

## Chard Shop Front Design Guide

Executive Portfolio Holder: Ward Member(s)	Cllr Jason Baker, Portfolio Holder for Chard Regeneration Cllr Jason Baker (Chard Holyrood), Cllr Tricia O'Brien (Chard Combe)
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Service Manager:	Natalie Fortt, Regeneration Programme Manager
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## Purpose of the Report

1. To seek formal adoption of the Chard Shop Front Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document, supporting policies in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028, in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## Public Interest

2. This report is requesting that the new Chard Shop Front Design Guide is formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. The Guide is part of the Chard Regeneration work and High Street Heritage Action Zone. It contributes to the improvement of the town centre environment by giving clear guidelines to businesses and property owners on style and quality of shop fronts.
3. Formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document means that the content of the Guide will build on and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028. It does not form part of the Local Plan nor does it introduce new planning policies. It will, however, be a material consideration in decision-making.

## Recommendations

4. That Full Council agree to:
  - a. formally adopt the attached Chard Shop Front Design Guide (Appendix A) as a Supplementary Planning Document, and subsequently to delegate to the HSHAZ Project Manager to make copies of the SPD and adoption statement available to the public for the prescribed period.
  - b. note that the Chief Executive agreed to delegate to the Acting Director/HSHAZ Project Manager the authority to make any factual or typographical corrections to the SPD prior to making the copies available in this way.

## Background



5. 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
  - 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The purpose of the new Chard Shop Front Design Guide is to offer advice towards achieving successful shop fronts in Chard, when new or replacement frontages are installed. Chard's High Street Heritage Action Zone provides some grant funding for these sorts of improvements, therefore having effective design guidance in place will support the grant scheme.
9. 'Shop front' is a generic term, short-hand for the assemblage of an entrance, display window, frame and signage. The Guide's principles therefore apply to any property use that utilises this set-up, including retail units but also other commercial or community uses. This is because any such feature is a major contributor to an area's distinctive identity and character.
10. The Chard Shop Front Design Guide, as a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), 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 the Local Plan Policies *EQ2: General Development* and *EQ3: Historic Environment*. Achieving well-designed places is a key component of the NPPF (2021) to ensure better places in which to live and work. Design guides or codes which reflect local character



## South Somerset District Council

and design preferences provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design<sup>1</sup>.

### 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 an SPD, the Chard Shop Front Design Guide has been subject to appropriate consultation.
12. An initial public consultation was carried out to understand what features of shop front design are important. Consultees were asked for their views on what makes a shop front attractive/what makes them choose to visit. This was carried out through three in-person events held at Chard Guildhall during October 2021 and an online survey on the Council's consultation portal (Citizen Space).
13. 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.
14. The results of these early-stage consultation activities informed the development of the draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide. This is set out in Appendix B – Part 1.
15. The draft Chard Shop Front Design Guide was then presented to District Executive, where it was approved for formal consultation.
16. The formal consultation required by legislation<sup>2</sup> was carried out for 6 weeks – from Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 until Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022 – which was 2 weeks longer than the required 4-week consultation period for SPDs, to account for the Christmas period.
17. Hard copies of the draft Guide and consultation statement were made available to view in person at Chard Guildhall (Chard Town Council) and at SSDC's Petter's House. Forms to collect in-person responses were provided. An email address was also provided for any responses.
18. The draft Guide was also available to view online on the Council's consultation portal (Citizen Space) along with a survey to collect responses.
19. All consultees on the Local Plan consultation database were contacted to notify them of the consultation. This included the statutory agencies. Individuals who had taken part in the initial consultation and had asked to be kept informed were also notified, along with those who have registered to be kept informed of the Chard High Street Heritage Action Zone, were notified directly, as were all South Somerset elected members. The consultation was advertised more widely via press releases and social media posts.

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paragraphs 126, 128

<sup>2</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



## **South Somerset District Council**

20. The responses received in the formal consultation are set out in Appendix B – Part 2, along with a summary of the main issues raised and how they have been addressed in the final draft for adoption.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulation Assessment**

21. A screening exercise was carried out to determine whether the Chard Shop Front Design Guide SPD requires a Habitats Regulation Assessment/Strategic Environmental Assessment, and was sent to the statutory environment consultees for their comment. It is included here as Appendix D, for reference. All three consultees responded to confirm that they had no comments and/or that they agreed with our determination that these assessments are not required.

### **Adoption Statement**

22. Once adopted, the Chard Shop Front Design Guide will be made available with an accompanying Adoption Statement. The draft Adoption Statement is provided as Appendix C.

### **Financial Implications**

23. The Chard Shop Front Design Guide provides guidance for the improvement of shop fronts in Chard. Until March 2024, the High Street Heritage Action Zone is providing 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**

24. The SPD has been produced in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and when adopted will form a material consideration in planning decisions but it is not part of the development plan.
25. The Local Plan forms the development plan for the area of South Somerset. It guides and is the first consideration in determining planning applications for land use and development. Legally, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Council Plan Implications**

26. 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**

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



## South Somerset District Council

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

28. A screening report for the environmental implications of the Chard Shop Front Design Guide was prepared and is included as Appendix D for reference. As part of the formal consultation, the statutory environmental consultees were invited to comment on this screening and all were in support of our determination.

### Equality and Diversity Implications

<i>An Equality Impact Relevance Check Form has been completed in respect of the Proposal?</i>	Yes
<i>The Impact Relevance Check indicated that a full EIA was required?</i>	No
<i>If an EIA was <b>not</b> required please attach the Impact Relevance Check Form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of its findings in the comments box below.</i>	
<i>If an EIA <b>was</b> required please attach the completed EIA form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of the result of your Equality Impact Assessment in the comment box below.</i>	
<b>Additional Comments</b>	
<p>The Impact Relevance Check Form (see Appendix E) confirmed that an EIA was not required, based on the following justification:</p> <p><i>Consultation was carried out to inform the Guide, both in person and online, to facilitate wide involvement. The new SPD sets out guidance and advice to businesses and property owners who are looking to change or create new shopfronts in Chard. It does not require change to existing infrastructure nor does it introduce new policy. It will be considered in planning decisions and should have a positive impact on citizens e.g. guidance includes improving signage &amp; access into shops.</i></p>	

### Privacy Impact Assessment

29. Prior to the consultation, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was carried out which considered in detail the information to be collected. The DPIA is available on request.
30. Information collected during the consultation has been processed in accordance with the legislation. As such, personal details have been redacted from the schedule of representations made during the consultation (Appendix B).
31. No personal data is included in the Chard Shop Front Design Guide SPD.

### Background Papers



# South Somerset District Council

- Appendix A – Chard Shop Front Design Guide
- Appendix B – Consultation Report
- Appendix C – Draft Adoption Statement
- Appendix D – Environmental Screening
- Appendix E – Equality Impact Relevance Check Form.