

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Shopfronts and Advertisements

Supplementary
Planning Guidance

November 2015



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been produced to expand on existing planning policy on shopfronts and advertisements set out in the adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP). The document provides clear and consistent guidance to applicants on the requirements of the Local Planning Authority with respect to shopfront design and security and advertisements.

1.2 This document covers the whole of Blaenau Gwent. It is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications for replacement of and alterations to shopfronts and building facades including security measures. It also provides detailed information on the display / erection of new advertisements.

1.3 There is a mix of shopfronts across Blaenau Gwent. Some are new shopfronts whilst others date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and often retain elements of the original Victorian and Edwardian architectural style. There are also variations between town centres, for example the shopfronts in Tredegar, particularly in the conservation area tend to be more traditional with historic features. Whereas Ebbw Vale tends to have more new shopfronts.

1.4 The guidance does not seek to impose wholly traditional shopfronts or a standard design solution on

every retail unit, or to remove flexibility for innovation and flair; but does promote a restoration of the traditional character of most shopping streets.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Attractive and successful shopping areas are integral to the vitality and viability of towns and villages and often form the heart of the communities. Many of the towns and villages in Blaenau Gwent have a proud history as commercial centres and remain important centres for retail activity.

2.2 Suitably designed shopfronts and building facades not only preserve the character of buildings but also contribute to the overall attractiveness. Inappropriate alterations can have a negative effect not only on the building but also the entire street. If the visual appearance of a shopping street is to be enhanced, well-designed shopfronts and building facades built with good quality materials are essential.

2.3 In recent years, the need for shopfront security has become increasingly important to combat the threat of theft and vandalism. Unfortunately, the use of some security measures, particularly solid roller shutters, has had a serious harmful impact on the appearance of buildings and on the character of some streets within Blaenau Gwent.

2.4 This SPG document seeks to improve the appearance of town centres recognising an attractive street frontage benefits trade and the local economy. It is essential that property owners use appropriate security measures which have minimum effect on the street scene.

3.0 THE POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 National Planning Policy is contained within [Planning Policy Wales](#) and [Technical Advice Notes](#). Local Planning Policy is contained within the [adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan](#) (November 2012).

National Planning Policy

3.2 Good design is a key aim of the planning system. Planning Policy Wales requires that Local Development Plans provide clear policies setting out design expectations.

3.3 [Technical Advice Note 7: “Outdoor Advertisement Control”](#) and [Technical Advice Note 12: “Design”](#) which supplements Planning Policy Wales supports the provision of detailed advice on outdoor advertisements and shopfront design.

Local Planning Policy

3.4 This SPG provides supporting information with regard to design policies included in the Local Development

(LDP). The SPG supports Objective 1; Strategic Policy SP3 “The Retail Hierarchy and the Vitality and Viability of the Town Centres” and Development Management Policy DM2 “Design and Placemaking”. Appendix 1 contains a copy of these policies.

4.0 SHOPFRONT DESIGN

What is Good Shopfront Design and Why is it Important?

4.1 Good design is essential to the creation of a high quality built environment. The promotion of good design and management of shopping streets can help to revitalise town centres and help them to remain an essential and vibrant part of the communities in Blaenau Gwent.

4.2 The appearance of shopfronts (including the combination of window displays, shop signage, canopies and building frontage above the shopfronts) form the dominant visual impression of a shopping area’s character. They are essential to the way in which shoppers experience their environment.

4.3 Good shopfront design is achieved when these elements create a balanced and proportioned façade, which sits comfortably on the building and within the wider context.



How do you Assess the Building's Context?

4.4 Buildings and shopfronts vary across the County Borough, adding interest, texture and quality to shopping areas.

4.5 There are a number of important elements to look for when assessing the character of a building. These include:

- Building proportions, such as width and height
- Architectural style, details and materials
- Historic value
- Width of pavement
- Features that detract from the building

4.6 In addition to assessing the building it is also important to consider the wider streetscene which will include neighbouring buildings and their shopfronts and surrounding public spaces. Important elements to consider when assessing the streetscene include:

- Style and proportions of neighbouring building facades and shopfronts
- Level of uniformity or variety within the streetscene
- Visual prominence of shop / building within the streetscene
- Repeated architectural features in surrounding shopfronts
- Opportunities for improvement

4.7 Consideration should be given as to whether the new shopfront will stand out within the streetscene or blend in. The building's context may lend itself towards an innovative, modern design or the retention of existing features with the aim of achieving harmony with the wider area.

4.8 Consideration should also be given to whether the building is listed or in a conservation area. Further information on shopfront design guidance for Tredegar Conservation Area can be found in the [Tredegar Townscape Initiative Conservation Area Appraisal Design Guide](#).

Should you Retain, Repair or Replace a Shopfront?

4.9 Where existing shopfronts include features which are of value or are original to the building, consideration should be given to whether these can be retained or repaired.

4.10 Original features may have been covered or damaged by subsequent renovations, and it is desirable that these are reinstated, to retain as far as possible the original elements of the building.

4.11 Consideration should be given to retaining or reinstating lost features where shops form part of a row within a single building and where the uniformity of the shopfronts forms a strong part of the character of the building.

4.12 Where shopfronts do not have original features; are of poor appearance; are unsuitable to the function of the shop; or where no shopfront currently exists, consideration should be given to how a new shopfront can be sympathetically integrated into the building facade.

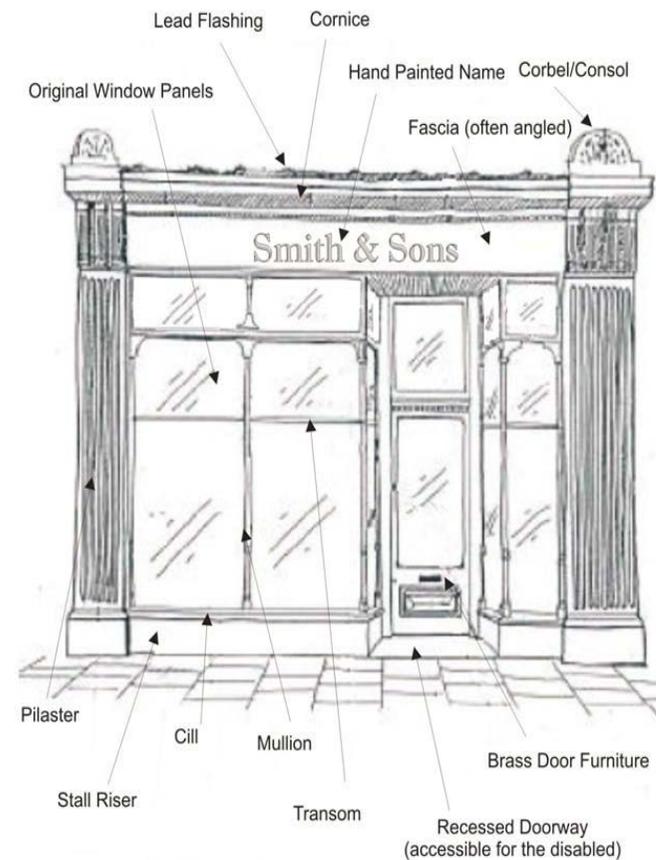


Examples of insensitively designed shopfronts

What are the Principles of Good Shopfront Design?

4.13 The features set out in Figure 1 below are typical of traditional shopfronts and provide a sound basis for shopfront design within the County Borough.

Figure 1: Traditional Shopfront



4.14 Fascia boards and lettering should be constructed to respect the building as a whole. Fascia should not dominate the shopfront and should be in proportion to it. The fascia sign should not reach the base of the first floor window sills and care should be taken when a fascia board straddles more than one building. On a traditional building, an angled timber fascia is most appropriate either with hand painted lettering or with individual cut stand off lettering. Consol brackets should be hardwood, while the pilasters can be clad in wood, or other aesthetically suitable material.

4.15 Where possible, **doors** that are recessed should be retained in any shopfront design. Separate entrances to upper floors should be retained and incorporated into the shopfront frame of pilasters and fascias. Doorways and entrances that are suitable for all users including disabled people, parents with pushchairs and the elderly should always be considered in all shopfront proposals. Advice in relation to inclusive access is included in [Part M of the Building Regulations](#).

4.16 Stallrisers provide a visual base for the shopfront and may be stone, brick, render, tiled or panelled wood to complement the host building. The appropriate height of the stallriser from the pavement will be dependent upon the design of the original building and the character of the streetscene. When stallrisers have previously been removed it is desirable that they are reinstated.

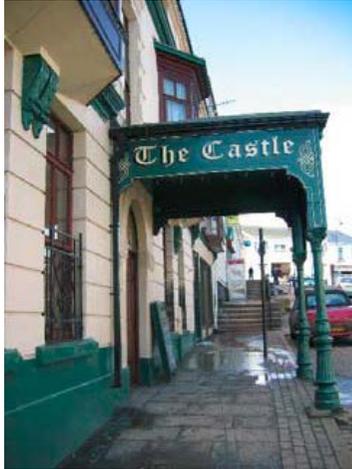
4.17 Often, stores refurbish the facades of **multiple buildings** to accommodate one large extended frontage. Where a single business occupies two or more adjoining shops, any new design should ensure that the shopfronts of the individual buildings are respected rather than incorporated into a single design spanning a number of buildings (The photo below is a good example of this).



4.18 It is recognised that the corporate images and house styles are important to some companies. However, the vernacular and character of the area's older buildings also have to be observed. Standard designs should adhere to these guidelines.

4.19 Retractable Blinds / Fixed Canopies should be sympathetic to the host building in scale, position, design and materials. Too much variety in style, location and materials is potentially disturbing. Retractable Blinds and fixed canopies should be limited to those shopfronts where needed, generally canopies are more useful and fitted on

shops on eastern sides of streets. Permanent plastic blinds should generally be avoided.



The unique canopy entrance to the Castle Hotel is a historic architectural feature.

4.20 Materials for shopfront improvements should complement the age and character of the building. For example other less traditional materials such as aluminium may be considered.

4.21 Display windows of a shop should be a large area of glass from the stallriser to the fascia. Mullions (as shown on Figure 1) can be inserted, which emphasise the vertical proportions of the building. Horizontal transoms (as shown on Figure 1) should only be used with great care as they can detract from and visually conflict with this vertical emphasis.

Other Approaches to Shopfront Design

4.22 Modern buildings may have very different styles and proportions to older buildings in the County Borough and a different design solution may be appropriate. For example the omission of window frames and stallrisers or the replacements of the fascia with an internal sign located behind glazing may be an appropriate design in the context of the streetscene or host building. In some cases, high quality original or imaginative modern design may also be used to integrate modern elements into older buildings.

5.0 SHOPFRONT SECURITY

5.1 Owners and occupiers of retail premises want to ensure their businesses are secure, and external roller shutters are often used for this purpose. While the Council recognises the need and desire to ensure that premises are secure, these shutters can have an adverse impact on the building and the street scene through obscuring shopfronts, and creating an unwelcoming environment when premises are not open. Therefore consideration should be given to other security measures prior to the use of external roller shutters.

5.2 The following bullet points set out security measures that are likely to have a less adverse impact and, depending on their design and location, are generally considered preferable to external roller shutters.

- **Use of stallrisers** can help prevent wear and tear, damage and vandalism caused by kicking windows (Photo 1).
- **Dividing shop windows into multiple panes, with internally reinforced frames** rather than having one expanse of glass makes them less susceptible to damage (Photo 2).
- **Securing recessed doorways and ground floor windows with wrought iron or steel gates** is generally a more attractive option of securing doorways rather than roller shutters (Photo 3 on next page).

- **Fixed railings**, when appropriately designed can help to prevent vandalism. Railings can also be removable as well as fixed.
- **Use of internal lattice / brick-bond grilles** do not normally require planning permission, although Listed Building Consent is likely to be required where a building is listed. They tend to have significantly less impact on the streetscene than external roller shutters (Photo 4 on next page).
- **Removable / demountable mesh grilles of an appropriate design and colour**
- **Wooden shutters**
- **Appropriate lighting** can act as a deterrent to crime.
- **Use of toughened / laminated glass** (although this may not be appropriate on traditional shopfronts that retain their original glass).
- **Anti-shatter window film**

5.3 It is important to note that whilst these measures generally have a less adverse visual impact than external roller shutters, they will only be acceptable if they are designed to a satisfactory standard and are appropriate for the building / location.



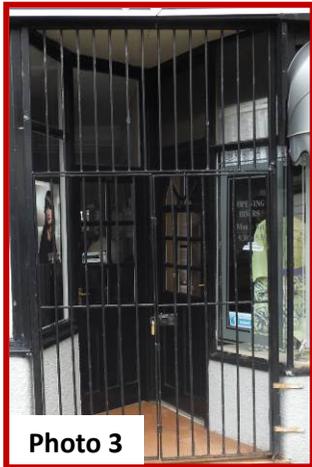


Photo 3

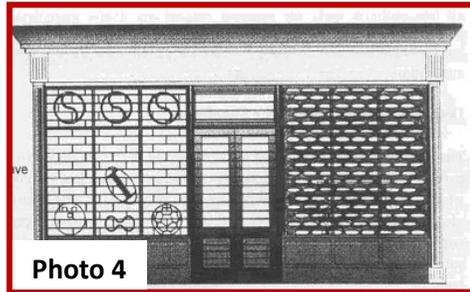


Photo 4

Note: Illustrations of three types of acceptable internal “open weave” retractable shutters or grilles (Source: Mansfield Council’s “*Shopfront Security Design Guidance*”, 1994).

5.4 If other security measures are clearly demonstrated not to be appropriate, external roller shutters may be considered, depending on the type and location of the building. **However, solid metal are not acceptable** (Photo 5).

5.5 It is important to note that the housing of any proposed roller shutters must be a minimum 2.1 m above ground level, and that the locking system and guides of the roller shutters must not encroach onto the public highway.



Photo 5

5.6 External roller shutters with the following characteristics are more likely to be considered acceptable:

- **Lattice or brick bond grille style roller shutters** allows the shopfront to be seen and is generally less foreboding than a solid metal shutter (Photo 6).
- The **housing box** is hidden behind the fascia. Other elements of the housing should also be appropriately integrated (Photo 7).
- **Painting or powder coatings** help to integrate the shutter with the shopfront. Powder coating is generally preferred as it requires less maintenance.
- **Individual shutters** are fitted to cover just the glazed area of windows and doors, ensuring that architectural features such as fascias, stallrisers and pilasters remain visible when the shutters are in place.
- **Perforated Roller Shutters** may also be acceptable in some circumstances, but the use of alternatives will generally be preferred and should be considered first (Photo 8 on next page).



Photo 6



Photo 7



This is a bad example of a solid metal roller shutter with external housing box in galvanised metal finish

6.0 ADVERTISEMENTS

6.1 This section of the document focuses on the location and design of all advertisements in Blaenau Gwent. Advertisements are, by their very nature, intended to stand out, their primary function being to attract attention and highlight the goods or services to which they relate.

6.2 There are two types of advertisements:-

- Advertisements relating to buildings
- Advertisement hoardings

ADVERTISEMENTS RELATING TO BUILDINGS

6.3 The design of any sign should always be in proportion and scale to the building to which it is attached. On shops the usual and most appropriate location is the fascia board. The materials and style of the building should also be reflected in the design of the sign. Where a business operates from premises which is predominantly residential in character it may be appropriate for properties to restrict to a single external nameplate or equivalent.

Illuminations

6.4 Many signs require extra lighting at night. However, in the interests of visual amenity projecting box signs and internally illuminated signs will be resisted. Where existing street lighting is deemed insufficient the use of trough

lighting or spotlights may be appropriate. Intermittent or concealed signs are considered inappropriate.

Materials

6.5 Advertisements are relatively short lived compared to the buildings to which they relate. Therefore, size, design materials and colour are important to any proposal. A traditional shopfront will necessitate a suitable advertisement. When attached to a building the materials used should reflect those of the existing building.

Hanging Signage



6.6 Some buildings have hanging signs for additional advertising, which can add to the quality of the streetscene if hand-painted and designed to reflect the character of the buildings. Signage projecting off buildings must not encroach to within 450 mm of a carriageway; this is required to maintain a safe distance to accommodate any vehicle overhang.

Multiple Advertisements

6.7 The Local Planning Authority encourage a single sign at the entrance to industrial estates advertising all businesses on the estate this avoids visual clutter and confusion for motorists. The issue of visual clutter also applies to shops that erect more than one sign on the primary elevation. It should also be noted that although you may be permitted to place a sign on the forecourt of the premises, it is not permitted to place one on the pavement without prior approval by the Highway Authority. In certain circumstances the Highway Authority may permit 'A-board' type signs on pavements subject to a licence being granted and only where the pavement will not be unduly obstructed.

ADVERTISEMENT HOARDINGS

6.8 Advertisement hoardings generate income to the area, directly via rental to landowners on which the advertisements are located and indirectly through attracting trade. Advertisement hoardings will be restricted to commercial areas where its effect on visual amenity will be minimised. Panels attached to buildings should be in scale with their host property and their surroundings so as not to dominate properties and should not protrude above the highest part of the roof.

6.9 Poster advertising is not appropriate in predominantly residential areas and accordingly free standing 48 sheet and 96 sheet panels positioned on the

gable ends of a house will be strongly opposed unless the house is immediately adjacent to a commercial centre.

6.10 Freestanding hoardings may be suitable where they screen unsightly or vacant ground or are positioned adjacent to roads in or near shopping areas. However, where they are located abutting primary routes and in areas of landscape value they will be opposed in the interests of visual amenity.

APPENDIX 1: RELEVANT LDP POLICIES

Objective 1:

By 2021, Ebbw Vale will be the main service and retail hub for the County Borough supported by a network of vibrant district / local hubs that provide a range of local services and facilities for their local communities. The district hubs will be well linked to the principal hub of Ebbw Vale through sustainable modes of transport.

Strategic Policy :

SP3 The Retail Hierarchy and Vitality and Viability of the Town Centres

1. In order to deliver thriving town centres and protect local shopping facilities a retail hierarchy is defined as follows:

Principal Town Centre

a. Ebbw Vale will perform a sub-regional retail role.

District Town Centres

b. Abertillery, Tredegar and Brynmawr will act as district shopping centres principally to serve the needs of their districts. Brynmawr District Town Centre will be linked to the new retail provision at Lakeside Retail Park.

Local Town Centre

c. Blaina will act as a local shopping centre that will be

protected and enhanced to provide facilities for the local community.

Neighbourhood Centres

a. Local shops in neighbourhood centres will be protected to meet every day local shopping needs.

2. In order to improve the vitality and viability of the town centres

a. Shops, offices and other commercial premises where appropriate, will be upgraded by means of refurbishment and redevelopment;

b. Opportunities to improve the retail offer will be implemented;

c. The provision of better vehicular access and circulation arrangements, improved public transport facilities and provision of additional car parking spaces will be provided where necessary; and

d. Disabled access and facilities will be improved.

3. In order to address local retailing needs, provision for 10,200 sq m of comparison and 2,445 sq m of convenience floorspace is required over the plan period.

6.21 In order to meet future retail needs in a co-ordinated and sustainable manner, a retail hierarchy has been

established. At the top of the hierarchy is the Principal Town Centre of Ebbw Vale (Sub-Regional Role), followed by Abertillery, Tredegar and Brynmawr (District Town Centres) followed by Blaina (Local Town Centre) and Neighbourhood Centres.

6.22 The Wales Spatial Plan identifies Ebbw Vale as a key settlement that has a critical role to play in the success of the Capital Region. Consequently, Ebbw Vale will perform a sub-regional retail role. The LDP seeks to maintain a strong, attractive and dynamic town centre that is highly accessible and has a good degree of choice in both comparison (non-food) and convenience (food) shopping and quality services and facilities. The Plan acknowledges that the town centre has the physical capacity for further growth in its retail and service provision.

6.23 District and Local Town Centres form an important part of Blaenau Gwent's retail hierarchy and of its social, economic and physical fabric. In addition to providing local shopping facilities they also accommodate a range of services, facilities and employment.

6.24 District Town Centres are generally larger and generally contain a greater variety of retail and non-retail uses, including banks, building societies, leisure facilities and business offices. Consequently, they are generally more commercial in nature and draw comparatively larger number of shoppers. A Local Town Centre is generally smaller in size and variety of uses and more likely to retain a

residential character. The size and character of District Town Centres means that they are more likely to be able to satisfactorily accommodate a greater range and mix of non-retail uses including business offices and commercial leisure facilities.

6.25 Local shops play a vital role in sustaining smaller neighbourhood centres and reducing the need for residents to travel to meet everyday needs. Neighbourhood centres may typically include a small convenience shop, newsagents and sub post office.

6.26 The Heads of the Valleys Retail Project (CACI January 2008) identified that there are opportunities, in each of the 5 retail areas, to enhance the quality of the retail offer, through attracting good independent retailers and enhancing the quality of the retail accommodation and retail environment.

6.27 The low car ownership rates in Blaenau Gwent, together with high levels of deprivation mean that the Council needs to ensure that all members of the community can access the retail areas. This relates to access by bus, car, walking and cycling together with internal circulation and parking provision.

6.28 There are Town Centre Action Plans in place for the Principal and District Town Centres, which identify regeneration schemes. A Regeneration Action Plan covers Blaina Local Town Centre.

Development Management Policy:

DM2 Design and Placemaking

Development proposals will be permitted provided:-

- a. They are appropriate to the local context in terms of type, form, scale and mix;
- b. They are of good design which reinforces local character and distinctiveness of the area or they positively contribute to the area's transformation and raise density, where appropriate;
- c. The development has regard to 'Secured by Design' principles;
- d. In the case of extensions to buildings, they reflect, complement or enhance the form, siting, materials, architectural details and character of the original building, its curtilage and the wider area;
- e. In the case of proposals for new and replacement shopfronts and signage, they make a positive contribution to the streetscene, Roller shutters should be sensitively designed and integrated into the overall design of the shopfront;
- f. In the case of the public realm and key locations such as town centres, major routes and junctions, the character and the quality of the built form is to a high standard of design and, where appropriate, includes public art; and

- g. Landscaping and planting, where appropriate, achieves a suitable visual setting for the scheme and integrates it into the wider context.

7.23 All new developments must enhance and respect their surroundings and contribute towards the local identity. Developments must be of an appropriate type, form, scale and mix, for their location or positively contribute to the area's transformation and raise density as the Council is committed to raising the standard of design on all new development. Developers will be required to submit comprehensive masterplans for residential proposals of 50 dwellings and over which must have regard to the need to create high quality, sustainable and locally distinct places.

7.24 Much can be done to reduce opportunities for crime through management, design or changes to the environment. The design and layout of new development can make crime more difficult to commit and/or increase the risk of detection for potential offenders. Developers are therefore encouraged to take account of the principles of 'secured by design' which are available at www.securedbydesign.com.

7.25 The Council acknowledges the desire of residents to stay within existing accommodation by adapting and upgrading their dwellings as their lifestyle and personal needs change. However, the changes must be balanced against the manner in which works to existing properties

both individually and collectively, have an effect on the character of an area. It is important that such extensions are well designed, in relation to the main building and to the general street scene. Extensions should be subservient to the original building and, where possible, significant alterations and extensions should be confined to the rear and side elevations. Detailed guidance in respect of householder applications is contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance on Householder Development in Blaenau Gwent.

7.26 The success of Blaenau Gwent's commercial centres is crucial to the delivery of the objectives of the LDP. Shopfronts and commercial frontages are an essential element of the commercial activity of Blaenau Gwent's Principal, District and Local Town Centres. If the visual quality of the area's shopping streets is to be enhanced, well-designed shopfronts built with good quality materials are essential. The design, proportion and scale of the shopfront must relate to both the building of which it is part, and to adjoining buildings. Detailed guidance is provided in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Shopfronts and Advertisements.

7.27 Whilst all design should be of good quality it is imperative that buildings in key locations should provide a good impression of the area as this will raise the image of the area. This adds, not only to the quality of life for local residents, but also enhances the ability to attract potential investors and visitors to the area. Blaenau Gwent has a

strong cultural heritage and the Council will ensure that new developments continue to add to the cultural fabric of the area. In considering proposals for public art as part of development schemes, the Council will seek artist commissions that add cultural value to the architecture, landscape design and sense of place.

7.28 The landscape and the natural environment are amongst the most important local resources and both need to be protected and enhanced. This does not mean that there should be no change but there is a requirement for high quality design solutions that complement or contribute to landscape character. The key is to incorporate areas of established importance and ensure these are protected and enhanced, for example through their management and the incorporation of new features such as native trees and plants.