

Signs, Adverts, Banners and Awnings

Bath Preservation Trust Guidance



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About the Trust

Bath Preservation Trust (BPT) has been campaigning to protect the city's special historic environment since 1934. Much of our work is focused on the repair and conservation of historic buildings and guiding sensitive development and alterations. We seek to influence decision-making and to promote appropriate solutions to development in Bath. At times we firmly oppose harmful change. Our charitable objectives are stated in full on page 28.

The Bath Preservation Trust (BPT) is first and foremost an advocacy and campaigning body which also delivers its policy through specific activities concerning built heritage. Whilst there are national bodies with overlapping remits, such as English Heritage, the Georgian Group, SAVE and others, it is BPT's role to make these issues specific to the needs of Bath and to draw on expert advice and opinion to contribute to decision-making in and around the city. Whilst BPT is not a statutory consultee, it is the oldest and most significant of Bath's amenity groups and its opinion is taken seriously by public organisations.

Who is this Guidance for?

This guidance note is designed to assist anyone who is involved in, or looking to erect, signage or advertising paraphernalia in Bath. This includes architects, developers and any other professional person as well business owners and their staff.

It provides information on the current issues, the context of Bath and the planning framework related to signage.

We understand that the language of planning with so much jargon can be confusing; if there are any terms or phrases whose meaning is unclear, please refer to the 'Planning Language Explained' section at the end of this document.





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Margaret's Building

Overview

Bath is a complex and highly sensitive city, an historic urban landscape which is under constant pressure to change. It is not only the sole example of a complete city in the UK to be designated as a World Heritage Site, and large areas also fall within a Conservation Area. It also has a high number of listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest. It is the combination of natural resources, built form and landscape setting that provide a cohesiveness that is recognised and valued internationally. Importantly however, it is also a working, living city.

The character and quality of our streetscapes has a direct impact on the special character and the Outstanding Universal Value of our World Heritage City. Advertisements and similar additions to the streetscape and to our buildings are very important elements that must be appropriate in every way in order to respect and enhance our city's public realm.

Cumulative and inappropriate clutter on buildings and in our streets results in a sense of disorder that is directly at odds with the unique character of Bath; that is to say with the harmony, simplicity, balance and elegance of the architecture and town planning. This sense of disorder is highly damaging to the quality and integrity of our historic city.

The Trust understands today's commercial pressures, but believes that it is possible, with an understanding of the historic environment, and a more empathetic approach that places a premium on quality, to promote premises and services effectively, whilst at the same time safeguarding and enhancing our public realm. The city is a successful visitor attraction and retail centre, and income from these sectors is very important to its financial health. We believe, however, that a more thoughtful and respectful approach to advertising and promotional activities generally, can enhance the attractions of Bath as a visitor destination, and hence improve the prospects of its businesses and traders.

The city's special status in the UK and as World Heritage Site will be jeopardised if the ability to appreciate the beauty of its streetscapes is eroded by unnecessary street clutter and incongruous, jarring, low quality advertising. It is the special status of the city that draws the many thousands of visitors every year; to lose this would undoubtedly impact commercially on the city.

Signage and Advertising Issues

- Protecting and enhancing the historic and architectural significance of listed buildings within the World Heritage Site, and similarly those architectural compositions with group value in architectural and/or historic terms
- Protecting and enhancing significant historic street views and lines of sight within the conservation area and World Heritage Site
- Preventing the obstruction of views of significant townscape features.
- Ensuring that new interventions in the streetscape are informed by an understanding of, and respect for, the importance of classical architecture, and the date of the construction of the building and shop front.
- Encouraging business owners to adopt a responsible and thoughtful attitude to any intervention in our city's streets and to seek for their signage to harmonise with the historic streetscape rather than 'argue' with it.
- Promoting visual homogeneity that is underpinned by a colour palette of materials special to Bath, namely Bath stone, iron, lead, natural slates, roman pantiles and lime render. Scale and proportion should be finely tuned.



George Street

An example of where poor colour choice and signage 'overkill' obtruding onto and damaging the street scene

Examples of where commercialism has overridden respect for the listed building and the overall streetscape



Westgate Street



Church Street



York Street

Planning Context

Applications for signage and advertising are usually dealt with under Advertising Regulation applications (AR) to the Local Authority and any signage applications relating to a listed building will also require a Listed Building Application (LBA).

National Planning Policy

The **National Planning Policy Framework** sets out 'the rules' covering all development. Section 16 details the national provisions for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Significance is a key underpinning tenet. In particular, it is necessary to understand the significance of the heritage asset (be it listed building or World Heritage site) and how proposals will affect the asset's character and appearance. Significance is the level of special interest an asset holds, be it archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. The setting of an asset can also contribute to its significance.

Relevant Planning legislation for Listed Building Consent:

The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Relevant Planning legislation for Advertising Regulations Consent:

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).



Broad Street

Local Planning Policy

Planning applications are approved in accordance with policies set out in local '**Development Plan Documents**' and adopted '**Supplementary Planning Documents**' unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for B&NES comprises the **Core Strategy**, which sets out the vision for Bath and the **Placemaking Plan** which sets out site specific policies. The replacement Local Plan is currently in preparation (at June 2018)

Core Strategy

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy>

Placemaking Plan

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/placemaking-plan>

The following policies of the **Core Strategy (2014)** are relevant:

- B2: Central Area Strategic Policy
- B4: The World Heritage Site and its setting
- CP6: Environmental quality

The following policies of the **Placemaking Plan (2017)** are relevant

- D.2: Local character and distinctiveness
- D4: Streets and Spaces
- D8: Lighting
- D.9: Advertisements & outdoor street furniture
- HE.1: Historic environment

Supplementary Planning Document:

Bath Conservation Area: Commercial signage and tables and chairs on the highway, July 2016.

General Guidance on Signs and Advertisements

Bespoke is best

Given the sensitivity of the cityscape, the Trust encourages business owners and B&NES Council to adopt a bespoke approach to signage coupled with a thoughtful attitude to signage placement. As a general rule, and to respect the harmony and simplicity of the predominantly classical architecture, 'less is more'. The cumulative impact of advertising on buildings is harmful clutter, which devalues the listed building, the conservation area, and the message of the advertiser. In particular we encourage corporate businesses to think about whether their usual approach is appropriate in Bath.

The Advertisement Regulations 2007 require local planning authorities to consider and assess issues of visual amenity when deciding applications for signage. Visual amenity is the impact signage could have on local character and appearance and whether, in its scale, design and materials, it is in keeping with and does not detract from that character

Know your building

The first step in any approach to signage on listed buildings should always be research and the production of an historic report; this will give the owners a full understanding of the historic and architectural significance of their building and its relationship with its neighbours. In this way signage can be designed which will enhance both the host building and the street scene.

Think about harm

In addition some forms of advertising are physically damaging to the fabric of listed buildings, whether they are fixed to historic stone, wood or metal. Cumulative pock marking damages our historic buildings and further devalues their simple beauty.



Milsom Street
High quality fascia signage



Union Street
High quality fascia signage with applied lettering

Materials

In general, we encourage the use of wooden hand painted signs, rather than materials such as acrylic or vinyl. In some areas good quality pin mounted metal or wooden lettering is appropriate. Whilst we understand the appeal of juxtaposition and impact in terms of modern materials, we strongly believe that traditional high quality forms of signage would most closely align with and complement our streetscapes. High quality design is key.

No to illumination

All illuminated signs impact upon the character of buildings, shop fronts and streets. Bath is a low-illuminated city where low light levels create atmosphere and complement the historic character of the city; consequently excessive lighting is harmful. Moreover, internally illuminated box signs are also often crudely designed and unsightly; they are not appropriate for use on listed buildings.

Colour

Choice of colour is a key consideration in signage. Again we would encourage business owners to be thoughtful about the integration of their signage within the overall Bath colour palette. Choosing strident colours or reflective finishes may be thought to be commercially justified, but bright colours are visually intrusive, clash with the mellow colours of the stonework and harm the street scene.



The Paragon
Bespoke signage on an interesting historic shop front



George Street
Appropriate heritage colour with handpainted signwriting

Signs

Hanging Signs

The Trust does not believe that hanging projecting signs are appropriate additions to streets with a group architectural composition, for example Milsom Street (see p.23-25). This is because such signs cumulatively clutter and intrude upon the principle elevations, breaking up their uniformity, and significantly devaluing the composition and harming one's ability to appreciate the heritage asset as a whole group. We are particularly against any type of projecting sign affixed to Bath stone at first floor level, due to the stone damage this will cause. In some cases projecting signs can add character and charm to narrow, architecturally eclectic streets, but we recommend that these are affixed at fascia level (on shop fronts) to mitigate any harm to historic stonework. Should historic hanging sign brackets be present, these could be used. We encourage a bespoke approach to the sign that would complement both the bracket itself and the architecture of the host building. Care needs to be taken not only in designing a new hanging sign but any new bracket to which it will be attached. Many modern brackets can look clumsy, incongruous and lack finesse; these should be avoided.

The Trust is concerned about the replacement of traditional pictorial hanging pub signs with plainer alternatives. Pictorial painted pub signs are a traditional form of advertisement; they add colour and vibrancy to the street scene and are often associated with the history and name of the pub.



New Bond Street



Broad Street



Walcot Street

Examples of traditional brackets with appropriate high quality signage including pictorial signage
 Note. Fixing to stone is discouraged unless using a pre-existing bracket

Blackboards and Wall Mounted Signs

In most cases the addition of signage flat to the elevation of a building (such as menu boards) will not complement nor enhance the host building. These sorts of signs are visually cluttering and therefore damage the character of the building as well as the fabric. In some cases one sign can enliven the street scene and be informative, but in many cases business owners use too many signs which are too large and this leads to a poor quality street scene with confusing clutter, which, in turn, defeats the object of the advertising. Again we would encourage any wall mounted signs to comply with the general guidelines noted above.

Name Plates

Name plates should always be discreetly and sensitively placed, of modest size and in a high quality traditional metal or timber, with minimal impact on historic fabric.



New Bond Street



George Street



Milsom Street

Good examples of hand painted or pin mounted lettering on timber fascias in appropriate colours

Advertising

A-Boards

The proliferation of A-Boards in Bath is of great concern to the Trust, as this type of advertising, especially when abused, is highly damaging to the quality of our streetscape. It also presents real problems for the disabled. Increasingly we are seeing business owners placing large A-Boards many metres from their premises, and often several at a time. We urge business owners to adopt a responsible attitude to A-Board placement, and to adhere to the guidelines contained in the B&NES publication *'How to use A Boards to Promote your Business'*. A-Boards should preferably be constructed in timber (not plastic) with hand painted sign writing and be modest in size and colour. In particular we urge owners to keep A-Boards adjacent to their shop frontage and not abandoned in the middle of a shopping street, where, aside from issues of pedestrian convenience and safety, the A Boards clutter the street, damaging the visual amenity of the area and creating a low quality aesthetic.

Advertisements on street furniture

The Trust is strongly opposed to any form of inappropriate displays on street furniture. Such advertising is very harmful to the overall public realm, creating a low quality, chaotic street scene that harms the street scene in much the same way as graffiti.



George Street

Good example of hand painted timber shop front with a well placed and sized A Board



Union Street

Low quality clutter that harms the public realm



Bartlett Street

Examples of poorly placed A Boards intruding on the street scene

Window lettering and images

In many cases window vinyls and displays can enliven and energise the street scene but they should not be excessive in size or window coverage. The Trust is generally opposed to window advertising which ‘deadens’ the facade, for example a totally blanked out window, or where the advertising is so bright and busy that it detracts from the ability to appreciate the appearance of the listed building. As a general rule we would encourage owners to be responsive to the special qualities of Bath’s street scene, and to avoid window displays which harm the appearance of the listed building and those nearby, either by being too bright, busy, over-dominant or inappropriate.



Broad Street

Gimmicks

Items placed outside businesses, such as giant ice creams and product displays, are not appropriate in Bath. Not only are they a highway risk but they are often incongruous intrusions which are harmful to the character of the street scene.



Union Street

Examples of excessive window vinyls blanking shop fronts

Shopfronts and fascias

The quality of lettering and finish on shopfronts impacts greatly on the streetscene. The desire for cheap fascia materials that require little maintenance or renewal (acrylic, plastic, printed metal) has crept into Bath’s streets and creates a low quality aesthetic that is at odds with and harmful to the World Heritage Site (see p7 image of Westgate Street). Fascias should always be hardwood timber with appropriate traditional joinery detailing, painted in matt muted colours that harmonise with the streetscene. Lettering should be minimal and hand-painted or pin-mounted in good quality materials such as metal.



York Street

An example of advertising gimmicks impacting street scene

Banners and Flags

Banners

The Trust believes that there is justification for some temporary banners, particularly those that advertise a local community event or festival. Banners by their nature do clutter the street scene; therefore, the word temporary is key. In our view, banners should always be bespoke, adhere to the Bath colour palette, and should never be affixed to the fabric of a listed building. Inappropriate placement of banners includes on railings and other boundary treatments. Permanent or inappropriately placed or designed banners once again create clutter and therefore damage the street scene and add to a sense of disorder within the public realm.

Flags

Unless there is significant historical precedent, flags are rarely acceptable as they dominate and compete with building facades, add clutter to elevations, block long street views and also detract from the setting of other listed buildings. Heavy flag fixings associated with flag poles damage historic fabric. Where historic precedent or fixings exists, we would expect a business owner to respect the authenticity of the history of the building and its flag and to be guided by the general rules regarding colour and design.



Milsom Street
Intrusive flag placement which harms the special group value



Union Passage

Awnings, Canopies and Blinds

In many cases awnings provide a traditional aesthetic to the street scene; this is usually welcome and can be attractive. However awnings should always be high quality canvas (not plastic), modest in size and reach, in colours in keeping with the Bath palette, and should not be overly cluttered with advertising. Box mechanisms should be discreetly fixed within shop front recesses rather than bolted on, or integrated into the awning design. Harm to historic stonework from mechanical fixings should always be avoided, and we support the refurbishment or reinstatement of traditional awning mechanisms. The reinstatement or addition of awnings should always be considered on a case by case basis, informed by historic research and a full understanding of the impact of the awning on the host building and general surrounding street scene. When not in use, awnings should be retracted.



George Street

A good example of an appropriate canvas awning but the box mechanism should be located below the top cornice.

SouthGate

SouthGate is a modern shopping centre, opened from November 2009. The architecture was intended to harmonise with the facades of the Georgian city and faced with Bath stone. Despite its function as a modern shopping centre, the area is within the Bath Conservation Area and shop signage should generally conform to guidance, namely the appropriate use of colours, materials and avoiding illumination. (see p.10-11)

Signage should be complementary to both the modern interpretation of Georgian architecture and the surrounding historic environment. Poor quality signage, using inappropriate colours, materials and illumination, will downgrade the high-quality environment created here by the architecture and use of Bath stone. Diminishing the quality of the environment will negatively impact this dynamic retail area.



New Orchard St



St Lawrence St



St Lawrence St

Position Statements

BPT₁:

The relevant planning and listed building consents for any type of signage, banner, awning and advertising should be sought prior to installation

BPT₂:

Signage should be informed by an understanding of and respect for Bath's historic environment and the special interest of listed buildings

BPT₃:

Signage and advertising design and manufacture should always be bespoke, responding to both the streetscene and the host building

BPT₄:

Signage should be designed and installed with the Trust's General Guidance in mind, including appropriate materials, method, finish, amount, location and colour

In Summary

The quality and character of the cityscape in Bath is internationally renowned and draws many people to the city. This produces a vibrant commercial environment. Advertisements and signage form a major and crucial element in the street scene, and cumulatively help to define the character of our public realm.

Advertisements and signage are also important to local businesses and the health of the local economy. High quality, well designed signage, thoughtfully detailed and placed, can make a positive contribution to our commercial streets, encouraging shoppers and supporting businesses. We, therefore, encourage business owners and traders to remember that trading in Bath carries a responsibility for understanding and enhancing the very special qualities of the World Heritage Site.

Further Reading and Guidance:

Bath Conservation Area: Commercial signage and tables and chairs on the highway, July 2016.

Bath Shopfronts – A Guide for Design and Conservation

World Heritage Site Management Plan 2016-2022

Hanging Signs on Milsom Street and Edgar Buildings (BPT)

Making Changes - BPT Guidance for owners of listed buildings

Planning language explained

Conservation – the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and where appropriate enhances its significance.

Conservation Area – part of a city, town, village, or (occasionally) countryside recognised as having special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act).

Curtilage – curtilage can be defined, for the purposes of the listed building legislation, as an area of land around a listed building within which other buildings pre-dating July 1948 (when the 1947 Town Planning Act came into effect) may potentially be considered listed. Not all buildings will have a curtilage. With those that do there will be cases where the extent of the curtilage will be clear (such as a garden boundary) but in others it may not be as clear – each case will always be a question of fact and degree. A decision-taker may take the following factors into account in assessing the matter:

- i. The physical layout of the listed building and the building;
- ii. Their ownership, past and present; and
- iii. Their use or function, past and present – specifically whether the building was ancillary to (i.e. subordinate to and dependent on) the purposes of the listed building at the date of listing.

See also ‘Setting’ below.

For more information please refer to guidance published by Historic England, Listed Buildings and Curtilage (www.bit.ly/2j3brsn)

Design and Access Statement – a document that explains the design thinking behind a planning application including details of matters such as layout and access arrangements.

Development – the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) defines development as the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

Heritage asset – part of the historic environment that is important to society as a whole or to a group within it and merits some level of protection or consideration.

Heritage impact assessment – a study to evaluate the impact of the proposed development on the ‘significance’ of the heritage asset. (See significance below).

Heritage statement – a statement setting out the details of the history and development of the asset. It should include an assessment of the archaeological, architectural, historical or other significance of the asset.

Historic environment – part of our surroundings that displays the interaction between people and places through time.

Listed Building – a building that has been placed on the national Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

Listed Building consent – the successful outcome of the application process required for all works of demolition, alteration or extension to a Listed Building that affect its character as a building of special architecture or historic interest.

Local Plan – a document that sets out the Local Planning Authority’s vision and framework for its area; it includes specific policies against which decisions about land use and development are made. The Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan are the two parts of the ‘Local Plan for Bath’.

Local planning authority – a local planning authority (LPA) is the local authority or council that is empowered by law to exercise statutory town planning functions for a particular area of the United Kingdom.

NPPF – The national planning policy framework sets out the Government’s policies for planning. www.bit.ly/1X5rlNx

NPPG – national planning policy guidance – planning practice guidance, which augments the NPPF.

Planning permission – an approved application for consent to undertake changes defined as development.

Permitted development – certain types of development (PD) that can be undertaken without planning permission.

Setting – in Listed Building terms the surrounding area which affects, or is affected by, a Listed Building, especially visually.

Significance – encompasses all or any of the different interests that might be grounds for designating a heritage asset. E.g. archaeological, architectural, historical, aesthetic, communal and evidential value.

Milsom Street

BPT Guidance on the Use of Hanging Signs in Milsom Street and Edgar Buildings

Milsom Street and Edgar Buildings (referred to in this guidance just as Milsom Street) have important and special significance and group value as architecturally planned 'set pieces' within the Bath World Heritage Site and conservation area. There is strong justification as to why hanging signs and fixed projecting signs should not be permitted at fascia level or on the upper storeys in these streets. These points can also be used to support a general presumption against projecting and hanging signs in all 'planned' and architecturally homogeneous Georgian streets, for example Queen's Square, Paragon.

Our approach to signage in Milsom Street is designed to preserve and enhance its special qualities, responding to a full understanding of the values that make the street distinctive and special:

- This historic upmarket shopping street is part of a planned Georgian group ensemble with harmonious and unified upper storey Palladian detailing. Such key elements found across the city underpin the World Heritage Site designation
- The street is highly significant in terms of its heritage value because of its historical associations, aesthetic qualities and social/communal meaning to the people of Bath
- Milsom Street has linear, architecturally framed views up to Edgar Buildings and down to the Old Bond Street island; these views form part of its special character
- Projecting signs on or near the shop fronts and upper storeys of Milsom Street and Edgar Buildings significantly clutter the uniform classical facades and intrude into the sweeping views of the street; this causes harm to the special interest of the group asset and devalues it
- Projecting sign fixings damage historic fabric

For these reasons, hanging signs are not appropriate in Milsom Street. However it is clear in some areas of the city hanging signs are appropriate. They can add charm to narrow, architecturally eclectic passageways and streets, for example Green Street, Northumberland Place and Broad Street.

A more detailed version of this guidance, including a history of Milsom Street and relevant planning policy, is available from the Trust.

Conclusion

Milsom Street retains a distinct visual, historical and architectural character which must be protected against the cumulative and damaging effects of street clutter and intrusive advertising. Other significant Georgian sites in Bath are afforded protection against intrusive incremental additions to facade elevations, and we believe that commercial considerations and pressures must not be allowed to overcome a consistent approach to the conservation of a special public realm that is arguably the communal heart of our World Heritage city.



Milsom Street, 1837– note the uniformity of the facades above shop height with no signage



About Bath Preservation Trust

Mission statement

‘To encourage and support the conservation, evolution and enhancement of Bath and its environs for the people who live and work in it, visit it or simply love it, within a framework appropriate to both its historic setting and its sustainable future; and to provide educational resources, including museums, which focus on the architectural, cultural and historic importance of the city’. We do this by:

- ~ advocacy, campaigning and the provision of expert advice and opinion on planning applications, planning policy and other matters affecting the World Heritage City and its environs;
- ~ running museums with specific themes and collections relating to the Georgian period, its architecture, social life and personalities;
- ~ providing educational resources, lectures, talks and events for all ages;
- ~ providing opportunities to help deliver the Trust objectives through volunteer participation; and
- ~ having an active membership of involved and concerned subscribers.
- ~ seeking to protect and preserve public rights of way and the beauty of the countryside around the City of Bath (and to promote its fullest enjoyment by the public.

BPT’s campaigning activities are focused on the evolution and enhancement of the living city and its environs as well as on the protection of Bath’s special character and conservation of its historic buildings and landscape. We aim to position ourselves as an essential partner in the plans of others, seeking dialogue at an early stage and hoping to influence developers before individual planning applications are submitted. We engage in strategic work with the Council and encourage developers and architects, large or small, to present and discuss their work with the Trust. As a membership organisation with charitable status and structures, we have a degree of authority and accountability which differentiates us from more ad-hoc lobby groups, whilst recognising that their supporters also reflect a side of Bath which cares about its environment.

Join BPT

Membership benefits include free advice on alterations and repairs to listed buildings and planning matters, regular updates on developments affecting the City of Bath and its surrounding countryside in our quarterly newsletter and monthly e-news bulletins. Becoming a member of the Trust also provides free entry to our four museums at No.1 Royal Crescent, MOBA (Museum of Bath Architecture), Beckford’s Tower and the Herschel Museum of Astronomy.

We are also on Twitter and Instagram. Please follow us [@BathPresTrust](#)

Bath World Heritage Site Enhancement Fund

The fund is a partnership between the World Heritage Site Steering Group, Bath and North East Somerset Council and Bath Preservation Trust. It has three aims:

- ~ to initiate and organise minor enhancements to Bath’s heritage;
- ~ to assist and encourage others to undertake such work;
- ~ to organise volunteers for the same purpose.

Ideas for further projects, especially those concerned with the heritage attributes on which Bath’s World Heritage Site status is based, are always welcome. If you would like further information about the Fund please contact whsef@bptrust.org.uk

Please contact us if the web link you need has expired and we can help you locate relevant documents.

Disclaimer

Whilst every reasonable care has been taken in compiling this guidance, the information is believed to be accurate at the time of issue and information may be liable to change.