

## Chard Shop Front Design Guide

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## Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from the District Executive for the draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide to be subject to formal consultation. This formal consultation is in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement which supports the Local Plan.
2. This consultation will support the adoption of the Chard Shop Front Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document supporting the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028.

## Forward Plan

3. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated committee date of 2nd December 2021.

## Public Interest

4. This report is requesting that District Executive approve the draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide for formal consultation. The Guide is part of the Chard Regeneration work and High Street Heritage Action Zone. It is intended to support the policies of the Local Plan and contribute to the improvement of the town centre environment by giving clear guidelines on style and quality of shop fronts. A similar document was produced and adopted for Yeovil town centre in 2019.

## Recommendations

5. That the District Executive recommends that the Chief Executive approves the attached draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide (Appendix A) for formal consultation.

## Background

6. Chard Regeneration focuses on regenerating the centre of the town, including the new Leisure Centre, and revitalising the high street. Chard Regeneration sets out to boost the economy and make Chard a more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and spend time. The objectives of the programme are:
  - To provide compelling reasons for residents and visitors to visit and use Chard town centre



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- To bring the key sites and buildings in Chard Town Centre back into economic and community use to stimulate physical regeneration and improve the vitality of the town centre
  - To increase the footfall within the town and support existing businesses
  - To improve the leisure and health offer in Chard for both local people and new visitors
  - To reinvigorate and bolster the role of Chard as a Market Town and economic centre.
7. Due to its historic character, SSDC was successful in bidding for Chard to become a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), attracting over £1m from Historic England as part of the £95m government-funded scheme and matched by more than £1m from SSDC. This award supports a programme of investment in the town centre, with a focus on improving public realm, historic buildings on the high street, and shop fronts.
  8. This report deals with the Chard Shop Front Design Guide which is a key component of the High Street Heritage Action Zone. Shop fronts and their associated signs and advertisements naturally play a very important part in the appearance of the commercial areas of our towns. Most of the buildings in these areas contain a shop front on the ground floor, which is the principal focus of attention and falls in the direct line of sight for people in the street.
  9. The purpose of the new Shop Front Design Guide will be to offer advice towards achieving successful shop fronts in Chard, when new or replacement frontages are installed. Chard's High Street Heritage Action Zone also provides some grant funding for these sorts of improvements.
  10. The draft Shop Front Design Guide has been prepared in support of the policies contained in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 and the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular to Local Plan Policies EQ2: General Development and EQ3: Historic Environment. It will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, following due process.

### Process of Adoption/Consultation Statement

11. The council has an adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which creates a clear framework for consultation relating to Local Plan documents. In accordance with the process for creating a Supplementary Planning Document, there are a number of steps to follow to ensure that the document has been subject to appropriate consultation. The following has been delivered to date:
  - a. An early-stage public consultation on what features of shop front design are important – asking consultees for their views on what makes a shop front attractive/what makes them choose to visit. Three in-person consultation events were held at Chard Guildhall during October 2021 and an online survey ran via the Council's consultation portal (Citizen Space).
  - b. At the same time, statutory Local Plan consultees for Area West were notified by letter of the development of the new Chard Shop Front Design Guide and were invited to participate in this early-stage consultation.



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- c. The results of the early-stage consultation have informed the development of the draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide. A report on consultation to date is included as Appendix B.
  - d. A screening report to determine whether the Chard Shop Front Design Guide SPD requires a Habitats Regulation Assessment/Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out and sent to statutory consultees for their comment. This is attached as Appendix C.
12. The draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide must be subject to a formal consultation in order to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, which must be a minimum of 4 weeks. This must be approved by District Executive.
13. It is proposed that this consultation will launch on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 run until Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022, which is 2 weeks longer than the basic consultation period to account for the Christmas period.
14. In order for the Shop Front Design Guide to be adopted before the Council enters the pre-election period, the proposed timetable is as follows:
  - a. *Formal consultation:* 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022
  - b. *Amended document and consultation statement submitted to District Executive for recommendation to Full Council for adoption:* 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 meeting.
  - c. *Document submitted to Full Council for adoption:* 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022 meeting.
15. The completion of this process would mean that the Supplementary Planning Document would then support the delivery of the Local Plan. This creates a clear design style for shop fronts in Chard town centre, intended to support the wider regeneration of the area.

### Financial Implications

16. The Shop Front Design Guide creates a backdrop for the repair and improvement of shop fronts in Chard. Until March 2024, the High Street Heritage Action Zone will provide grant support for shop front improvements (funded by SSDC and Historic England, funding already ring-fenced) and the Guide will therefore assist with the effective implementation of the grant scheme.

### Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

17. None arising from this report.

### Council Plan Implications

18. The delivery of Chard Regeneration and the High Street Heritage Action Zone are amongst the Council's key priorities. This report therefore directly links to and supports these priorities.

### Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

19. The Shop Front Design Guide provides guidance aimed at ameliorating the negative impact of new developments. It is anticipated to have positive and beneficial effects on



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the built environment of Chard town centre. It offers guidance on the implementation of existing Local Plan policies, to provide further positive effects.

20. A screening report for the environmental implications of the Shop Front Design Guide is included as Appendix C, which provides further detail. The statutory environmental consultees have been invited to comment.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

21. This report is making no specific proposals that have an implication for equality and diversity but the proposed consultation will seek views on the principles of design of shop fronts in the town centre.

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

22. The consultation will encourage public feedback. Information will be processed to support the production of the Shop Front Design Guide in accordance with the legislation. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been carried out which considers the information collected in detail – this is available on request.

### **Background Papers**

- Draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide – Appendix A
- Consultation Report – Appendix B
- HRA/SEA Screening Assessment – Appendix C.