

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Liz Richardson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning	
DECISION DATE:	Not before 23rd July 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E2889
TITLE:	Adoption of informal planning guidance on commercial signage and the placing of tables and chairs on the highway in Bath Conservation Area	
WARD:	Weston, Lansdown, Lambridge, Bathwick, Newbridge, Kingsmead, Walcot, Abbey, Twerton, Oldfield, Westmoreland, Widcombe, Lyncombe, Odd Down and Combe Down Wards.	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex 1 Final version of the guidance Annex 2 Table summarising comments received and Council' response and changes made to guidance Annex 3 Draft version of the guidance 		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 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 can be counter-productive to the positive image and beauty of the City.
- 1.2 Design and Conservation guidance has been prepared to support a clear and consistent approach by the Council when dealing with these matters throughout Bath Conservation Area.
- 1.3 It is intended that the guidance will be for informal use by Development Management when determining applications for planning and listed building consent , as well as being a point of reference for property owners, retailers and agents.
- 1.4 It supplements both the saved B&NES Local Plan policies BH.17 – BH.21 on this matter, and the emerging Placemaking Plan Policy D.9 'Advertising and Street Furniture for Commercial Premises'.
- 1.5 The draft guidance was included as part of the stakeholder consultation on the Draft Placemaking Plan. One detailed response was received to the public consultation on the guidance. This came from Bath Preservation Trust and the document has been amended where appropriate in response to the comments received.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member agrees that the guidance, as amended following public consultation, should now be finalised for use for development management purposes.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The cost of preparing the guidance and the public consultation has been provided from relevant existing budgets within Development Management.
- 3.2 There are not considered to be any financial implications related to the decision.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Where planning permission, advertisement consent or listed building consent is required under the Town and Country Planning legislation, control is provided over the design and positioning of signage and the use of the highway for the placing of tables and chairs. Each application is considered on its merits, but the guidance will assist in ensuring a higher degree of consistency by the planning officers in the decision making process. It will also guide property owners, retailers and agents in the submission of applications.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Bath Conservation Area is located in the World Heritage Site and is spread over a wide area. It contains a significantly high number of listed buildings, many of which are in commercial use.
- 5.2 In the last decade and more there have been substantial gains in terms of improving the character and visual appearance of the Conservation Area. This includes the Council's own public realm projects. At Widcombe Parade and London Road such projects have recently improved key entrances to the city and further enhanced the visual appearance and setting of the Conservation Area.
- 5.3 Bath remains an important destination for tourism within the United Kingdom. In excess of four million people visited Bath in 2014 bringing over £500 million to the local economy. As well as the historic attractions offered by the city, much of the appeal to visitors is the visual appearance of individual and groups of buildings such as the Royal Crescent, Great Pulteney Street and The Circus. Others such as Milsom Street and Union Street also attract visitors for shopping, and signage and provision of outdoor eating facilities enhances this offer.
- 5.4 The Conservation Area has distinct 'character areas' each with its own distinct qualities in terms of visual appearance and setting, contributing to the Conservation Area as a whole. It is important to protect this local character and to avoid signage and placing of tables and chairs on the public highway causing both visual and physical harm to any heritage asset.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 The preparation of the design and conservation guidance is intended to assist in preserving the visual appearance and character of Bath Conservation Area.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 No other options were considered suitable as it was considered that the approach taken should be informal to achieve best results. The guidance serves this purpose and is also educational. It will support officers when explaining to applicants the need for a

consistently high standard and quality of design. A more 'draconian' or heavy handed approach to the matter would be self-defeating and potentially harm the good working relationships between the Council and the commercial sector in the City.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As explained above, the draft guidance was included as part of the stakeholder consultation on the Draft Placemaking Plan which ran from 16th December 2015 to 6th February 2016. Certain groups and organisations were specifically informed of the public consultation to ensure they were made aware, including the Business Improvement District (BID) the Southgate Shopping Centre Management Company, Historic England and Bath Preservation Trust. Internal workshops were also held with officers from relevant departments.
- 8.2 One detailed response was received to the public consultation on the guidance. This came from Bath Preservation Trust; the document has been amended where appropriate in response to the comments received. Details of the response and amendments made are set out in Annex 2.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	Annex 1 Final version of the guidance Annex 2 Table summarising comments received and Council' response and changes made to guidance Annex 3 Draft version of the guidance
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