simple form and design do not suit a traditional approach and will require a contemporary design that reflects the scale and proportions. The choice of contemporary design versus traditional design in new development must follow through into the shopfront design. In general, high quality and sympathetic contemporary design and architecture will be preferable to historic designs for new development.

#### Traditional response

- 4.3 Throughout the Borough there are good examples of fine historic shopfronts. Where these remain they should be retained and repaired as they reflect the history of the area and traditional materials and techniques. Any new additions such as signage should be sensitively designed and well-integrated with the overall design.
- 4.4 When designing a traditional shopfront, care needs to be taken to ensure that each element is well selected and well related to one another.



## Contemporary response

- 4.5 There is a place for contemporary and innovative design that can enhance the setting and provide a fresh perspective. Where contemporary design departs from a traditional approach design and materials must be of the highest order and clearly communicated through drawings and samples.
- 4.6 Simplicity and creativity will be preferred to elaborate or contrived designs with high quality materials.
- 4.7 Where creating larger shopfront units it is vital to breakdown the frontages to provide more vertical proportions.



*Above: A contemporary approach to shopfront design with a large extent of glazing that provides a large display area and results in a more lightweight character. The different colour division at the top provides a clerestory and fascia for signage.*

## Combining traditional and contemporary design

- 4.8 The fusing of 'old and new' is most successful when based upon the format of traditional shopfronts where one or more element reflects a contemporary design language. This might include lettering and signage, materials and finishes, glazing and lighting or other design aspects. The key to success is combining traditional and new in a complementary juxtaposition.



*Left: A new shopfront that references traditional design. The elements of stallriser, pilaster, corbel, fascia and cornice are all evident with elements that present a more contemporary twist e.g. the glazed black brick stallriser and arched clerestory.*



## 5.0 Elements of Shopfront Design

- 5.1 Understanding the layout of traditional shopfront design and elements are particularly important as this helps set design parameters, for restoration and new designs. Where one or more shopfront element is poorly resolved this is generally to the detriment of the overall design. Vertical proportions should help to structure the design reflecting the grain of variety of the streetscene.
- 5.2 A traditional shopfront is composed of a number of elements that come together to form a cohesive holistic design that responds to the character of the building while also providing an active frontage. Although based on classical shopfront design these elements are often reflected and modified in contemporary shopfront design.



- 5.3 General rules when designing and scaling shopfronts include:

- Fascia deeper than stallriser
- Glazing in door deeper than panel
- Pilaster narrower than stallriser is deep
- Symmetry preferred to asymmetry where space allows
- Subdivision of glazing laterally where shopfronts taller than the standard unit
- Recessed doorway
- Subdivision vertically to provide glazing return towards recessed doorway
- One colour and a simple palette of materials should provide harmony.

The elements that make up the shopfront are discussed in detail below:

## Stallriser

- 5.4 The panel at the bottom of the shopfront that provides a base for the whole design as well as providing protection from the street. Historically materials include timber, render, Vitrolite, stone and in some cases glazed brick. The depth of the stallriser can vary, but the height is usually carried through to the lower panel of the door.



*Above: A typical traditional timber stallriser which helps ground and protect the shopfront. The height of the stallriser carries through to the door panel.*



*Left & Below: Examples of traditional stallriser materials reflecting the history of development, materials and design.*



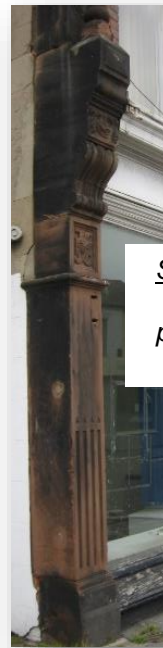
## Pilaster

- 5.5 Columns that frame the shopfront, commonly of timber or stone/terracotta, and enclose it from the stallriser to the fascia above. They provide verticality to the design and help frame the shopfront. These may not be essential in modern shopfront design, but are a key characteristic of historic shopfronts.

Below: Photos showing the various pilasters details and materials.



*Timber pilasters with different relief detail and corbel/console detail.*



*Stone relief and detail for a later pilaster forming part of a row that repeats the design.*

### Corbel/console bracket

- 5.6 These sit at the top of pilasters and usually project forward to form a termination at the top of pilasters. Sometimes they carry the cornice (top of the shopfront) while others project beyond it. These may not be essential in contemporary shopfront design.

*Examples of different corbel/console brackets and materials – historically these are decorative features with carving and relief details.*

*Timber.*



*Stone; the right having been partially painted which detracts from the detailing.*



### Shop window

- 5.7 Area of glazing that provides the active frontage. Large sections of glazing can be split into smaller components by mullions (vertical bars) and transoms (horizontal bars) that form a clerestory at the top of the window – these top windows can be left plain or decorative with some incorporating a grille for ventilation. The cill detail

is where the window meets the stallriser. The style of shop windows can vary depending on the age and character of the property.



*Above: Traditional shopfront with clerestory with decorative frosted glazing and spandrel detail (bracket at the corner of the windows). This helps in breaking up the extent of glazing.*



*Above: A different type of shopfront with bay windows and glazing bars that reflect the Georgian character of the property.*



*Above: A modern shopfront that reflects the typical characteristics of shopfront design with mullion and transom details that breaks up the glazing and adds verticality to the design.*



*Above: While the elements of the shopfront reflect traditional design the use of extensive signage and vinyls detract from this and deaden the frontage which erodes its character.*

## **Fascia**

- 5.8 This is the panel located above the glazing and is used for signage; usually as individual letters or hand-painted. Traditionally these can be flush or sloping, the latter to better read the text from the street. Fascias should not be excessively deep as this inflates the scale of the shopfront, usually to the detriment of the

building itself. The building should not be cluttered with extensive advertising as it detracts from the main shopfront. Bulky projecting box-like fascia signs crudely attached over existing fascia boards will not be acceptable

*Right: Examples of traditional fascias and proportions. Historically these would be hand-painted but individually applied letters are also acceptable. The text in its design and scale should sit comfortably within the fascia and should not be overly cluttered with additional information.*



*Above: A row of overly large modern fascias that fail to respond to the proportions of the shopfronts and fail to respond to the building or the traditional character and materials.*



*Above: An example of a box fascia, which is cumbersome and bulky and fails to reflect the more refined proportions and detailing of the shopfront.*

## Cornice

- 5.9 These sit above the fascia and project beyond it to help shed the water away from the building. Historically they include decorative moulding and has lead flashing for protection.



*Examples of timber cornices and decorative mouldings that respond to the traditional character of the shopfront and the buildings. These photos show the brackets carrying the cornice above while the bottom left shows the console breaking through the fascia on a larger premises to break up the shopfront.*

## Doorway

- 5.10 Entrance to the shop. Historically these were recessed with a tiled or mosaic entrance and splayed. The proportions and sub-division of the doors should respond to the proportions of the shopfront e.g. lower panel in line with the stallriser. For taller shopfronts a window may be installed above the door known as a fanlight.



*Above: Traditional recessed shop entrance with tiled entrance floors and fanlights that add prominence to the shopfront.*

## Signage

- 5.11 Hand written or individually applied letters are likely the most appropriate with the size and scale sitting comfortably within the depth of the fascia or other appropriate location. Illumination should be discreet and justified i.e. integrated into the cornice for new designs. The fascia should be the primary area of advertisement to prevent clutter. Where there is no fascia, signage should be sympathetic to the building in its location, respecting architectural features and be in an appropriate material.

*Example of Signage that responds to the existing building and shopfront.*



*Left: Traditional approach with handwritten lettering on the fascia. This sits comfortably within the fascia and is not cluttered with additional signage and detailing.*

*Right: Although not a 'traditional' fascia the individually applied letters sit comfortably within the architecture of the shopfront.*



*Left: Excessive signage that fails to respond to the scale and character of the building and results in clutter that detracts from the character of the area*

- 5.12 Hanging signs are characteristic of the area and can add visual interest. They should be elegantly proportioned and mounted from a robust bracket and housing which can be read as a single structure. They should not obscure other architectural features or be overtly dominant. Only one per shopfront will be permitted.



*Above: Discreet signage that indicates the use of premises. The hanging sign responds in proportions and materials to the character of the building*

- 5.13 Box signs mounted directly to the façade and internally illuminated look crude and stuck on and are therefore not acceptable.

*Example: Box signs and lettering failing to respond to the proportions of the shop front.*



- 5.14 Glazing can accommodate simple forms of information to prevent cluttering the fascia. However, this should be kept to a minimum and not obscure large areas of glazing which will deaden the frontage. Simple frosted text/symbols are the most discreet and appropriate.



- 5.15 Internal signage should be restricted to enable views into the shop so as not to deaden the frontage. A balance between communication of information, the visual quality of the frontage and views in and out need to be struck.

*Example of internal signage which does not detract from the shop front.*



- 5.16 Public footway signage such as A boards, can create street clutter and inhibit pedestrian movement creating a hazard. For this reason street display boards are not permitted.

### Canopies and blinds

- 5.17 Shopfront canopies provide an essential role for some shop uses and historically were used to cover produce and shield the window from reflection. However, there has been a recent trend for the use of canopies for decorative rather than functional purposes. This can detract from a cohesive street scene with the introduction of unnecessary clutter across successive shopfronts. Therefore, the requirement for canopies and blinds will need to be justified and must respond to the character and features of the existing building.

Where acceptable canopy design should respond to the following:

- Canopies should be in the traditional 'English flat style'
- Continental fan blinds will not be permitted
- Simple design and layout is the requirement
- Design should avoid screening of architectural features when not in use and housing should be integral to the fascia board
- *Single colours should be used which harmonise with the overall colour of the shopfront.* Stripes and other patterns will not be acceptable.

- Advertising will be allowed as these features will likely obscure fascia boards but should be limited to the name of the shop.
- Should not create potential hazards to pedestrians
- All canopies and blinds should be fully retractable

*Below: Flat style canopies of simple design do not introduce unnecessary clutter to the street scene*



*Right: Example of poorly designed canopy*



### Security shutters

- 5.18 Security shutters deaden the frontage and create an uninviting street scene. Where it can be demonstrated that security measures are required these need to be designed in a sensitive manner.
- 5.19 Shutters and other security features should be retracted during daylight hours. Where it can be demonstrated that such features are required they should do the following:
- Be discreet and internally mounted
  - Allow views into the shop and display area when in operation. Perforated shutters are preferred
  - Unfinished steel and roller shutters are not acceptable

- Shutters should not be the same colour as the shopfront but should be a recessive dark neutral colour
- Externally mounted grilles are not acceptable



*Left: A poorly designed security shutter which has a 'tacked on' appearance and adds an unsightly bulky addition to the shop frontage. This will also deaden the frontage when down.*

*Right: A more discreet design of security measures with bars placed behind the glazing which also allows for views into the shop. These should be removed during operational hours to present a more active frontage.*



### Colour palette

5.20 Colour plays an important role in establishing the character and quality of shopfronts. The following should be used as guidance:

- The colour selected should be related to the age and heritage in question and/or the prevailing character of the area
- Use of painted colour finish should be limited to a single colour or a narrow tonal palette
- Colours/finishes for fascia and related signage/lettering should be well related and offer good contrast
- Bright primary colours should be avoided where these will unduly dominate the building and street scene

- High gloss finishes should be avoided – matt/eggshell is likely the most appropriate
- Particularly for historic properties and conservation areas a heritage palette is preferred.



*Above: A row of traditional shopfronts demonstrating a range of appropriate heritage colours that respond to the historic context.*



*Left: Despite displaying all the elements of a traditional shopfront the garish colour finish detracts from this and fails to respond to the building or its setting.*

## Illumination

- 5.21 A vibrant evening economy is important and creates a pleasant environment and sense of place. Shopfronts and other uses such as cafes and restaurants are central to this experience.
- 5.22 It is understood that some uses will be more active in the evening and therefore will require a degree of illumination. Where justified, illumination should be discreet and low level and incorporated as part of the design e.g. small discreet LED strips as opposed to large swan neck or flood lights.
- 5.23 Illuminated box fascias are not acceptable being large bulky additions that detract from the quality and design of the shopfront. Where letters are illuminated they should be halo illuminated and hanging signs are best lit by small discreet strip

lighting, not internally illuminated. The degree of illumination should be kept to a minimum and be white/warm light, not different colours. Contemporary projecting signs should be restricted to modern shopfronts and buildings and used with discretion.

- 5.24 The illumination of shopfronts internally after hours can add a degree of interest. Lighting units should be small, discreet without overly dominant fittings, clutter or cables. Lighting should be limited to the advertisement element (logos and words) and not the full width of the fascia. In considering applications for illuminated advertisements the Council will seek well designed, visually unobtrusive lighting sources. Integrated lighting and the use of slim LED technology is recommended.



*Above: Example of discreet internal lighting*

*Below: Bright internal lighting not considered appropriate*



### Pavement Cafés/Outdoor Seating Areas

- 5.25 Outdoor seating adds vitality and vibrancy to the street scene and provides improved natural surveillance, which makes for a more friendly and safer environment.
- 5.26 There are a number of simple design approaches that can make an outdoor seating area more successful including:
- Outdoor seating to cafes, restaurants, bars and public houses should be directly associated with the property where this does not create a barrier to the street
  - Where seating might block pedestrian routes it may be more distant from the edge of the property and screened by protective barriers – depending on the context this could be achieved with rope barriers or planters
  - Areas of seating and tables should avoid creating trip hazards
  - Any associated infrastructure should be temporary in nature and stored away out of hours



*Examples of external seating. In both instances these are adjacent to the premise and are easily removed when business closes for the night. They do not dominate the street and associated paraphernalia is restricted.*



### Conversion to Retail

- 5.27 Challenges can arise when converting existing buildings to commercial/retail premises. In such instances standard shopfront design may not be appropriate and a more sympathetic and bespoke solution will need to be sought that respects the character of the building. This will also need to consider aspects such as signage and security and how these can be incorporated without adversely impacting on the character of the building.



*Above: The conversion of the building to tea rooms required a bespoke approach. Limited alteration has taken place to fenestration and detailing which retains the historic character and signage has been successfully incorporated to respect architectural features. Individually applied letters ensure they are not unduly prominent.*



*Left: While the conversion of the former brewery building has ensured its continued use the signage does not respond to the architectural features and the character of the building obscuring features. The colour palette also detracts from the historic character and the addition of the shutter on the ground floor window has disrupted the proportions of the opening.*

## 6.0 Permissions

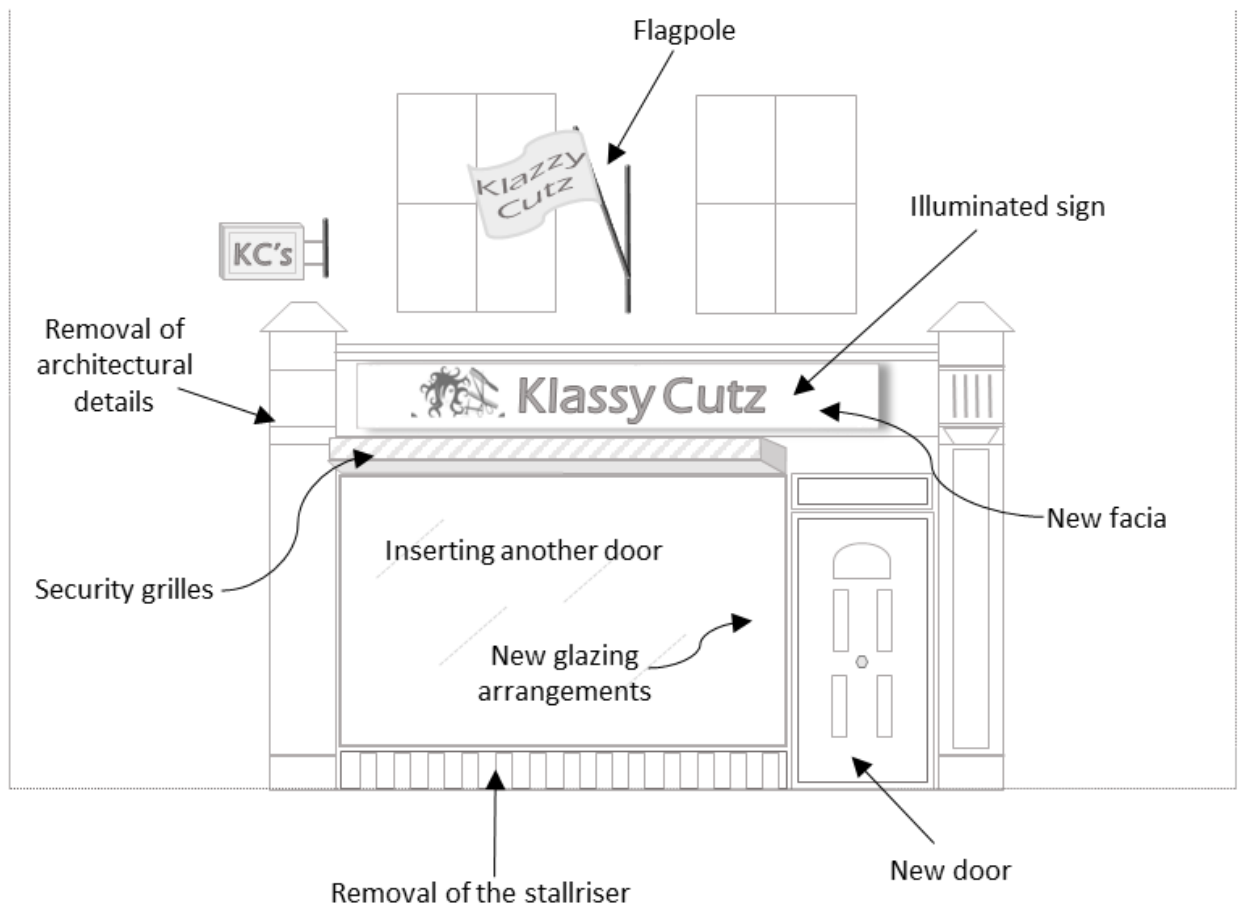
6.1 Works of alteration, even minor works, may require one or more forms of consent. Consent is not normally required for repainting, repair works or minor like-for-like replacements (in matching materials and details). When proposing alterations to the fabric or use of a shop premises it is advisable to check if any consent is required, particularly in the case of listed buildings where unauthorised works are an offence. If you are in any doubt you can submit a pre-application advice enquiry to establish what/if consent is required:

<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning/planning-permission/non-householder>

6.2 Shops that are not listed buildings can usually be redecorated and have non-illuminated signage changed without the need for planning permission. Planning permission will however be required for new shopfronts including all premises within Use Classes A1-A5. Replacement shopfronts or alterations to existing shopfronts that involve a 'material' change in the external appearance will need planning permission:

<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning/apply-for-permission>

6.3 The following diagram highlights particular elements that may require planning permission or advert consent.



## 7.0 Enforcement

Where expedient, the Council will take enforcement action against works that have been carried out without necessary consent(s).

The Council has the power to serve an Enforcement Notice requiring that a building is restored to its condition before unauthorised work was carried out. If such a notice is not complied with or successfully appealed against, the failure to comply with the Notice becomes an offence which could be prosecuted in the courts.

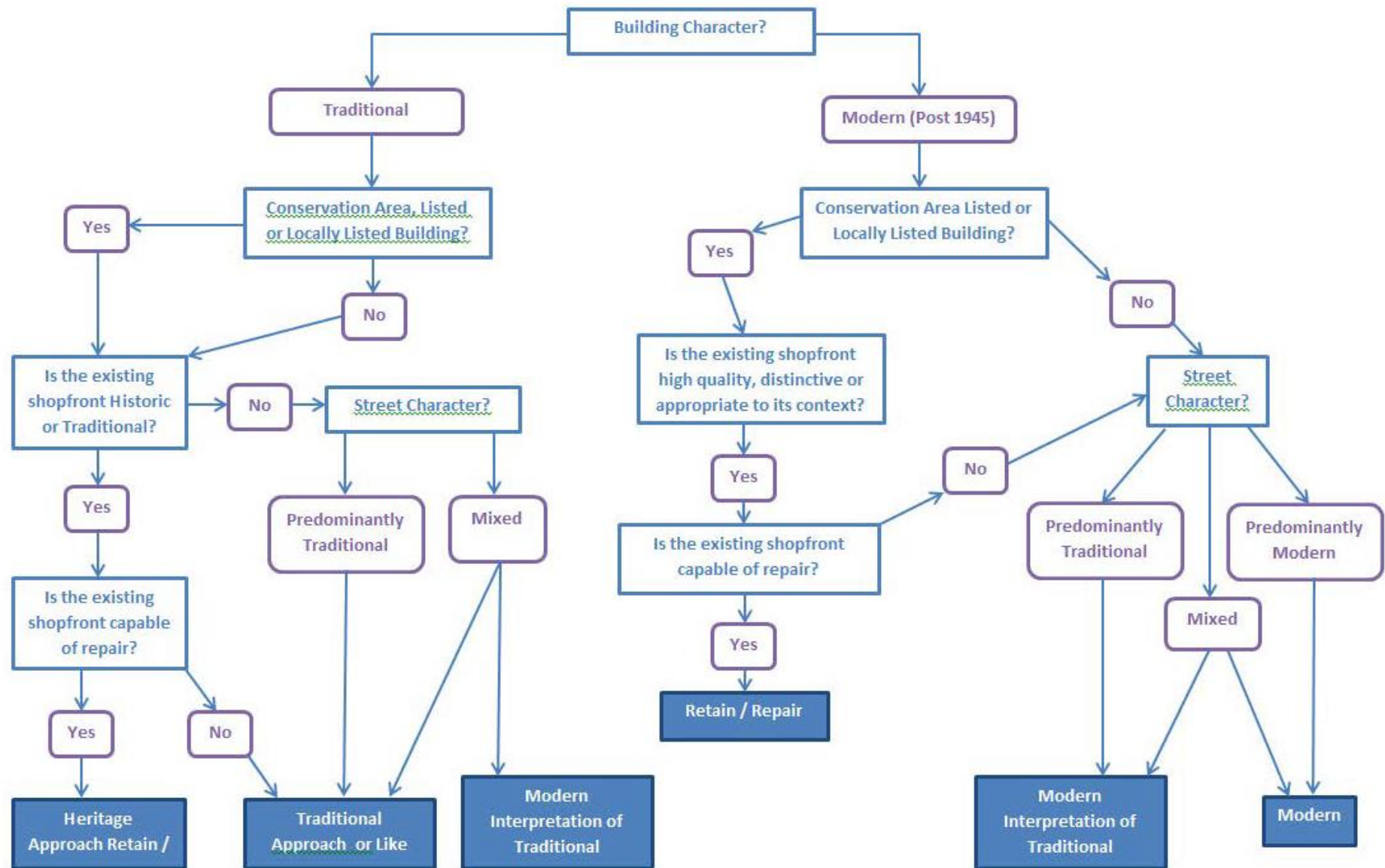
Unauthorised works to a Listed Building and the unauthorised display of advertisements are automatically criminal offences.



## 8.0 Checklist

<b>Checklist</b>	
<b>Permissions</b> Do you need; planning permission, listed building consent and/or advert consent?	
<b>Location and context</b> Is the building in a conservation area? Does your proposal respond to the surrounding character and context?	
<b>Design</b> Is this in keeping with the building and surrounding character? Does it respond in terms of scale, proportions, form and materials with identifiable elements? Are the materials proposed appropriate?	
<b>Colour</b> Is the colour palette and finish appropriate for the building and surrounding area?	
<b>Signage</b> Is this kept simple and streamlined in order to avoid a cluttered frontage? Have you avoided the use of vinyls to provide a more inviting and active frontage?	
<b>Illumination</b> Is this necessary and justified? If so does it form an integrated part of the design and not have a 'tacked on' appearance?	
<b>Drawings</b> Have you submitted drawings and elevations that clearly show the details and materials of the proposal?	

## 9.0 Design Approach Assessment



## 10.0 Further Information

9.1 Additional advice is available from:

- East Staffordshire Borough Council Planning Service:  
<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning>
- Pre-application advice service:  
<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning/pre-application-advice/apply>
- Staffordshire County Council Highways:  
<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Highways/licences/Home.aspx>
- Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/11499/326679.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11499/326679.pdf)
- Conservation Area Appraisals  
<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning/conservation-and-listed-buildings/view-conservation-area-appraisals>