



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Cabinet

Tuesday, 5 May 2026

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet
Member for Planning

South Kesteven Shopfront Design Guide Review

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on a review of the South Kesteven Shopfront Design Guide 18 months after its adoption by South Kesteven District Council.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Note the report on the South Kesteven Shop Front Design Guidance following the initial 18-month review period agreed during its adoption by Cabinet on 5 November 2024.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Planning & Growth in conjunction with Cabinet Member for Planning to approve 'quick reference guides' produced based on the document for use; and approve minor changes to the document including images and formatting which do not impact the substantive guidance given within the document**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 No financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

1.2 Following its adoption in November 2024 the South Kesteven Shopfront Guide became a material consideration in planning decisions relating to shopfronts. The Guide was adopted as a technical document to sit alongside the existing design guides which have been adopted as supplementary planning policies.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) Corporate Plan highlights the importance of maintaining the historic and built environment of the district within both the 'Connecting Communities' and 'Enabling Economic Opportunity' priorities.
- 2.2 Good design in town centres is a cornerstone of generating and supporting a sense of place which not only enhances civic pride and strengthens communities but also supports local businesses.
- 2.3 As has been demonstrated through the delivery of the SKDC and Historic England funded Shopfront Improvement Schemes in Grantham, appropriate shopfront design has a significant impact on the appearance and perception of our town centres.
- 2.4 During the Grantham High Street Heritage Action Zone programme (2020- 2024), participants in the Shopfront Regeneration Scheme had provided feedback to the Council that they found the existing Grantham Shopfront Design Guidance difficult to use and outdated. As such it was decided that an updated version of the guidance should be produced.

- 2.5 Due to the similarity of Shopfront Design requirements across the district, this provided the opportunity to combine the previously separate guidance for Grantham, Stamford and Bourne into one document, as well as include guidance for Market Deeping town centre, which was not covered under the existing supplementary planning documents.
- 2.6 The Shopfront Design Guide now provides advice which applies to shopfronts in all towns, and indeed shops across the district situated in village high streets, as well as specific guidance and special considerations for each town.
- 2.7 This was the first update in Shopfront Design Guidance within the District since 2005.
- 2.8 The new design guide provided updated information on planning legislation, including special provisions such as Stamford's Article 4 Direction (which was implemented in December 2018), as well as clarifying guidance on colour, signage, the use of vinyl window coverings, and supporting accessibility.
- 2.9 The new guidance document was adopted by Cabinet in November 2024, and it was agreed at that point that the document would be reviewed over the subsequent 18 months to ensure that it was fit for purpose.
- 2.10 The adoption of the new guidance supported the launch of a South Kesteven Shopfront Maintenance Grant which was funded through UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF). Applicants to the grant were encouraged to use the new guidance when developing their applications.
- 2.11 Applicants who have referred to the guidance have given positive feedback about their experience and ability to find the information required, which supported the delivery of a number of shopfront improvements. This includes 16 Market Place, Grantham which was significantly altered to bring the shopfront in line with design guidance. Before and after images are presented in **Appendix A**.
- 2.12 Some applicants have suggested that it would be useful to have a range of 'approved colours' for shopfronts listed in the document. This was considered but ultimately decided against, as what specific colours are suitable will vary depending on the shopfront, its design, age and location.
- 2.13 Conservation Officers also raised that if a list of 'approved' colours was included it may lead to confusion for owners or tenants of listed buildings who may misinterpret that using a colour from this list would negate the need for Listed Building Consent.
- 2.14 It has been noted that despite efforts to simplify the guidance and present it in simple language, the new design guide is lengthy, totalling 34 pages. It is understood that business owners may find this off putting.

- 2.15 As a result it is proposed that a series of single page 'quick reference guides' be produced on colour, signage/ advertisements, lighting, windows and doors, and security be produced to support property owners/ designers to make informed decisions.
- 2.16 On 17th March 2025, Ariane Buschmann (Conservation Officer) and Claire Saunders (High Street Heritage Action Zone Project Manager) gave a presentation on Shopfronts to Stamford Civic Society. During the meeting the updated shopfront design guidance was raised, and the members invited to give their comments.
- 2.17 The feedback received was positive, specific clarification about the use of colours which are produced as part of 'heritage' paint ranges included within the new guidance was welcomed.
- 2.18 Planning officers raised a minor concern that the background design of the document obscures some of the imagery in the guide and can interfere with some of the colours, which is unhelpful for the guidance relating to colour. This will be rectified.
- 2.19 Other Civic Societies within the District have been approached for their feedback, as they frequently engage with the Council with regards to shopfronts.
- 2.20 In order to ensure that guidance remains relevant and reflects local and national planning policies and legislation, it is important that design guidance is periodically reviewed and updated where necessary. It is suggested that design guide documentation is reviewed every five years as a minimum to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The town centres of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping are all within designated conservation areas which highlights the importance of their special character and historic value.
- 3.2 Many of the retail properties within the town centres are listed buildings and as such under a higher level of legal protection. Carrying out unauthorised works to a listed building is an offence which may result in prosecution.
- 3.3 Despite this many business owners are not aware of the relevant guidance and planning regulations which relate to shopfronts.
- 3.4 The updated Design Guide has significantly improved the accessibility of the guidance and been beneficial for the business community and it has been well received, however this could be improved further with the production of single page fact sheet style guidance covering the most frequently raised queries.

- 3.5 To ensure that the guidance remains fit for purpose, it should be reviewed and updated, if necessary, every five years, or following any significant change in local or national planning policy or legislation.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The 'do nothing' option, to not implement any suggestions raised through the review of the document has been considered. However, although this guidance document represents a very recent update in comparison to previous documents, it is important that the guidance be up to date and accessible to ensure that businesses are able to comply with all relevant requirements and legislation.
- 4.2 As such the 'do nothing' option has been discounted in favour of producing 'quick reference' guides on key topics within the guidance and reviewing Shopfront Design guidance on a pentannual basis.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Clear and accessible shopfront design guidance is important to maintaining the quality of the historic environment within the district's town centres, and thereby their attractiveness to visitors, residents and businesses.
- 5.2 The recommendations made within this report will ensure that guidance remains accessible, accurate and relevant, and will support the maintenance of a high-quality environment within South Kesteven's town centres.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 ['South Kesteven Shopfront Design Guide' Cabinet Report Tuesday 5th November 2024](#)

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A: Before and After images 16 Market Place, Grantham.