

Guide to shopfront advertising for historic buildings

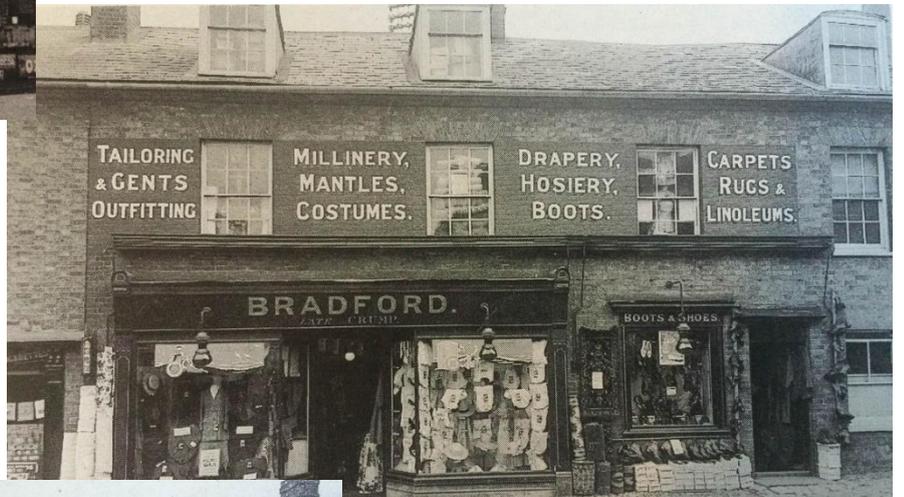
Design guidance



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Contact

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Signs of the times: shop and business signage has always been a part of the village square – creating an identity.

The adjacent images are a selection of some of the faces of familiar buildings from years past

Introduction:

If you own or run a business from a listed building or within the Lenham Conservation Area and you are thinking of changing your outdoor signage or putting up additional outdoor signage at your business premises, this design guide may apply to you.

It explains when listed building or advertising consent is needed for new shopfronts and for signs and lighting. This guide also gives general advice on achieving a good quality of signage design and looks at the types of signage that are suitable for historic buildings, and that will be acceptable in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings.

The Guide does not introduce any new policies, but it is an expression of the views of the Lenham Parish Council as a means of maintaining and improving the visual aesthetic within the Conservation Area and specifically the 'feel' of the historic market square area.

Typically, this promotes the retention of traditional shopfronts and the use of shopfront signage and advertising that is sympathetic to historic buildings and areas.

After the shop window, signs are one of the most effective forms of advertisement for a retailer or business owner. Signs convey information through words, pictures and logos to inform passersby of the goods or services available. However, the quality of signage design can also convey a message about the quality of the individual business and have an impact on the quality of the wider environment.

Good quality design makes good economic sense. A high-quality environment leads to a sense of pride and enhances the experience of shoppers and visitors. The individuality and character offered by historic, town-center shops which is in contrast to the alternative 'identikit' shopping centers and retail parks is what makes the Lenham experience.

If you are thinking about installing new signage, or altering or replacing existing signage you may need to get Advertising Consent, or Listed Building Consent if your building is listed. Please check whether or not the works you wish to undertake will require consent *before* carrying out any work.



The success of events like the Farmers Market (above), the Len Valley Art Show and the Family Festival rely on and benefit from the attractive environment with a sense of history and tradition which is at the heart of Lenham and its community

Consultation:

A draft version of this guide was discussed at the LPC Planning and Main Committee meetings in July & August 2018

Do I need Advertising or listed building or other consents to alter or add signs on my building?

Listed Building Consent is likely to be necessary for general signage and will *always* be necessary for illuminated signage. Signage will only be acceptable where no historic or architectural features are damaged or obscured and the character and quantity of the signage is appropriate to the building in terms of the design, scale and quality of materials. Internally lit, or halo lit signage will, in general, not be acceptable on a listed building.

Planning permission may be required for replacing existing facias (the signage boards on to which signs are applied) with bigger boards, particularly where the replacement boards are large and the building is within a Conservation Area.

Advertising Consent for signage on a shopfront or forecourt will be required if:

- Any letters, figures, symbols or similar features are more than 0.75m in height.
- The highest part of the signage is more than 4.5m above the ground
- The highest part of the sign is above the bottom of the first-floor window.
- Individual signs do not exceed 1.55 square meters
- Would result in more than 4.6 square meters of signage (in total) on the forecourt (the term 'forecourt' includes any enclosing railings, wall, fence etc that do not form part of the building itself).

Advertising Consent for lighting is required within all Conservation Areas for

- Internally illuminated signage,
- Separate lights shining onto the signage
- 'Halo' lit signage

The above includes the replacement of an existing sign, *or* its means of illumination. Generally halo lit or internally illuminated signs will not be considered acceptable in conservation areas.

Where consent is required, consideration will be given to the impact the signage will have on the appearance of the building, and the surrounding area.

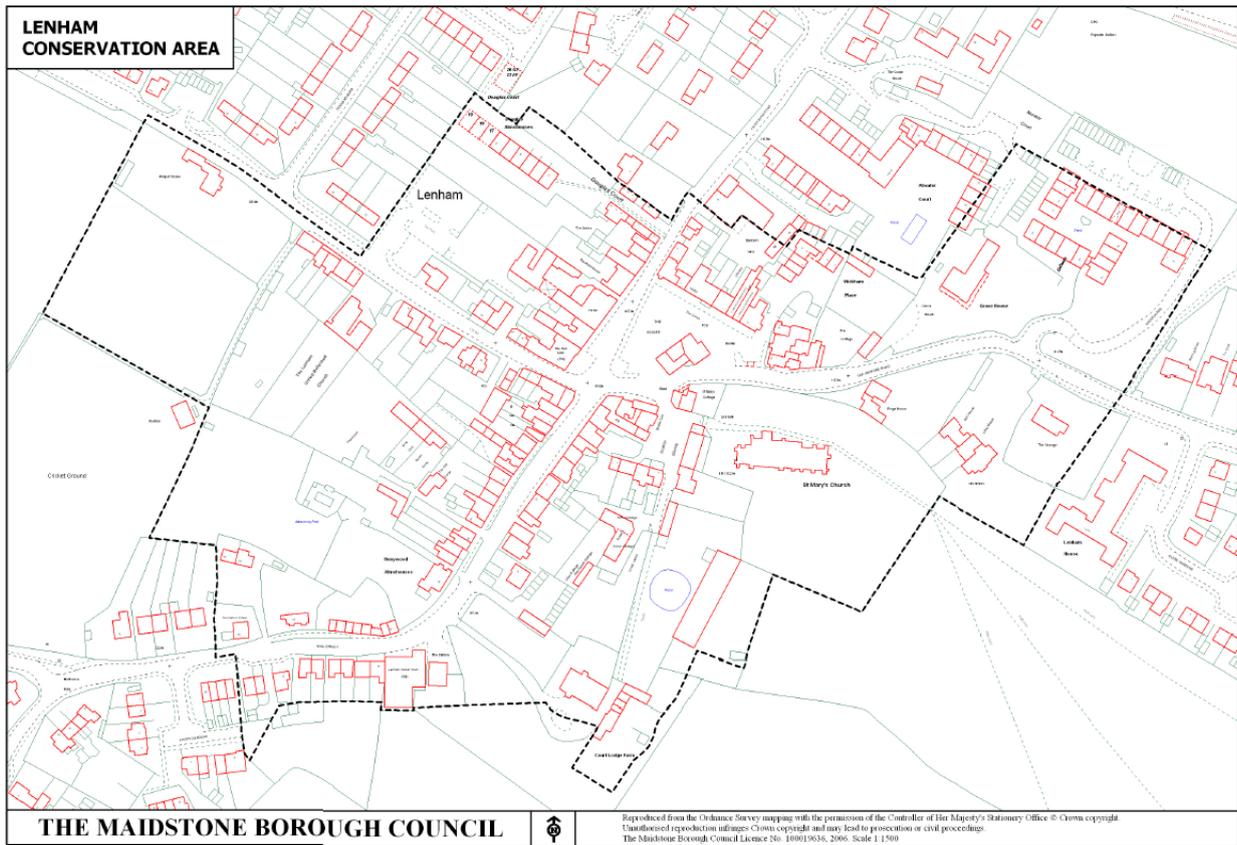
What happens if I do not apply for listed building or advert consent and I do not follow the guidance?

As noted above, this guidance note is promoted by Lenham Parish Council and the council would anticipate that retailers would be keen to promote the increase in visitors and improve the visitor experience. As such we would trust that retailers would accept the intention behind the guide.

Where signage is in place without the relevant permissions and approvals, the Parish Council would like to work with the shop owners to mitigate matters and devise an acceptable solution – which would reduce the likelihood of an enforcement notice being served by Maidstone Borough Council or Historic England. For clarity, an 'enforcement notice' requires you to remove or alter the signage so that it is acceptable. If you do not comply with this, the Borough Council *can* take you to court. It is a criminal offence to carry out work that damages the historic or architectural importance of a listed building.

The map below (extracted from Maidstone Borough Council list of borough wide conservation areas) sets out clearly the extent of the Lenham Square conservation area.

<http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/planning-and-building/primary-areas/heritage-and->



[landscape/tier-3-primary-areas/conservation-areas](#)

The map below (extracted from Historic England web site) shows the listed buildings within the conservation area – marked with a dark dot.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=true>



The design of signs:

Keys to good signage design

- Respect the character of the existing building and its neighbours
- Use materials that are in-keeping with the period of the building
- Have a clear identity, not a mixture of styles
- Lettering should not be over-large, and should not result in the building façade looking cluttered.
- Keep information simple, too much is confusing
- Employ a competent designer and use skilled craftsmen

Shopfront fascias

Fascias are the vertical boarding on a shop front onto which shop signs are fixed or painted. Traditionally, shop-fronts have integral fascias, onto which the name of the shop can be painted, or spelled out in applied letters.

In earlier shop-fronts (18th – early 19th century), the fascia tended to be very narrow, whereas in later examples (mid-19th century onwards) the fascia tended to be a bit deeper. Generally, however, the fascia was approximately the same depth as the brackets and corbels on either end of the shop-front.



Fascias, brackets and corbels

Traditional shop fronts should have timber fascias kept to a size that is in proportion to the building and the shop-front, and should not obscure glazing or architectural detail. Only the name or trade of the shop and the street number of the property should appear on the fascia, and the lettering should be easy to read and reflect the quality of the shop-front.



Large fascias which hide architectural detail and are not in proportion with the building have a negative impact on its character and should be avoided.

Conservation Areas:

In Conservation Areas, hand-painted signs or those with applied lettering are preferred. For Listed Buildings, hand-painted signs and some types of applied letters are likely to be the only acceptable options. The use of acrylic sheet for the fascia will not generally be acceptable. In the absence of hand painted signage – quality vinyl lettering may be acceptable but should be reviewed in advance.



A skilled sign writer can create a unique and stylish identity for a business that wants to distinguish itself from its competitors. Equally, businesses with a corporate identity can maintain that identity whilst demonstrating an understanding of local character.



Applied lettering can offer a good alternative to a hand painted sign, particularly where the holes left by the fixings could be repaired easily such as on timber fascia's.

This can be either physical or vinyl applied lettering

Signs on non-illuminated (unlit) fascias do not *usually* require advertising consent as long as they are no higher than the bottom of the first-floor window above the signage; no letters, figures or symbols are over 0.75 meters in height, and individual signs do not exceed 1.55 square meters in area.

However, if you are in any doubt, please contact the Parish Council or Local Planning Department.

If your building is listed, Listed Building Consent will be necessary, particularly where the signage will require new fixings to be put in the walls of the building.

Projecting signs:

Projecting signs can be a useful way of advertising a business; they can either display the name of the business, or trade, and can catch people's attention from further down the street. The sign might be a hand painted board, or in three-dimensions

Traditionally projecting signs are hung from brackets attached to the face of the building. These 'hanging' signs will be favoured in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings over signs that are rigidly fixed to the face of the building. Careful consideration should be given to the size, shape and positioning of both the sign and the bracket from which it hangs. Hanging signs will not be appropriate for all buildings.



Projecting signs might bear the name of your business, or the type of business you run.



Projecting signs will usually need advertising consent and will almost certainly need Listed Building Consent if your building is listed.

Other types of non-illuminated signage fixed to commercial premises

Sometimes it is desirable to have signage that advertises particular products or services, as well as the name or nature of the business. For example, a café may wish to display a menu board on the outside of the building to entice prospective customers inside.

Banners

Generally speaking the Parish Council does not look favorably on the use of banners within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings, particularly when it is intended as a permanent sign. The Parish Council is therefore likely to require the removal of banners where the appropriate consents have not been secured.

Any fixings attached into the facade of a listed building in order to display a banner will need Listed Building Consent.

Banners are not permitted on street railings/safety barriers as these impact on vehicle sight lines and are likely to contribute to accidents.

The Council does not encourage banners in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Advertisement consent is therefore unlikely to be granted for banners.

Estate agents boards:

Signs advertising the sale or lease of premises do not generally need Advertising Consent as long as they are removed within 14 days of the sale or grant of the tenancy.

However, where a property is listed, this type of signage should not be fixed into any external elevation of the property without Listed Building Consent. Even though a sign may be temporary, the damage caused by the fixings will not be. Fixings drilled directly into bricks, rather than mortar joints can be particularly damaging. Where this type of sign is attached to a listed building without Listed Building Consent, and any damage not made good once the sign is removed, the Borough Council may follow a course of enforcement action to resolve the issue.

Advertising on forecourts – ‘A’ boards

Where Advertising Consent is required for free standing or fixed signs within the grounds of a building, consideration will be given to the impact the signage will have on the appearance of the building, and on the surrounding area. This is particularly relevant if the building is listed or in a Conservation Area. Forecourts cluttered with signage can look messy and visually confusing.

Use of ‘A’ boards is understood but requires management. Location must be within a reasonable distance of the shop it serves; the board must be in good condition and placed so as not to present an obstacle or impediment to pedestrians. A minimum footpath width of 1500mm or more must be maintained near an ‘A’ board. If this is not possible the location of the board should be reviewed/changed. The Parish Council does not wish to see ‘A’ boards secured/chained to other street furniture.



Setting out a 'stall' is a tried and tested method of advertising and can have a very different effect to more haphazard alternatives.

Most important is to ensure that the footpath remains clear for all users – with attention paid to the width and the quality of the available space – avoid making a ‘pinch point’ over an inspection chamber or grate or other potential trip hazard.



Advertising boards are not permitted on the highway without a license from the borough council. This type of signage can cause a dangerous obstruction and can result in injury.

Illuminated signage:

This category of signage includes signs that are internally illuminated, halo lit, and signs that are lit by separate lights such as stalk or trough lights.

Internally lit signs will not be acceptable on Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas as the nature of this type of signage is at odds with the character of historic buildings and streetscapes.

Halo lit signs (example right) *may* in some exceptional circumstances be acceptable, and applications for this type of signage will be considered on the merits of the design, choice of materials, level of illumination, and the impact of the signage on the character of the building, and that of the surrounding area.



The only type of illuminated signage that will be acceptable in Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings is externally lit signs. Stalk lights, trough lights or spotlights cast the light towards the sign and can highlight the detail on the shop-front (see image on page 6)

The Parish Council would prefer illuminated signage to be extinguished within an hour of the premises closing each day. The visual disturbance of illuminated signs is detrimental to the ambience of the historic feel of the village square – adding to light pollution and being distracting. There is little logic in a shop advertising it is 'Closed' all night or equally where it is when it is closed.

The used of flat screens in shop windows has seen an increase in recent years. While improvement in technology permit such advances in media and advertising – the Parish Council would prefer that such displays are switched off an hour after closing – due to the visual impact on the ambience of the area.

Generally speaking the more discrete the lighting, the less cluttered the shop - front appears. Large swan-neck lights were popular in the late 19th, early 20th century, but they are easily damaged and can be over-bearing. Modern lighting technology allows for much smaller lights, to give the same effect, and these are preferable over larger types.



All types of illuminated signage require advertising consent in Conservation Areas, and illuminated signage will always need Listed Building Consent if a building is listed

Illuminated premises is particularly an issue in the evenings as the lighting chosen and signs have an effect on the area as well as serving to advertise the particular shop. With the historic 'market town' feel of the village square, the twilight and night time ambience is important, and all illumination should be considered in this situation. It is noted that the street lighting is provided by modern versions of old looking lamps/standards.

The following images highlight examples from both ends of the spectrum – where lighting is successful or dominant (to the point of distraction – even when the premises is closed).

An element of caution should also be used considering the effect externally not only on the ambience but also on highways. The image below illustrates an illuminated sign in a shop window which, at a glance, could replicate a green traffic light, located very close to a road junction – providing a distraction to an unwary driver.



It is worth noting that not all bulbs emit white light and that modern lamp technology can provide a range of white – from 'warm' to 'cool' where warm has a softer effect and cool is much harsher.

If there is any doubt about the right lighting and colour – either ask a lighting specialist or check with the LPC.



THE
CORNER
HOUSE

The Tea Rooms

