



Wheathampstead & District Preservation Society

Protecting and promoting Wheathampstead

Design Statement



Signage in the Parish of Wheathampstead

Signage in the Parish of Wheathampstead: Design Statement

1 Introduction

As was clear from the Village Plan survey conducted in 2008, the residents of Wheathampstead feel proud of where they live. They appreciate the character and the feel of the village. They want to keep it separate from the surrounding towns, and want it to feel like a village. They want Wheathampstead to have an identity of its own.



Many villages in Hertfordshire and elsewhere are very successful at preserving their character and strongly promoting the principle of conservation. To meet the expectations of those who responded to the Village Plan survey, Wheathampstead needs to be one of those villages.

Residents want Wheathampstead to feel like a village

The kinds of sign that are used and managed in a village are not the only element that contributes to the local character, but they can make a very considerable difference. To achieve a standard of signage that confirms and strengthens the separate village identity of Wheathampstead will require the participation of the whole community: residents, businesses and other organisations, as well as the bodies that have responsibility for public signs. We shall all need to adhere to a common vision.

In the central conservation area where preserving the character of Wheathampstead is most crucial, much of the onus will fall on businesses. It must be remembered however that the majority of the businesses in the centre of Wheathampstead are not in competition with one another – a factor that could easily lead to the use of forceful and inappropriate signs. Rather, the business community as a whole is in competition with the businesses that exist in other locations, such as the nearby towns where people may choose to shop in preference to the village.

It is therefore very much in the interests of local businesses to work together and help create a unique environment in Wheathampstead in which residents and visitors alike will choose to shop and to conduct their business.

This Design Statement does not replace the apparatus for obtaining planning permission. It instead seeks to advise and influence. The underlying assumption is that the majority of residents, businesses and other organisations will be willing to conform to reasonable guidelines provided that they are aware of them and provided too that the guidelines are clearly for the benefit of the community.

2 Shop Fascias and similar signs

The fascias on shops and similar premises (such as offices operating from premises with shop-fronts, restaurants and public houses) are a very noticeable and often memorable feature of a village such as Wheathampstead. It is imperative that they should convey the look and feel of a village, and it is ideal too that they should be distinctive in a way that makes Wheathampstead feel unique and the kind of place that residents will choose to shop in and that visitors will want to return to.

An important way of achieving these objectives is to avoid clutter, and this applies as much to signs on premises as it does to other types of signage. Fascia should therefore be seen as the main (and ideally the only) form of external advertising on the front of the premises.



Shops should convey the look and feel of a village and should appear uncluttered



The importance of fascias in determining the character of a village should not be underestimated. The size and proportions of the fascia – and in particular the depth of the fascia – are major factors in determining the proportions of the whole

building. The fascia should be seen as complementing the balance of the complete frontage.



The size and proportions of the fascia are major factors in determining the proportions of the whole building

Many similar considerations apply to large permanent signs that proclaim the name of the company or institution outside other commercial and public premises, especially if those premises are in conspicuous or visually sensitive locations.

For convenience separate guidelines are shown below for:

- shops and other premises with fascias that either are in the central conservation area or are listed buildings;
- other commercial and public premises in the central conservation area or in listed buildings;
- shops and other commercial or public premises elsewhere in Wheathampstead that are not listed buildings.

Many of the same general principles apply however to all three categories.

2.1 Guidelines for

- ⇒ *shop fascias in the central Conservation Area and*
- ⇒ *on other listed buildings*

These guidelines apply to shops and similar premises (such as offices operating from premises with shop-fronts, restaurants and public houses). They apply only within the central conservation area and to listed buildings. The term “shop-front” is used here in the sense of the frontage of any of these premises.

1. The design of a fascia must respect the period and style of:
 - the building
 - the other elements of the shop-frontand it must be compatible in design, colour and texture with them.
In this way, along with those other elements of the shop-front, the fascia should display a unity with the architectural style of the building.
2. The height of the fascia must be in proportion to the scale of the building. In general, the fascia should be shallow rather than deep, and must never fill the entire space between the shop window and the first floor windows.
3. The fascia must be constructed from traditional materials, such as timber.
 - a) In the case of a timber fascia, the detailing and construction of the fascia panel trims and end-pieces must also be traditional.
 - b) Non-timber fascia panels, if these are used, must have a matt, non-reflective finish, and the panel trim should be in the same colour as the panel.
4. The fascia must be in a heritage colour that (a) matches or complements the colour scheme of the building, and (b) does not detract from the appearance of the immediate area.
5. Fascias must have plain designs without large extraneous logos, underlining or other embellishments. (Discreet logos are acceptable where they do not detract from the overall appearance of the building.) Mass produced or company image signs must be avoided.
6. Lettering and numbering on fascias must:
 - a) be proportional in size to the depth of the fascia itself, and in any event must not exceed 500mm in height;
 - b) use letter faces or fonts that are classical in style, preferably with serifs;
 - c) be either
 - wholly in upper case or
 - in lower case, with upper case used in accordance with the traditional conventions of punctuation;
 - d) be matt and non-reflective;
 - e) be in a heritage colour that matches or complements the colour scheme of the remainder of the shop-front (and in particular the colour of the fascia panel);
 - f) not be multi-coloured.
7. Fascias must not be internally illuminated.

It is expected that fascia signage will constitute the principal form of signage on a shop-front. Any other lettering or signs that appear on the shop-front (whether on a window or elsewhere) must adhere to the guidelines above insofar as they are applicable. Any lettering that is permanently fixed to a window must be discreet and must not cover an undue percentage of the window.

2.2 Guidelines for

- ⇒ *signs at other premises in the central Conservation Area and*
- ⇒ *at other listed buildings*

These guidelines apply to large permanent signs – whether free-standing or attached to the building – outside other types of commercial and public premises that proclaim the name of the company or institution. They apply only within the central conservation area and to signs relating to premises in listed buildings. They do not apply to brass plates and the like. The term “building” is used here in the sense of the building to which the sign is attached or, in the case of a free-standing sign, any building close to which the sign stands.

1. The sign must respect the period and style of the building, and it must be compatible in design, colour and texture with the building.
2. The height of the sign must be in proportion to the scale of the building.
3. The sign must be constructed from traditional materials, such as timber.
4. The sign must have a wood finish or must be in a heritage colour that (a) matches or complements the colour scheme of the building, and (b) does not detract from the appearance of the immediate area.
5. Signs must have plain designs without large extraneous logos, underlining or other embellishments. (Discreet logos are acceptable where they do not detract from the overall appearance of the building or the area.) Mass produced or company image signs must be avoided.
6. Lettering and numbering on signs or which themselves form a sign must:
 - a) (if on a sign) be proportional in size to the dimensions of the sign itself;
 - b) use letter faces or fonts must that are classical in style, preferably with serifs;
 - c) be either
 - wholly in upper case or
 - in lower case, with upper case used in accordance with the traditional conventions of punctuation;
 - d) be matt and non-reflective;
 - e) be in a heritage colour that matches or complements the colour scheme of the building;
 - f) not be multi-coloured.
7. Signs must not be internally illuminated.

2.3 Guidelines for other premises in Wheathampstead

These guidelines apply to all commercial and public premises in the parish of Wheathampstead that are not covered by the guidelines above. The term “building” is used here in the sense of the building to which the fascia or sign is attached or, in the case of a free-standing sign, any building close to which the sign stands.

1. The design of a fascia or sign must respect the period and style of the building and it must be compatible in design, colour and texture with the building.
2. The height of a fascia or sign must be in proportion to the scale of the building.
3. The fascia or sign must be in a wood finish or in a colour that (a) matches or complements the colour scheme of the building, and (b) does not detract from the appearance of the immediate area.
4. Lettering and numbering on fascias or signs must:
 - a) be proportional to the size of the fascia or sign itself;
 - b) be in a colour that matches or complements the colour scheme of the remainder of the building (and in particular the background colour of the fascia or sign).
 Provision b) applies also to lettering that itself forms a sign.

3 A-boards

In some areas of the UK strict limitations are imposed on the use of A-boards. Some local authorities for example, such as the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, do not permit the use of A-boards within conservation areas. In areas of particular natural beauty (e.g. the Lake District National Park), A-boards are typically allowed only on forecourts and not on public pavements. In some areas residents and businesses work together to ensure that all A-boards follow a similar approach or have a similar design.



Such limitations do not apply in Wheathampstead, even in the central conservation area, and it is generally accepted that A-boards may be used where they are necessary to promote a business. It is essential however that, at least within the central conservation area, any display of A-boards respects the character and sensitivity of the village.

Left: Example of a well-designed A-Board

Poorly designed and poorly sited A-boards can be detrimental to the character of an area. If they are too numerous, badly positioned or inappropriately designed, they

can make the area appear cluttered. Not only that, but they lose their impact as a means of advertising and fail to serve their primary purpose.

Guidelines

1. A-boards must be designed so that their appearance is sympathetic to the surrounding area. In the central conservation area:
 - a) they should be constructed of wood;
 - b) apart from any parts that form a chalk-board, they should either:
 - have a wood finish or
 - be in a heritage colour that (1) matches or complements the colour scheme of the premises to which they relate, and (2) does not detract from the appearance of the immediate area;
 - c) for any permanent lettering, letter faces or fonts should be used that are not overtly modern or bold;
 - d) any temporary lettering (e.g. in chalk) should be neatly written, avoiding the use of garish colours.
2. A-boards must be of sufficiently robust construction that they do not easily blow over.
3. A-boards should not normally exceed 0.6m in width or 1.0m in height.
4. At any one location at any one time a single business must not display more than one A-board.
5. A-boards must not be displayed outside the business hours of the premises to which they relate.

Businesses that display A-boards must also take into account the safety of the public. Among the main considerations are that A-boards:

- must be sited in such a way that they do not cause an obstruction or inconvenience to:
 - pedestrians (particularly people who are disabled – and adequate space must therefore be left for wheelchair access), or
 - the emergency services;
- must not include protruding or other elements that could cause :
 - people to trip or fall, or
 - other injuries to passers by or damage to their property, such as the snagging of clothes by splinters.

It is acknowledged that A-boards can be an effective means of encouraging business. So long as the principles above are followed and they are carefully designed so as to add to the visual richness of the scene, A-boards can be accommodated in the village.

5 Other Temporary Signs

Signs, even temporary ones, are an important part of village life, providing information and direction. Well designed signs add vitality and enhance the general “feel” of the village. The reverse is true of temporary signs which are poorly designed, badly executed and intrusive. This is a difficult balance to achieve because signs are intended to attract attention and are therefore often placed in prominent locations. This clearly causes conflict in an attractive area. This type of sign can dominate the streetscape and obscure important building features, but it is also vital for the life of the village that local businesses are able to thrive.



It is important to think about and respect Wheathampstead’s rich visual history when considering erecting a temporary sign and ensure it is sympathetic to the surroundings.

It is also most important to make a distinction between temporary signs publicising local and community events and temporary advertising signs.

Left: Temporary signs, as with this To Let sign, can be very intrusive

Guidelines:

1. Elements such as windows or decorative details should not be obscured by signs.
2. The material, style and colour of temporary signs should complement the building and surroundings.
3. Any lighting of temporary signage needs to be subtle and in keeping with the surroundings.
4. The use of plastic faced signs should be avoided.
5. Temporary signs should be temporary. Those publicising local events should be placed for a reasonable time in advance and should be removed as soon as the event

has taken place. Advertising signs promoting limited offers must be removed as soon as the offer closes. Signs promoting permanent aspects of a business must comply with the guidelines covering permanent signs.

6. Signs on Building Façades and side walls should not exceed;
7. Temporary signs painted on windows should be avoided.
8. Should we be proscriptive about font, size and colour?
9. Temporary signs should not dominate façades or obscure architectural features
10. Temporary signs should not 'stand out' by excessive use of colour, shape or style
11. Temporary signs should not overlap or obscure other signs
12. Temporary signs should not duplicate information
13. Temporary signs should not cause damage to buildings when installed or removed