

COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	<i>Shopfront Signage: Existing Signs and the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide</i>
Committee:	<i>Planning Committee</i>
Item Number:	13
Date:	21 September 2026
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Report status:	<i>Decision</i>
Confidential / Exempt:	No

1. Report Summary

This report sets out advice received from Wiltshire Council on the control of existing shopfront signage in Salisbury, and asks the Committee to agree how the Council should approach concerns about signs already in place.

- 1.1 Members raised concerns that a number of shopfront signs in the city do not accord with the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide, which forms part of the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan. Officers were asked to seek clarification from Wiltshire Council on what can be done about signs already in place.
- 1.2 Wiltshire Council has now responded. In short, the Guide continues to carry weight when the Committee comments on new or amended advertisement applications. For signs already in place, the position is more limited: a sign that does not accord with the Guide is not for that reason unlawful, and Wiltshire Council cannot normally require a sign with valid or deemed consent to be changed.
- 1.3 The report follows the Committee's request on 18 August 2026 that officers prepare a report and seek clarification from Wiltshire Council.
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Committee notes the advice, agrees to continue applying the Guide when commenting on advertisement applications, and agrees a process for referring signs which may not have the necessary consent to Wiltshire Council's Planning Enforcement team.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the advice received from Wiltshire Council, summarised at section 3 of this report.

- 2.2 Agrees that the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide continues to be applied when the Committee comments on new or amended advertisement applications.
- 2.3 Agrees that where a member considers that a sign may not have the necessary consent, the details are provided to officers, and that officers refer the matter to Wiltshire Council's Planning Enforcement team for investigation.
- 2.4 Agrees that signs are not referred to Wiltshire Council solely on the grounds that they are considered unattractive or do not accord with the Design and Advertising Guide.
- 2.5 Agrees that the Council does not approach owners or occupiers directly in the first instance, and that matters are referred to Wiltshire Council as the local planning authority.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 18 August 2026 a member circulated a summary of the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide, which forms part of the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan, and raised concerns that a number of signs in the city do not accord with it. The member suggested that the worst examples might be identified and referred to Wiltshire Council.
- 3.2 The Chair agreed that the matter be brought to the Committee. Officers undertook to seek clarification from Wiltshire Council on the control of advertisements and to report back.
- 3.3 Wiltshire Council responded on 8 September 2026. Its advice is summarised at paragraphs 3.4 to 3.9 below.
- 3.4 Advertisements are controlled under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Wiltshire Council is the local planning authority and holds the enforcement powers. Salisbury City Council is a consultee.
- 3.5 ***How consent is established?*** Wiltshire Council checks the individual advertisement against the 2007 Regulations and the planning history of the site. A sign may have express consent, may benefit from deemed consent, or may not require express consent. The appearance of a sign alone does not establish whether it is authorised.
- 3.6 ***Whether the passage of time prevents enforcement?*** Advertisement control differs from normal planning enforcement. An unauthorised advertisement does not automatically become lawful because it has been displayed for a long period. Wiltshire Council has however drawn attention to Class 13 of the Regulations, which concerns sites used continually for advertising for the preceding ten years. Wiltshire Council would also consider whether enforcement action is appropriate, particularly in relation to amenity and public safety.
- 3.7 ***Whether replacing or altering a sign requires a new application?*** Not always. If a replacement sign still falls within a category benefiting from deemed consent, a new application may not be required. Where there are significant changes to size, design, materials, illumination, wording or method of display, the sign may need to be considered as a new advertisement. Each case is considered individually.

- 3.8 ***The weight given to the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design and Advertising Guide?*** Wiltshire Council has confirmed that the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan forms part of the development plan and that significant weight is given to its policies. Advertisement applications are however considered principally in terms of amenity and public safety. The Guide remains relevant when the Committee considers new or amended advertisement applications.
- 3.9 ***Whether an existing lawful sign can be required to meet current design guidance?*** Generally, no. Where a sign already has valid consent, or benefits from deemed consent, Wiltshire Council cannot normally require it to be changed simply because it does not accord with current design guidance. Where signage has been erected without the necessary consent and an application is subsequently submitted, officers may seek changes.
- 3.10 ***Whether the Council can refer existing signs?*** Yes. Where members identify a sign which they believe may not have the appropriate consent, it can be referred to Wiltshire Council Planning Enforcement for investigation. Wiltshire Council has advised that signs should not be referred simply because they are considered unattractive or do not appear to follow the Guide, since whether consent is required can depend on matters such as dimensions, lettering and the type of advertisement.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council adopts a two-track approach.
- 4.2 For new and amended advertisement applications, the Committee continues to apply the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide in its comments and does so consistently. Wiltshire Council has confirmed that significant weight is given to the Neighbourhood Plan, of which the Guide forms part.
- 4.3 For signs already in place, members identify specific signs of concern and provide the details to officers, who refer them to Wiltshire Council Planning Enforcement where there is reason to believe the necessary consent may not be held.
- 4.4 Members have raised concerns about the appearance of a number of shopfront signs and have asked what can be done. The advice received distinguishes clearly between what the Council can influence through the application process and what can be pursued in relation to signs already displayed.
- 4.5 A consistent and evidenced approach to advertisement applications, applying the Guide in full rather than selectively.
- 4.6 A clear route for members to raise concerns about existing signs, with referrals made by officers on a consistent basis.
- 4.7 Referrals that are more likely to result in action, because they are directed at signs which may lack consent rather than at signs which are simply disliked.
- 4.8 The Committee asked for this report in August, and members have indicated that they intend to identify examples for possible referrals.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 Option 1 – Preferred Option

5.1.1 Apply the Guide consistently to new and amended applications, and refer signs which may lack consent to Wiltshire Council through officers. This works within the advice received and directs effort where it can have an effect.

5.2 Option 2 – Alternative Option(s)

5.2.1 Approach owners and occupiers directly to seek voluntary changes. This is possible, but Wiltshire Council is better placed to establish whether express or deemed consent exists, and an approach made without that information risks asking a business to change a sign it is entitled to display. Direct approaches are therefore not recommended in the first instance.

5.2.2 Refer a large number of signs on the basis of appearance. Wiltshire Council has specifically advised against this. It would also be likely to reduce the weight given to referrals which do raise a genuine question of consent.

5.3 Option 3 – Do Nothing

5.3.1 Concerns raised by members would not be pursued, and the Committee would have no agreed basis on which to deal with signs brought to its attention.

5.4 The preferred option is recommended because it reflects the advice received, uses the weight the Neighbourhood Plan carries where that weight applies, and concentrates referrals on cases where Wiltshire Council can realistically act.

6. Financial Position

6.1 There is no direct cost. Officer time would be met from existing resources.

6.2 No additional funding is required and no budget provision is sought.

6.3 There are no ongoing revenue implications.

7. Legal and Governance Considerations

7.1 The Council acts as a consultee on planning and advertisement applications. Making representations and referring matters to the local planning authority is incidental to that function under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

7.2 Advertisements are controlled under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Wiltshire Council is the local planning authority and holds all enforcement powers. The Council has no power to require the removal or alteration of a sign.

7.3 The Planning Committee has delegated authority to determine the Council's approach to commenting on planning and advertisement applications.

7.4 Members should be aware that a sign which does not accord with the Design and Advertising Guide is not for that reason unlawful. Statements to the contrary, in correspondence or in public, could be inaccurate and could cause difficulty for the business concerned.

7.5 For the same reason, it is recommended that referrals are made by officers to Wiltshire Council rather than by direct approaches to owners or occupiers.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1 The matter was raised by members of the Planning Committee in correspondence on 18 August 2026, and the Chair and Vice-Chair agreed that it be brought to the Committee.
- 8.2 Officers sought clarification from Wiltshire Council, which responded on 8 September 2026.
- 8.3 Members expressed the view that the Committee has not applied the Design and Advertising Guide as firmly as it might, particularly on the depth of fascias, the use of painted timber on historic buildings, traditional colour palettes, and the proportion of lettering to fascia.
- 8.4 Members suggested concentrating on a small number of the least acceptable examples rather than attempting a comprehensive review.
- 8.5 A member suggested raising public awareness of the Guide, which officers could pursue separately.
- 8.6 Wiltshire Council's advice is summarised in full at section 3.
- 8.7 Should the Committee agree the recommended approach, officers will confirm the referral route with Wiltshire Council Planning Enforcement.

9. Strategic and Policy Alignment

- 9.1 The proposal supports the Council's role as the qualifying body for the Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan and the consistent application of its policies.
- 9.2 Salisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide, which forms part of it. The Guide addresses shopfronts and signage at pages 56 to 71.

10. Implementation and Next Steps

- 10.1 Subject to the Committee's decision, the next steps will be as follows:
 - 10.1.1 Members provide details of signs of concern to officers, with the address and a photograph.
 - 10.1.2 Officers refer those where there is reason to believe consent may not be held to Wiltshire Council Planning Enforcement.
 - 10.1.3 Officers report the outcome of referrals to a future meeting of the Committee.

11. Additional Relevant Information

- 11.1 The Salisbury Design and Advertising Guide is available on the Council's website. Shopfronts and signage are addressed at pages 56 to 71.
- 11.2 A member has offered to identify and photograph examples for consideration. It is suggested that these are provided to officers so that referrals can be made on a consistent basis.

12. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	None	No cost arises. Officer time met from existing resources.
Legal	Low	Wiltshire Council is the local planning authority and holds all enforcement powers. The Council has no power to require a sign to be removed or altered. A sign which does not accord with the Design and Advertising Guide is not for that reason unlawful.
Risk	Low	Referring signs on grounds of appearance alone would be contrary to Wiltshire Council's advice and could reduce the weight given to future referrals. This is mitigated by recommendation 2.4. Direct approaches to businesses risk asking for changes to signs they are entitled to display; this is mitigated by recommendation 2.5.
Personnel	Low	Referrals would be handled within existing officer capacity.
Environmental Impact	None	No environmental effect arises from this decision.
Equalities Impact Statement	None	No equalities impact arises from agreeing an approach to commenting on and referring advertisements.
Community / Public Impact	Low	Consistent application of the Design and Advertising Guide may over time improve the appearance of the city centre. Any effect on individual businesses would arise from Wiltshire Council's decisions, not the Council's.
Procurement / Contractual	None	No procurement arises.
Property / Asset	None	No effect on Council assets.
Data Protection	Low	Referrals may identify a business premises. Photographs should not include individuals. Referrals will be made to Wiltshire Council in the normal way.