

Canopies and glazed extensions on commercial forecourts – a design note

Background

The council has recently seen an increase in proposals to reuse premises as town centre eating and drinking establishments. Many of these proposals include external covered or glazed areas to increase the useable floorspace of the premises and to extend the use of these areas during the winter and/or inclement weather.

In certain situations it is considered that bringing an active use onto an otherwise “dead” street frontage may have a beneficial impact on the vitality and vibrancy of an area. However, in other situations such extensions may introduce a level of harm to the character of the area.

Where it is considered appropriate to allow such extensions, it is important that these are developed in a consistent manner in order to ensure the harmony of the area. The guidelines set out in this document seek to establish a number of principles that will assist in the determination of planning applications for this form of development, and so should assist those preparing those applications in the design of the canopy proposal.

Where canopies or extensions are proposed in conservation areas or to listed buildings, additional legislative requirements to preserve the setting of the listed building or preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area will also apply.

Many premises, especially those with traditional shop fronts, will have previously been fitted with a retracting canvas canopy. On appropriate premises, the reinstatement or provision of a retractable canopy of this style will be the most appropriate solution to provide a covered area.

In most situations the use of umbrellas or free standing/temporary retracting canopies will be preferred as these can be stored out of site when not in use and will allow the building to return to its original form if the use of the premises ceases to require an the covered area.

Planning Implications

A permanently fixed canopy, glazed extension or decking area will always require planning permission. Temporary siting of tables / chairs / umbrellas on the forecourt to a premise will not require permission, although could have implications for other legislation such as Premises Licencing.

Where works are proposed that do require planning permission that application will be assessed against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations. The development plan is currently the Fylde Borough Local Plan, but this is due to be replaced with the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 in summer 2018.

Key policy tests in the Fylde Borough Local Plan will be

- Policy SH16 - Restaurants
- Policy SH6 – Wood Street
- Policy EP3 – Conservation Areas
- Policy EP4 – Listed Buildings

Key policy tests in the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 will be:

- Policy EC5 – Vibrant Town, District and Local Centres
- Policy GD7 – Achieving Good Design in Development
- Policy ENV5 –Historic Environment

Principle of Canopies and forward extensions

Canopies and forward extensions will not be permitted where:

- They would obstruct a public highway or pavement,
- They would significantly obstruct the free circulation of pedestrians within and between “private” forecourts of premises
- Their construction and / or location will have a harmful impact upon important street trees and public realm features
- The design, scale or location of the structure will have an unduly harmful Impact on the integrity of the building to which they are attached, especially where the host building possesses important architectural features
- They have a design, scale or location that will conflict with an existing coherent pattern of such features in the vicinity of the application property.
- The extension would not have an unacceptable impact on a grouping of buildings or would inappropriately stand in isolation, thus creating a visual intrusion
- The development would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance as the particular building, which is either listed or locally listed or might be detrimental to its setting.

Design criteria

In circumstances where it is considered acceptable in principle to provide a canopy or forward extension

- The canopy shall retain the open character of the frontage and not result in a closed space, such that it assumes the form of a projecting conservatory.
- The canopy shall be of a size, in particular with respect to its projection that is proportionate to the size and scale of the parent building.
- The height of the canopy should respect the fascia height of the premises and should not obscure this fascia or any element of it where this is a key historic design feature to the building
- The canopy shall not obscure any key design or architectural features to the host building
- The canopy should be designed to reflect the character of the premises to which it attached, as well as the character of the area and any other canopies in the immediate vicinity.
- The design of the canopy should incorporate appropriate architectural details and features that serve to enhance the building and to provide a link between the canopy and the host building
- Existing ground levels should be retained

Other Considerations

Where covered areas or external dining areas are provided, their hours of operation may be restricted in order to reduce the level of disturbance to nearby residents from the external use of such outside spaces.

There are likely to be implications for the Premises Licence that applies to a property as it would need to include such spaces.

If an external dining area is proposed for an area of adopted highway or pavement then there will be additional implications that need to be explored with Lancashire County Council as the local highway authority, and a Pavement Café Licence is likely to be required.