

Bath Conservation Area

Commercial signage and tables and chairs on the highway

Design and Conservation Guidance





This Guidance was produced by the Planning Department's Conservation team together with the Environment & Design team. The Environment and Design Team is a multi-disciplinary team of Natural Environment and Design specialists within Bath & North East Somerset Council.

The Environment & Design Team are the Council's lead advisors on the following areas: Biodiversity; Trees & Woodlands; Green Infrastructure & the River; Landscape and World Heritage site setting; Historic landscapes & gardens; Urban Design; Public Realm and Sustainable Construction.

This document can also be viewed via our website:

www.bathnes.gov.uk/ldf

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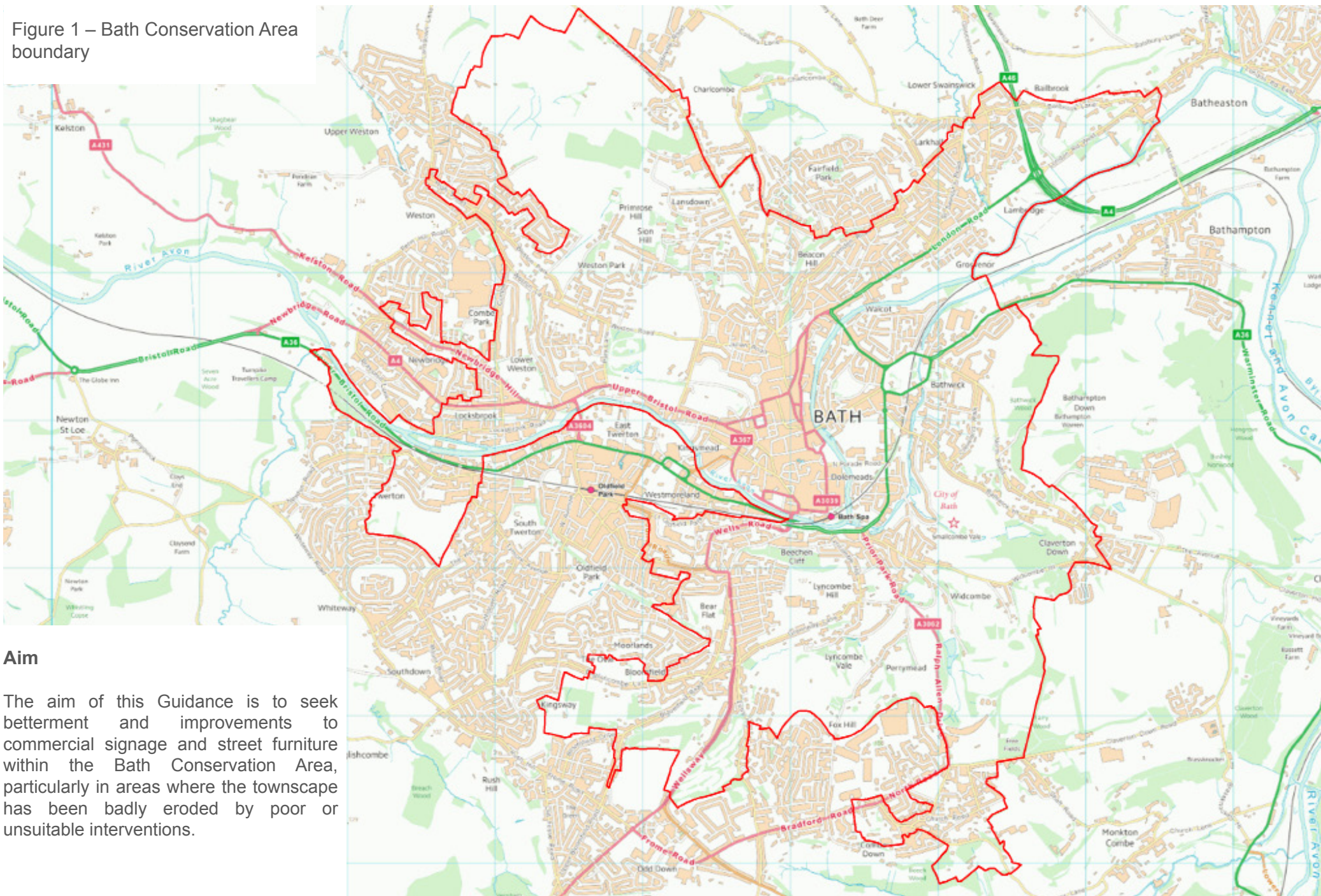
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Figure 1 – Bath Conservation Area boundary



Aim

The aim of this Guidance is to seek betterment and improvements to commercial signage and street furniture within the Bath Conservation Area, particularly in areas where the townscape has been badly eroded by poor or unsuitable interventions.

Introduction

Status of this Guidance

1.01 This document is draft informal guidance for use by the Planning Department when determining planning applications and listed buildings consent within the Bath Conservation Area (as shown in **Figure 1**). It is also a useful point of reference for property owners, retailers, and agents.

1.02 It supplements both the saved B&NES Local Plan policies BH.17 – BH.21 and the emerging Placemaking Plan policy D.9 on *Advertising & Street Furniture for Commercial Premises* which applies District-wide. It has been produced for stakeholder consultation alongside the Draft Placemaking Plan.

1.03 This Conservation & Design Guide seeks to apply the principles of the Bath Pattern Book (extract included as December, 2015), **Appendix 1** and the Bath Lighting Strategy (December, 2015), **Appendix 2**.

Introduction

1.04 Where planning permission, advertisement consent or listed building consent is required, the legislation provides control over the design and positioning of signage and the use of the highway for placing of tables and chairs.

1.05 While well-placed and designed signage, advertising and outdoor eating facilities can contribute to the economy and vitality of Bath, if poorly sited and badly designed it is counter-productive to the positive image and beauty of the city. Historic fabric, streetscape and building character can be damaged.

1.06 Recent experience has demonstrated growing issues with unauthorised and harmful signage fixed to buildings and the placing of tables and chairs on footpaths, particularly in the central area of the City. This guidance has been prepared to ensure that a clear and consistent approach is adopted by the Council when dealing with these matters throughout the Bath Conservation Area. It supports previously adopted and still relevant Council guidance on 'Bath Shop Fronts' (1993), **Appendix 3**.

1.07 The city has a vibrant shopping and tourist economy. It has an exceptionally high density of listed buildings and other non-designated heritage assets and enjoys World Heritage Site status.

1.08 Many commercial uses including shops, restaurants, cafes, bars, hotels and other such premises are located within these heritage assets, and require signage and outdoor tables and chairs.

1.09 The Council has the responsibility to ensure that the settings of listed buildings and their features of special architectural or historic interest are preserved and enhanced. It is also required to pay special attention to the preservation or enhancement of the character of the Bath Conservation Area which contains the primary shopping and commercial area.

1.10 The recently completed Southgate shopping centre has separate ownership controls over signage in that part of the city (as outlined on **page 5**).

1.11 The Council's planning, licensing and transportation services share responsibilities for the control

and management of signage and street furniture associated with retail, food and drink and other commercial premises. Accordingly, a permit from the Council's Licencing and/or Highways Teams may also be required. For more information, see weblinks below:

- [Licencing Permits webpage](#)
- [Highways Permits webpage](#)

General Design Guidance: External Commercial Signage

2.01 The number of signs should be kept to the minimum necessary to convey essential information, including in commercial areas. On commercial properties one projecting and one fascia sign on each principal frontage will normally be permitted. There will be circumstances where projecting signs will not be permitted, depending on the character of the street.

2.02 When preparing designs for new signs the opportunity should be taken to reduce the number of signs on the building or structure and to remove those which are redundant.

2.03 The following criteria will be used to determine the suitability of proposed signage:

i. Local Street Character

Bath Conservation Area has sub-areas of distinct character. The overall aim is to preserve, enhance and improve this local character. In some parts of the City distinctly formal and elegant Georgian terraces predominate, and this dictates the importance of using sensitive signage which does not harm this character. Elsewhere, including some of the narrower lanes away from the main thoroughfares, there is a greater variety

of built forms and character where a less constrained approach to signage is possible, provided this positively adds to character and does not detract or harm.

In other areas of contemporary development (e.g. Southgate/Brunel Square) or where there are particular artisan qualities (e.g. Walcot Street) an approach that relates well to this distinct character should be taken. Where existing poorly located or designed signage is in place this will not be considered to set a precedent for new or replacement signage in the area. All signage will be expected to improve

local character.

ii. Location / Position

Signs should be confined to the ground floor. Where permitted, projecting signs should be fixed to the shop-front pilasters or columns between buildings at fascia level. Regard will be had to the impact of the sign on pedestrian and vehicular safety. Generally signage above first floor window sill level will be considered inappropriate unless such signs were a historic feature of the street. Properties such as public and entertainment buildings may have originally had signage at a higher level

Figure 2: Variety in street character



which, due to their scale and importance may be accommodated.

iii. Size

The size of any sign should be proportionate to the scale of the building or structure to which it is fixed. It should not extend over windows or obscure street name signage. Where existing poorly located or designed signage exists this will not be considered to set a precedent for others in the area.

iv. Colour

Historic colours for signage will be encouraged (see **Appendix 3**, section 7 for details). Subtle tones of other colours may be acceptable, depending on location. Bright colours do not compliment the background of the various hues and tones of Bath Stone. A matt or satin finish will be encouraged.

v. Materials

Shiny, reflective or highly glossy materials including plastic and acrylics will be resisted. Natural traditional materials such as timber and non-reflective metal will be sought.

vi. Lettering

Lettering should preferably be traditionally sign-written or applied individual letters mounted on minimal pins. It should respect the character of the shop or business to which it relates, and be of proportionate size and extent. Use of national chain 'house styles' is unlikely to be acceptable.

Where high quality transfers are proposed a material sample will be required for consideration.

vii. Illumination

Internally illuminated signs are at odds with the historic character of the Conservation Area and will not be allowed unless there are extremely special circumstances such as late night pharmacies or to identify hospital openings.

External illumination of signage will only be considered acceptable if it has low luminance levels and the necessary fixtures or fittings are small scale and can be discretely positioned. It will only be permitted if it preserves or enhances the local character of the

area.

Particular attention will be given to applications for externally illuminated signage on listed buildings where it may be considered that illuminations would not preserve the building or its setting, and will not be granted consent.

Where external illumination is allowed it will normally be restricted to opening times only.

viii. Internally positioned signs

'Deemed' consent applies to internally positioned signs whether illuminated or not, but when involving a listed building the fixings will require consent.

ix. Fixings

Most front elevations of buildings in the Conservation Area are constructed of ashlar. Many have been previously

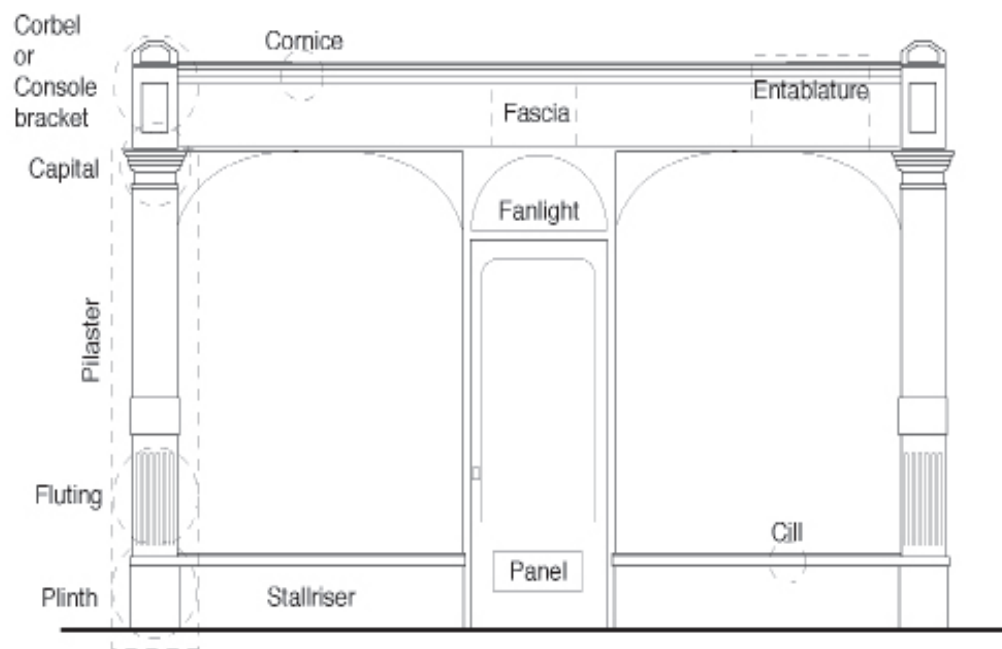


Figure 3: Shop front elements

Southgate Shopfronts Guidance

The Southgate retail-led scheme introduced a Shopfront Design Guide which proposals for retail units should accord with (as part of Condition 9 of planning application 97/01019/FUL).

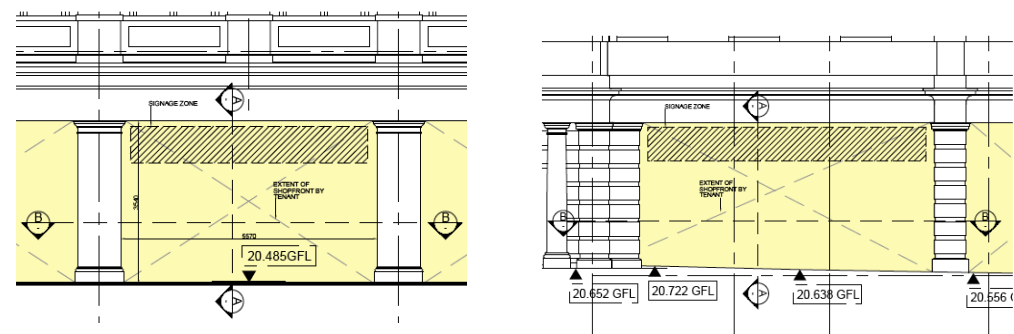
This Design Guide is also included as **Appendix 2**.



Figure 4: Blocks where Southgate Design Guide applies



Figure 5: Sample elevations from the Southgate Shopfront Design Guide





damaged by drill holes for signage fixings. Where possible existing holes should be reused and drilling of new holes avoided.

x. Cumulative impact

The impact of proposed new signage will be assessed in terms of its cumulative impact with any existing signage being retained.

Fascia signs

2.04 These should be contained within the original architectural fascia of the building and only indicate the name/nature of the business together with discrete incorporation of the street number. The appearance of fascias can be improved by use of dark coloured backgrounds with lighter coloured letters. White shop fronts and fascias can appear stark.

Projecting or hanging signs

2.05 Painted timber or stove enamelled metal hanging signs of modest size and well-designed proportions are a traditional feature of some commercial streets in the

city. Others, such as Milsom Street are partly characterised by a lack of hanging signs, and such character will be respected. Where possible, existing brackets and boards should be reused. When acceptable, new signs will need to meet the following criteria:

- One sign on each principal frontage
- Fixed at fascia level or just above, no higher than first floor sill level.
- Minimum of 2.6m above pavement level
- Minimum of 1m from the kerb line
- Max dimensions of 750mm X 750mm with each sign considered on its merits.
- Not interrupting or obscuring architectural detail
- If part of a uniform or cohesive group of buildings such as C18/ C19 terraces, reflect the uniformity of the group in terms of siting and size.
- Traditionally designed “trade” signs may be acceptable, depending on location.

Figure 6. Projecting hanging signs dimension criteria

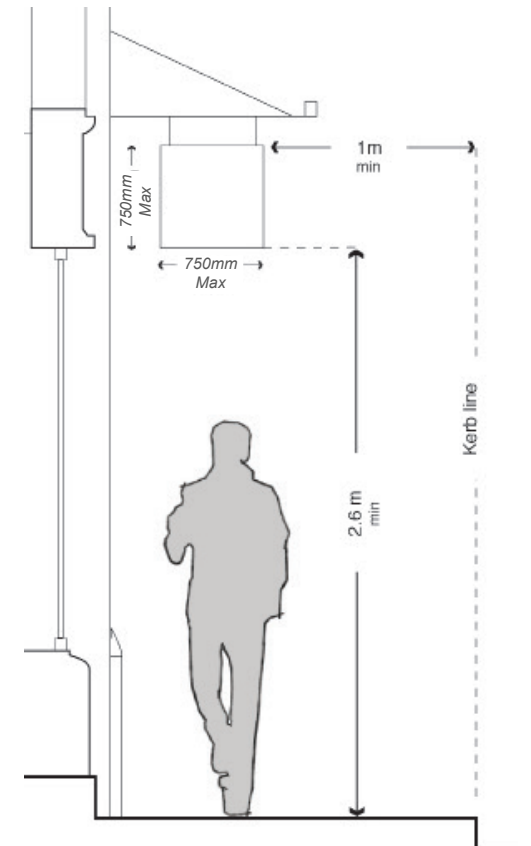


Figure 7: Examples of bespoke signage design from both local shops and national chains in Bath, that compliment character



2.07 Solid projecting box signs will not be permitted due to their poor appearance.

Other commercial signage and lettering

2.09 Internal roller blinds are sometimes used as an alternative means of advertising. The blinds should be neutral shades such as white or cream with discretely sized and well-balanced lettering.

2.10 Signage can be professionally painted or etched onto the internal surface of the windows. This may be particularly suited to frontages with an architectural form that does not lend itself to the attachment of external signs or fascias. Applied stickers may be acceptable subject to size, colour, design and positioning.

2.11 Sign-writing on external stone walls is unacceptable as it is damaging to the historic fabric. It may be agreed on previously rendered or painted surfaces if of traditional design and appearance.

2.12 Signage mounted on foam board, marine ply and other such materials has a temporary appearance, usually lacks a 'frame' and is inevitably photo based. Such signage has a temporary appearance and will not be allowed.

2.13 Name plates are traditionally used for services such as solicitors, accountants and doctors/dentists. The size of the name plate should appear discrete, and both the plate and the text must relate in scale to the space available at the side of the door. The plate should not extend across architectural features such as rustication or stone courses. Several businesses sharing a building should consider sharing a name plate. Traditionally such signs are brass, but use of toughened engraved glass with brushed steel fixings may also be acceptable.

2.14 Signage fixed to street level front boundary railings will not be permitted.



Signs on blinds and awnings

2.15 Any lettering or logos on approved external blinds or awnings should be minimal, small size and limited to the name of the company or business. It should not dominate the area of the blind. The lettering style should co-ordinate with the design of the shop front as a whole.

'A' boards

2.16 Free standing 'A' boards can cause obstruction to pedestrians and require planning permission and a separate consent under the Highways Act. There is a proliferation of such signage in the city. Consequently, new guidelines for the treatment of 'A' Boards is currently being considered by the Council. This guidance will be updated to reflect the corporate approach to 'A' Boards prior to its final publication.

Flags and banners

2.18 Even well designed commercial flags and banners can be unacceptable if they harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or individual historic buildings. Commercial flag signage will be considered inappropriate

on listed buildings. Temporary flags and banners promoting local cultural events may be acceptable subject to design and positioning. A city wide planning consent for flags and banners in specific locations, was secured by the Council for use for festivals and events in 2014. Highways consent is still required for banners across the Highway in these specified locations.

For further details see our [webpage](#).

Street trader signage

2.19 Such signage should be designed as part of/ fixed to the stall, be proportionate to the stall in size and not over- dominate it. It should meet this document's design criteria.

Additional guidance on signage is provided in **Appendix 3**. Contacts for local traditional sign-writers can be obtained from the Conservation Team.



Estate agents' and similar boards

2.20 Within specified limits temporary signs announcing that a property is for sale or to let can generally be placed without consent. However, in the Conservation Area a Regulation 7 restriction applies in relation to Estate Agents' boards. For further information see our [webpage](#).

Night time projected images on to buildings

2.21 Where these include advertising they require advertisement consent. Listed building consent will also be required if any fixtures or fittings are attached to listed buildings. The requirements of the Habitat Regulations should be considered in relation to the impact of lighting on protected species, particularly in relation to the river corridor. Highways approval is also required, to agree light levels, uplighters, location and potential stray light nuisance.

2.22 The Council's Lighting Strategy (**Appendix 2**) should also be taken into account.



Design Guidance: Tables and Chairs for Commercial Premises

3.01 Outdoor eating associated with cafes, pubs, and restaurants can result in the positioning of tables, chairs, umbrellas, demountable screens and other associated furniture being placed on public footpaths in the Conservation Area.

3.02 The acceptability of using the public highway for this purpose is determined by the following criteria:

Location and siting

3.03 Principal types of location where planning applications for tables and chairs on the highway may be allowed:

- In fully pedestrianised streets
- In partially pedestrianised streets where vehicles are banned at certain times of the day
- In streets with footways of adequate width and carriageway

Other location & siting criteria:

- There should be a minimum clear width of 2 metres between the edge of the chairs and the kerb. 'Clear width' is the width available for

pedestrians either on a footway or a shared surface between the area being used for tables and chairs and any other obstruction eg trees or street furniture.

- Minimum footway widths are also dependent on pedestrian flow and activity (such as waiting areas for bus stops and areas of high footfall), and as such additional width may be required. It is recommended that pre-application advice be sought to clarify the width requirements.
- Tables and chairs should be placed so as not to obstruct drivers' sight lines
- Emergency access should not be obstructed.
- Access to utility's equipment (eg manhole covers) should be easily achieved.
- Tables and chairs to be visible from within the premises.
- Tables and chairs to be removed at the end of the consented period
- Generally hours of operation will



be limited to between 9am to 11pm from Monday to Sunday, subject to location.

Other Design Criteria

3.04 The following design criteria will be applied to tables and chairs:

- Tables and chairs permanently fixed to the adopted highway are unlikely to be agreed if they reduce opportunities for other uses of the space which could add to the vitality of the area.
- Advertising on tables, chairs or umbrellas is unlikely to be approved.
- Separate tables and chairs are preferred.
- High backed benches and planters used to demarcate space are unlikely to be acceptable. Similarly accompanying planters which further privatise public space will not be considered acceptable.
- They should be heavy enough to resist movement by wind. Chains and other similar devices to secure from theft are unacceptable.

- All tables and chairs should be of the same design and material. Plain and simple designs will be sought which respect the historic character of the buildings and their settings.
- Damaged tables and chairs must be withdrawn from use.
- If acceptable, fixed umbrellas must be a minimum of 2 metres high. They should be free of signage.
- A direct route of 1.2 metre wide must be maintained from the footpath to the entrances to premises.

Low level barriers

3.05 Where acceptable, low-level moveable barriers around outdoor eating areas should meet the following additional criteria:

- Any advertising on barriers is unlikely to be acceptable.
- No higher than 900mm from the ground.

- Should be of railed construction either vertical or horizontal.
- Only muted colours/subtle tones will normally be permitted, which complement the background of Bath stone.
- Sharp corners must be avoided, and appropriate corner barrier(s) should define the outer corner(s) of the approved area.

Management and Storage

3.06 A management plan including details of storage of street furniture outside operating hours will also be required.

Information to accompany planning applications/consents:

Plans accompanying Listed Building applications should be to scale. A submission should include:

- Elevation clearly showing the position and appearance of the signage (scale 1:20).
- Large scale plan of each sign (1:5)
- Sections, if raised lettering is proposed (1:2 scale)
- Hanging signs elevations (1:5 scale)
- Where brackets for hanging signs or other fixtures are proposed, details of these (1:5 scale)
- Where a canopy is proposed plans of it both open and closed should be submitted.
- Management Plan for tables and chairs

Details of materials and colours to be used should be clearly noted on plans, including the British Standard colour code.

