

Visual language 2.0

—BBC design guidelines for the web

Index

1. Introduction	3	7. Content	28
2. Who approves this?	4	7.1. The fold	29
3. The Template	5	7.2. Text/object indentation	30
3.1 Page Layout	6	7.3. Fonts	31
3.2 Design Grid	7	7.4. Images	32
3.3 Flexible Layouts	8	7.5. Interim Embedded Media Player sizes	34
4. Global Masthead	10	8. Local Navigation	36
4.1 The Menu - Explore the BBC	11	8.1. Horizontal Local Navigation	37
4.2 Masthead Variations	15	8.2. Vertical Local Navigation	39
5. Local Masthead	19	8.3. Two Basic Patterns For the local navigation: A & B	41
5.1. Make better use of the space	20	8.4. Breadcrumb trails	42
5.2. If there is no alternative but to use an empty stripe	21	9. Advertising	43
5.3. Freeform Local Masthead	23	10. Putting it together	44
6. Footer	27	Appendix	45

I. Introduction

—visual guide when designing for the web

This is a visual guide document to be used by all the designers when designing for BBC sites.

This way we will improve the site's overall user experience through consistency in design and interaction.

2. Who approves this?

These guidelines have been defined in collaboration with user experience teams across the BBC.

Approval for this proposal (and any subsequent alterations and/or additions) sits with the User Experience Cluster and the Head of User Experience & Design.

Any feedback or suggestions should be raised with your representative in this Cluster and also Lyra Xharra Loxha and Steve Gibbons.

3. The template

—a visual framework

The centred page template and its associated guidelines create a visual framework that make the BBC site consistent.

The following pages outline the structure, including a design grid that affords flexible layout options and updated global elements.

There are also guidelines for sizes and placement of images, the embedded media player and advertising.



GRID
EXAMPLE



GRID APPLIED TO
THE BBC HOMEPAGE



GRID APPLIED TO
BBC NEWS

3.1. PAGE LAYOUT —the stuff that surrounds us

All the BBC pages are based around a design grid with a standardised surrounding border.

The design grid constrains your content area. No content should be placed outside of the design grid.

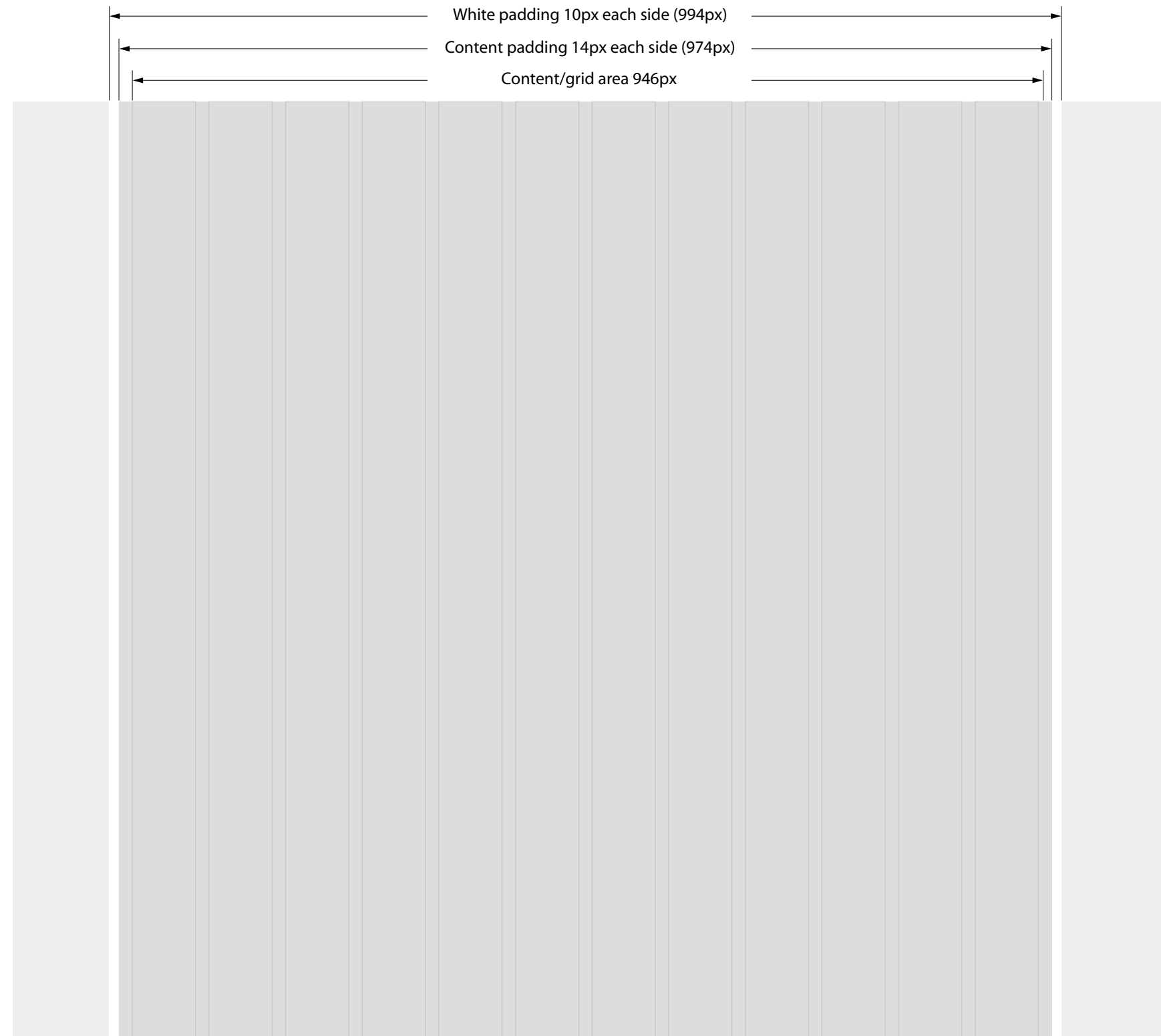
The first border to the design grid is 14 pixels either side and should be the page background colour. This gives a total of 974 pixels in which the page sits. There is a further 10 pixel white margin either side of this to frame the page, and then an outer border covering the rest of the page.

You MUST design your page to be fixed width (NOT stretchy) and centred within the browser.

PLEASE NOTE:

The 10 pixel margin will always be set to white, unless an exemption has been made.

The outer borders will always be set to #EAEAEA.



3.2. DESIGN GRID

The design grid consists of 12 columns, each 66 pixels in width with a 14 pixel gutter spacing between them. This gives a total content area of 946 pixels.

An underlying 24 sub columns of 26 px can also be employed to aid in your design in more complex layouts.

The number of columns chosen enable the use of a variety of super column structures to allow for different page types (see next page).

The grid sets the bounds for content only. The structure of the areas outside the content are illustrated on the following pages.

All designers should adhere to the grid rules. Flash sites are not exempt from the grid rules



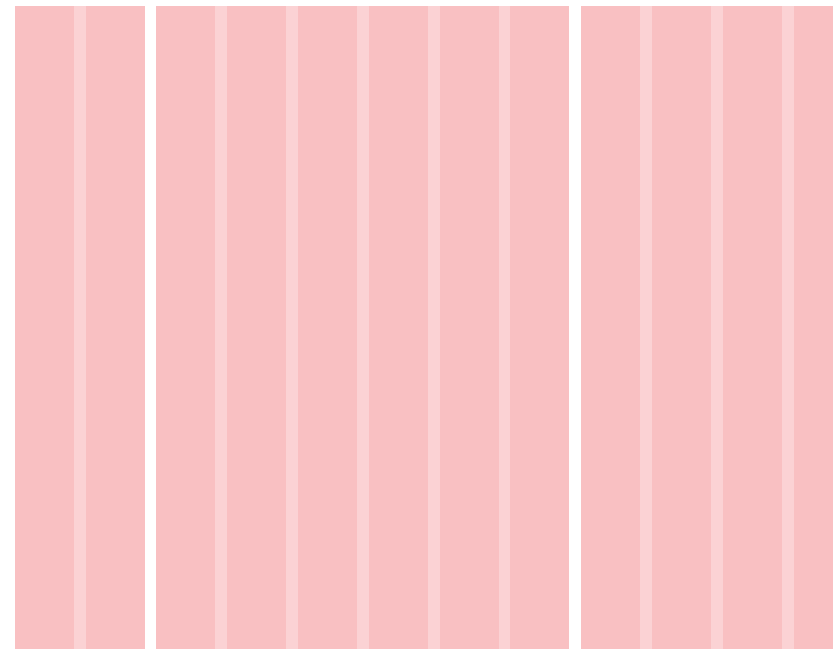
3.3. FLEXIBLE LAYOUTS —something for everyone

The grid is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of super column layouts and enables ad placement in the right hand column for international visitors.

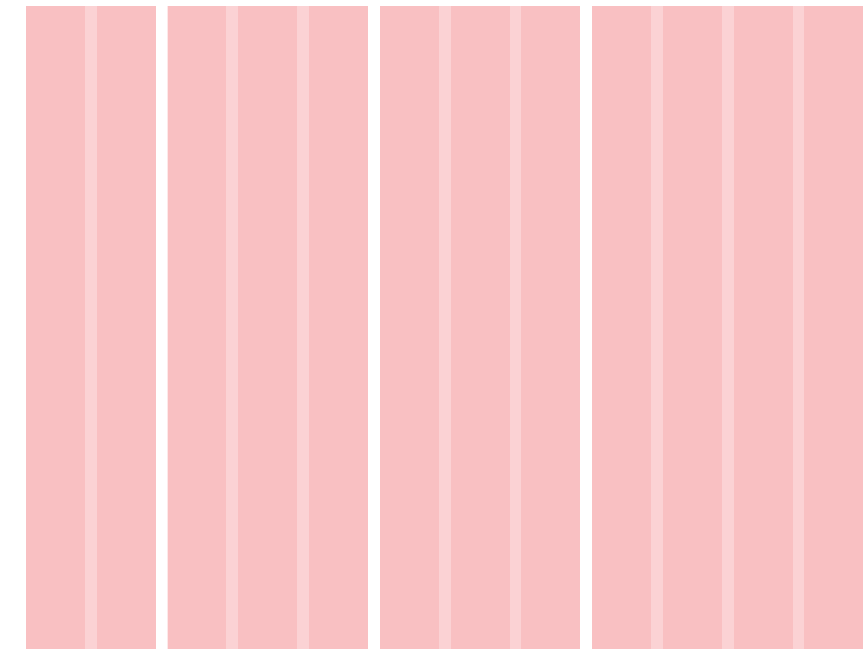
Common layouts include 2 and 3 super columns with left hand navigation.

When using a super column for left hand local navigation you MUST always use 2 columns. This creates a consistent 146px for all left hand local navigation.

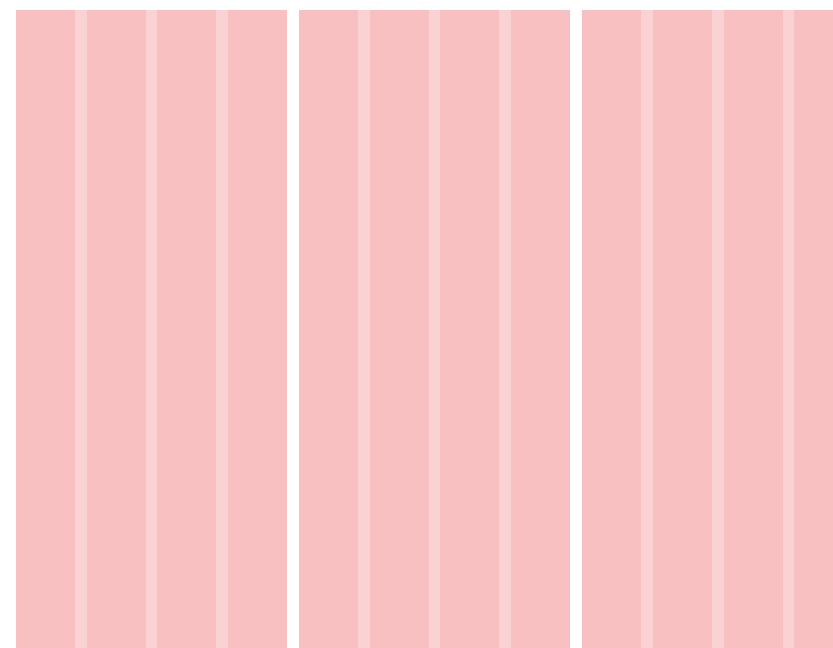
A combination of super columns could be used to create more complex structures. See bottom right for just one possible example of this.



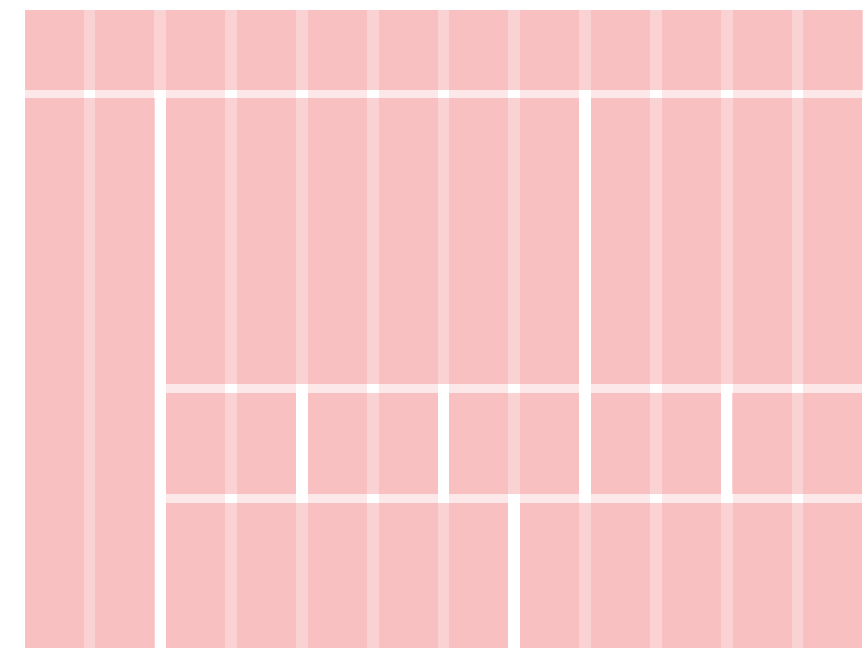
2 SUPER COLUMN LAYOUT WITH LEFT HAND NAVIGATION (STORY PAGE)



3 SUPER COLUMN LAYOUT WITH LEFT HAND NAVIGATION



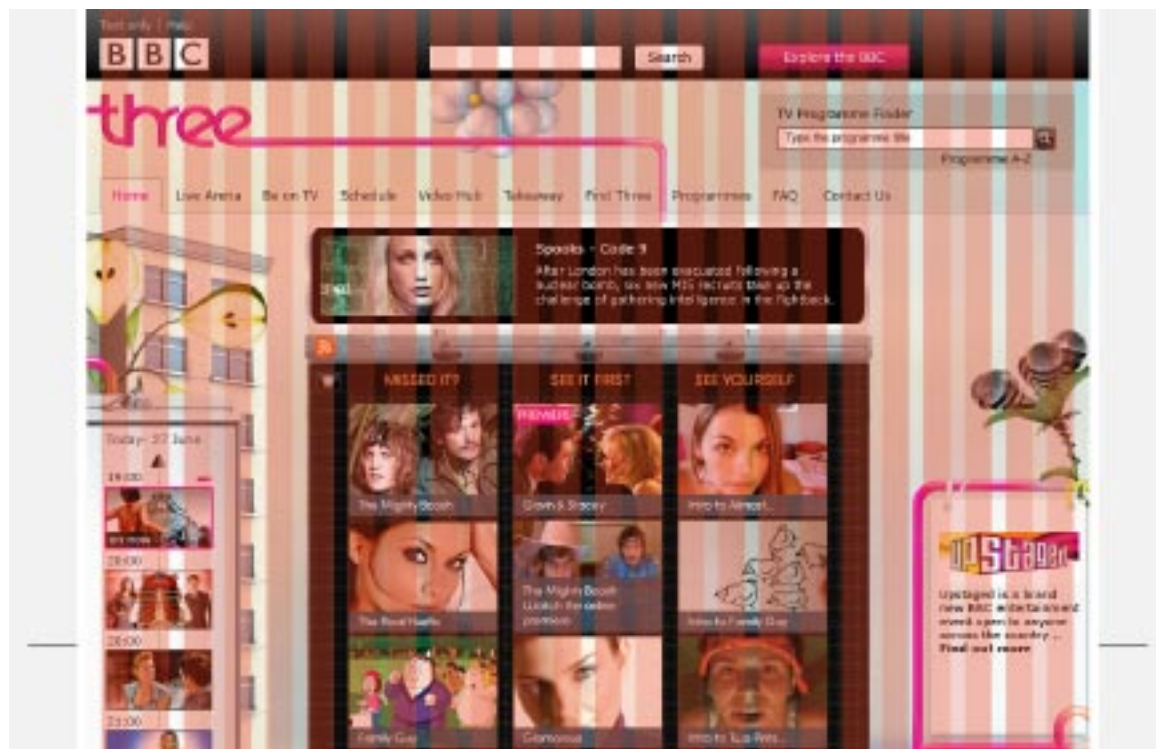
3 SUPER COLUMN LAYOUT



MULTI SUPER COLUMN LAYOUT

Using the grid with flash

The content that sits on flash sites needs to adhere to the grid.
This means that flash sites are NOT exempt from using the grid

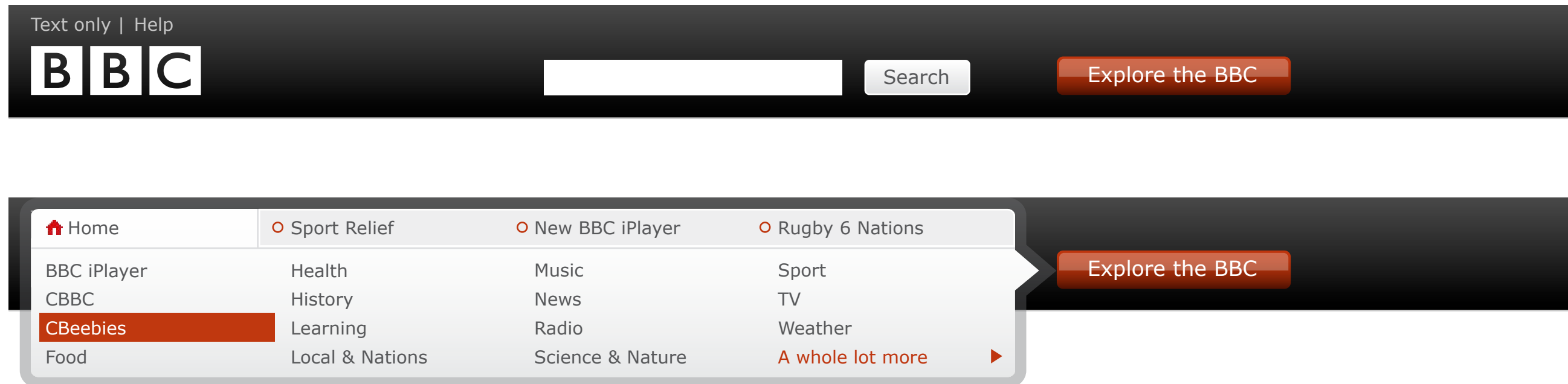


CORRECT TREATMENT



✗ INCORRECT TREATMENT

4. Global masthead



This is the global masthead for the whole of the BBC site.

As an overview the masthead includes the BBC masterbrand, Text only & Help links, Search and an 'Explore the BBC' button which has a menu containing 17 static (including Home) and 3 temporal links.

The menu colour (button and links) can be changed by using the provided palette of colours **ONLY**. Please make sure you explicitly specify the menu colour to your development team.

NOTES

1. The design assets that accompany this document contain Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop files of the current Global Visual Language to form the basis of your design. All assets including the page structure, the grid, global masthead and footer are provided. You **MUST** not recreate the files.

2. Current guidelines state that pages must be readable when the **font size is increased by two steps** in our supported browsers. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/newmedia/technical/xhtml_integrity.shtml#css)

3. The measurements of 118px and 140px are based on default text size and +2 text resizing in Firefox (IE resizes in smaller increments) respectively and will ensure there the menu is not cut off within all our supported browsers.

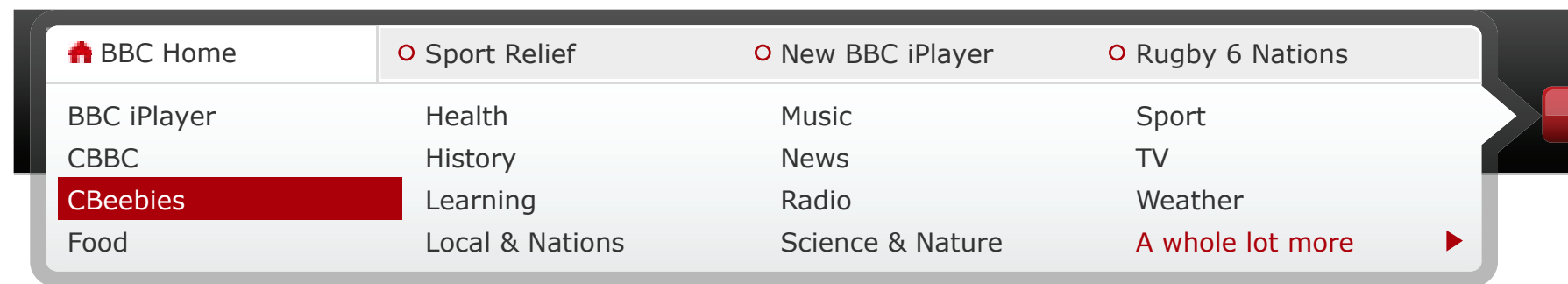
4.1. THE MENU —explore the BBC

The 'Explore the BBC' menu gives quick access to great content on the BBC site. There are 17 static links (including Home) and 3 temporal links used for promoting content and events.

The 'A whole lot more' link to the bottom right of the menu will take the user to a page that gives access to an extended collection of BBC sites that are not in the menu.

NOTES

1. The 17 static links were agreed in consultation with senior business stakeholders.



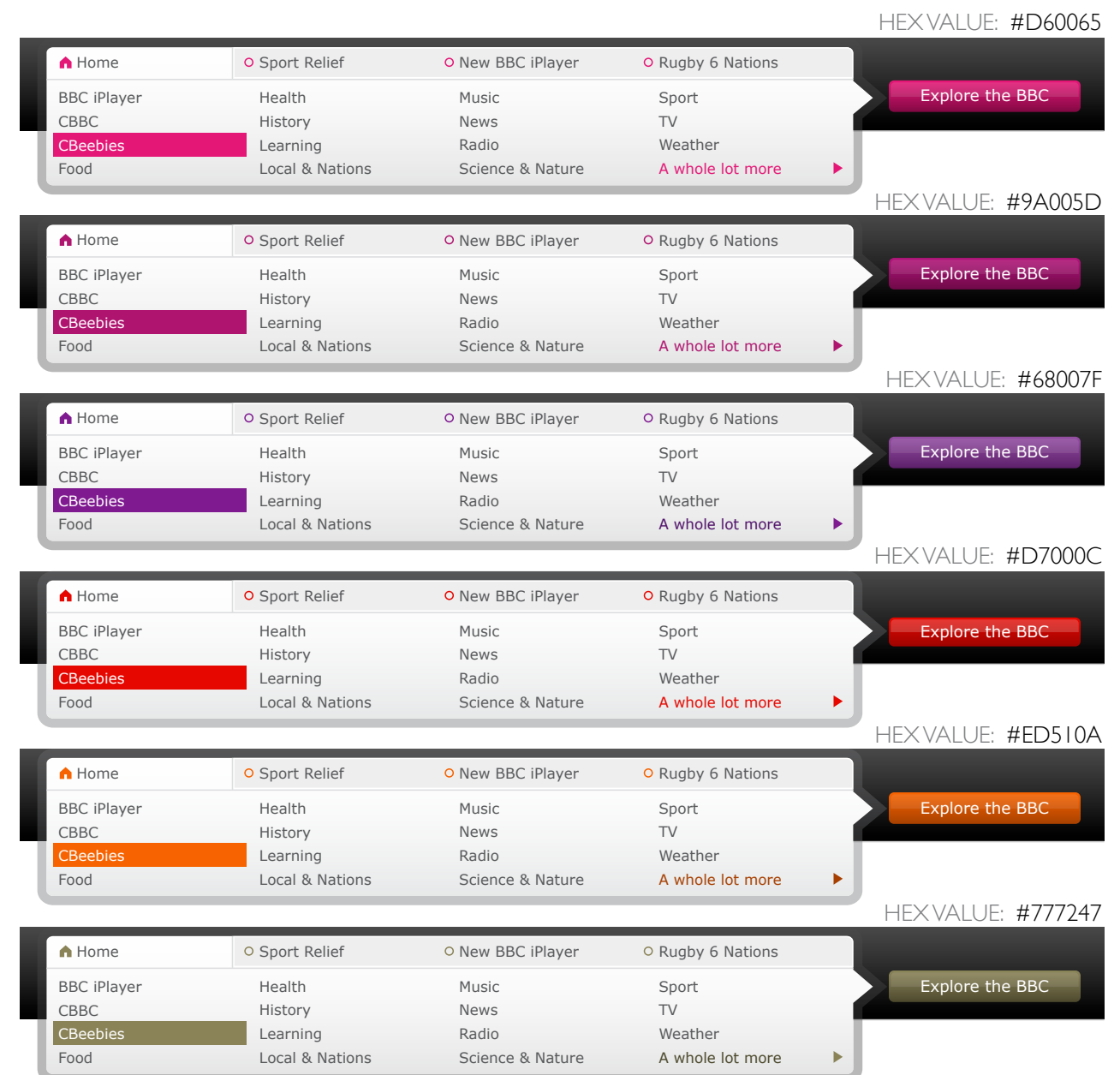
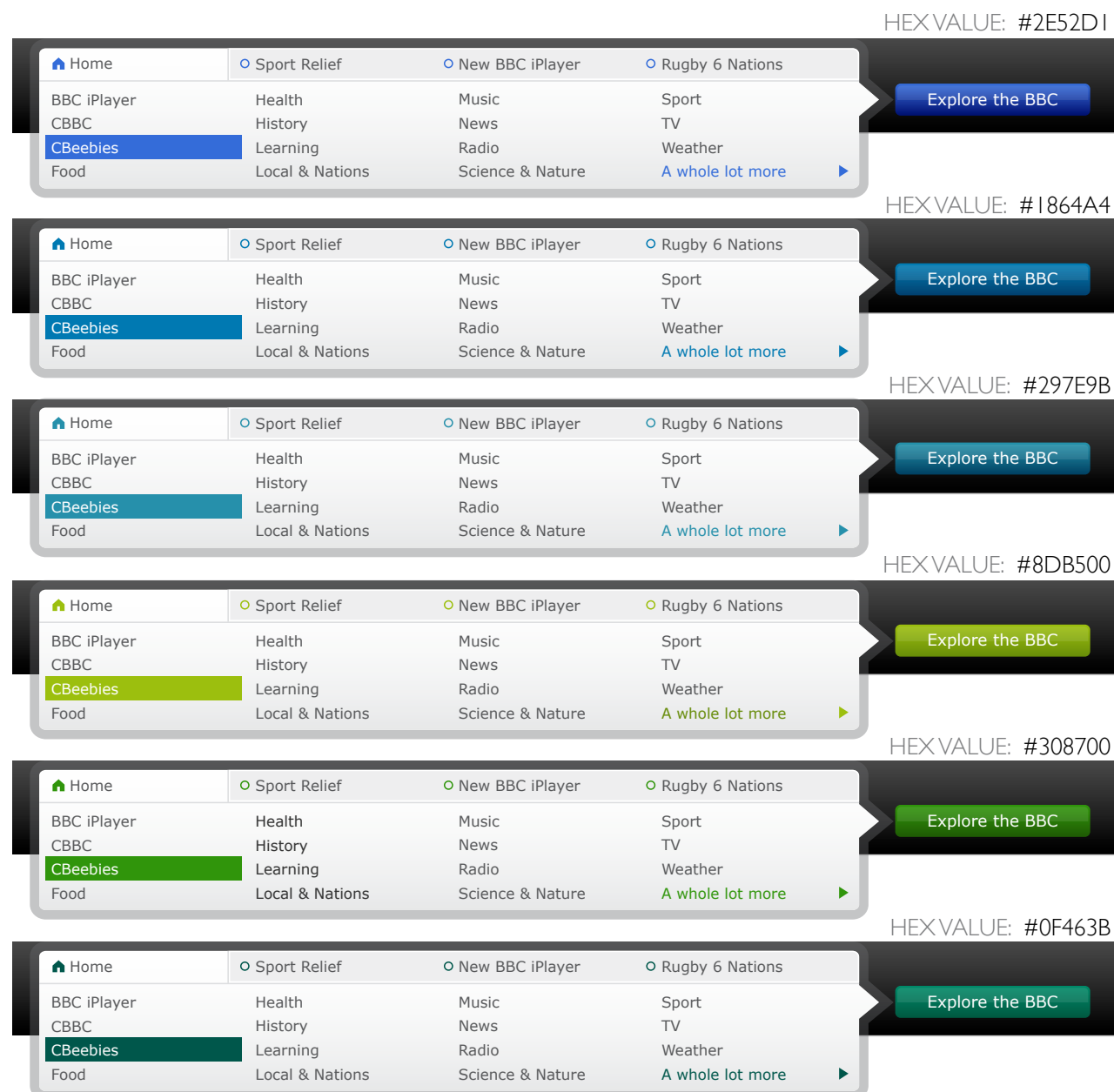
4.1.1. Colour variations a bespoke fit

Colours used in the menu can be changed (choosing from a fixed palette) to suit the current site. The button **NEEDS** to be noticeable whilst matching it with your colour scheme. **One way of achieving this is to use a**

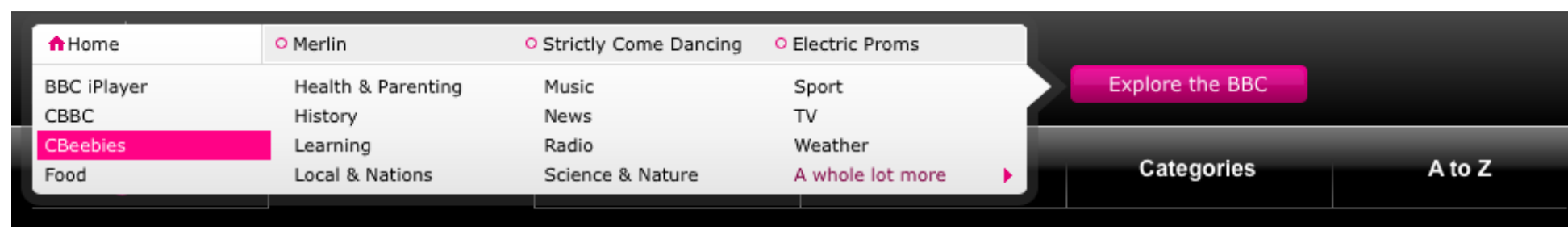
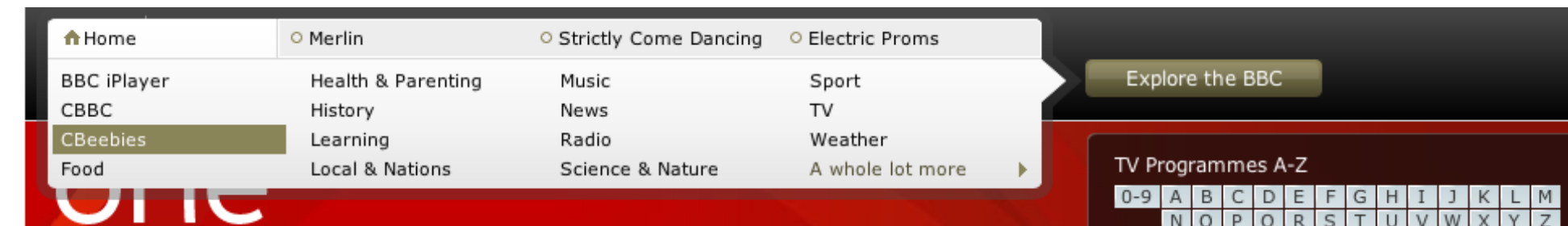
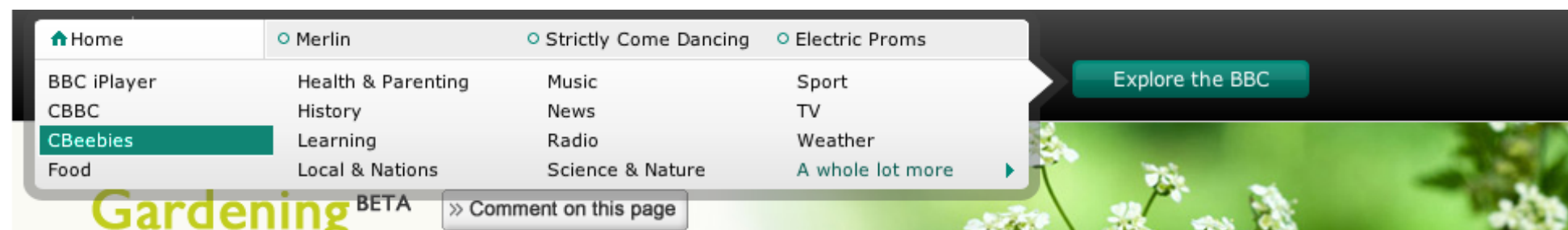
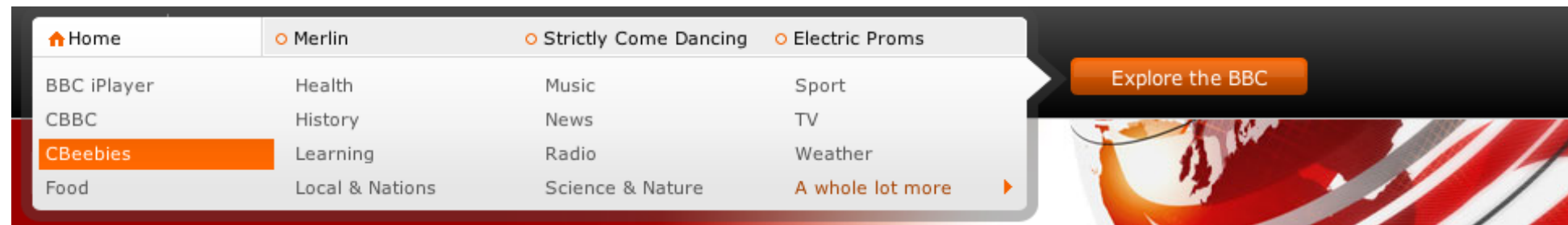
complementary colour to your main one rather than matching directly. The artwork for the nav will be placed in the 'Assets' folder which will be accompanying this document

NOTES

1. If your developers **DO NOT** explicitly set the colour in Barlesque, the button/menu will use the default blue (as shown, top left).



Colour variations example usage



4.1.2. Safe zone a flash warning

The current version of Adobe's Flash player creates a technical issue where Flash content will overlay HTML content including drop down menus and lightboxes. The menu has been designed to appear as high up the screen as possible to help avoid this.

You **MUST NOT** place any Flash content above **118px**. This will ensure the menu is not overlaid by it [Flash].

The menu expands vertically on text resize. Site designs **MUST** proportionally expand (vertically) to ensure that Flash content does not display above **140px**.

NOTES

1. Current guidelines state that pages must be readable when the font size is increased by two steps in our supported browsers. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/newmedia/technical/xhtml_integrity.shtml#css)

2. The measurements of 118px and 140px are based on default text size and +2 text resizing in Firefox (IE resizes in smaller increments) respectively and will ensure there the menu is not cut off within all our supported browsers.



THE MENU OVERLAYED BY FLASH CONTENT

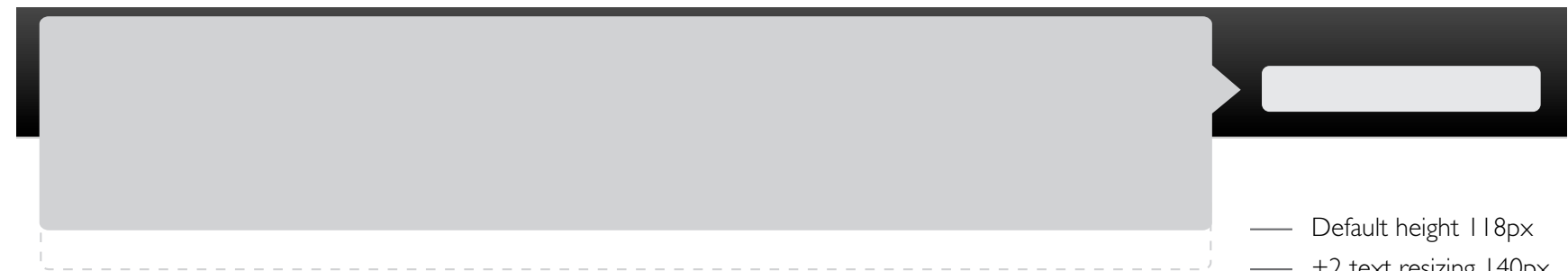


ILLUSTRATION REPRESENTING THE HEIGHT INCREASE WHEN RESIZING TEXT

4.2. MASTHEAD VARIATIONS —site/user specific changes

The global nature of the masthead means we should not make radical changes for local requirements. However, in certain circumstances a variation to the links in the menu needs to be addressed.

This is apparent on both international facing sites (English and other languages) and Children's sites where specific user requirements may need to be met.

4.2.1 International facing sites

Sites in other languages and sites with international versions can use a variation of the masthead.

Through discussion with BBC World Service, a specific set of links for the menu has been proposed.

Where an international version of a UK menu item is applicable that link should be enforced as a default unless the user has a cookie set specifically to the UK version. This would include, but may not be exclusive to News, Sport, Weather, TV & Radio.

Additional links that have a unique international perspective should also be included. These are currently the Languages portal, World Service Learning English & World Service Trust.

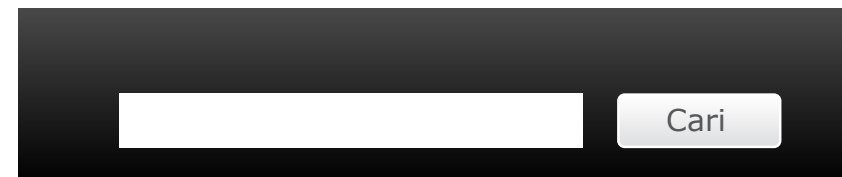
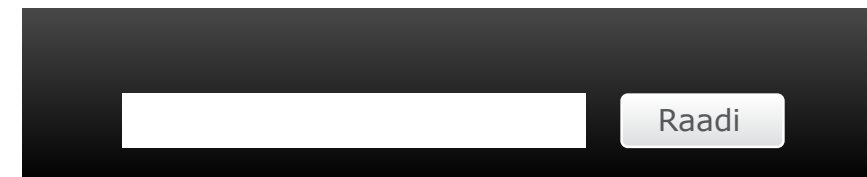
Finally, links that are targeted towards a UK specific audience (e.g. Gardening, Food, Health) should be removed from the menu and access to these will be on the 'More BBC sites' / 'A whole lot more' page.



4.2.2 Non-english language sites

Additionally the label used on the search button should reflect the language of the site the user is on and be scoped to search for results in that language where possible.

Note - current BBC search is only optimised for some languages not the full 33

A dark grey search bar with a white input field and a light grey button labeled 'Buscar'.A dark grey search bar with a white input field and a light grey button labeled 'Ara'.A dark grey search bar with a white input field and a light grey button labeled 'Cari'.A dark grey search bar with a white input field and a light grey button labeled 'Raadi'.A dark grey search bar with a light grey button labeled 'بحث' (Bihar) on the left and a white input field on the right.

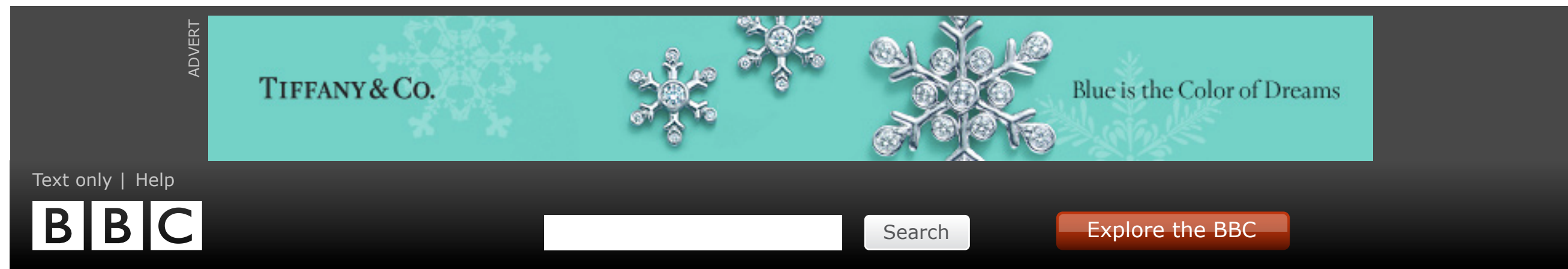
4.2.3 Advertising on the masthead of international and language sites

International facing sites will also carry advertising to non-uk users.

The masthead will need to accommodate a Leaderboard advert (728 x 90 px).

NOTES

1. Find out more about advertising on section [8. Advertising](#)



5. Local masthead

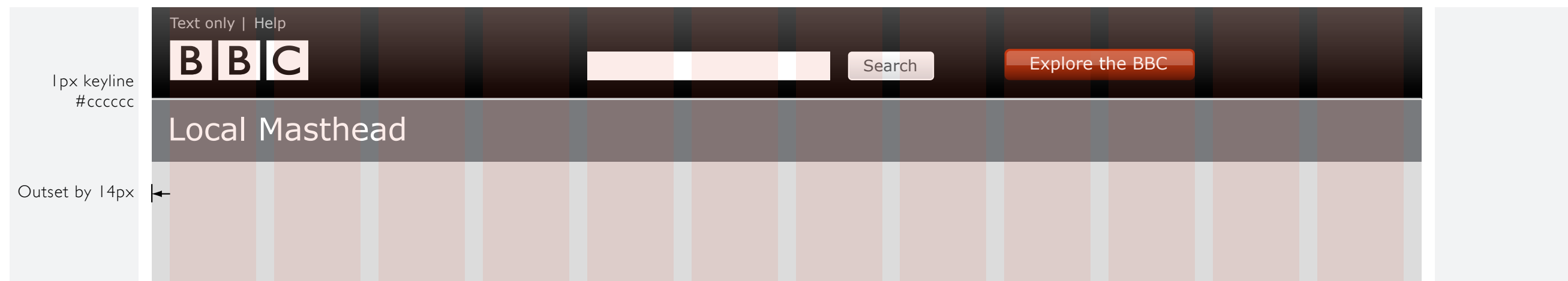
If you have a local masthead you should extend it outside the edge of the content grid to the inside edge of the white page border. There is a 1px key line (#cccccc) between the global masthead and the local masthead. This is part of the global masthead and does not need to be incorporated into a site's design.

Content **MUST NOT** be placed outside of the grid.

NOTES

1. The illustration below is only an example. The local masthead does not have to be a strip of colour (see the following pages for guidelines).

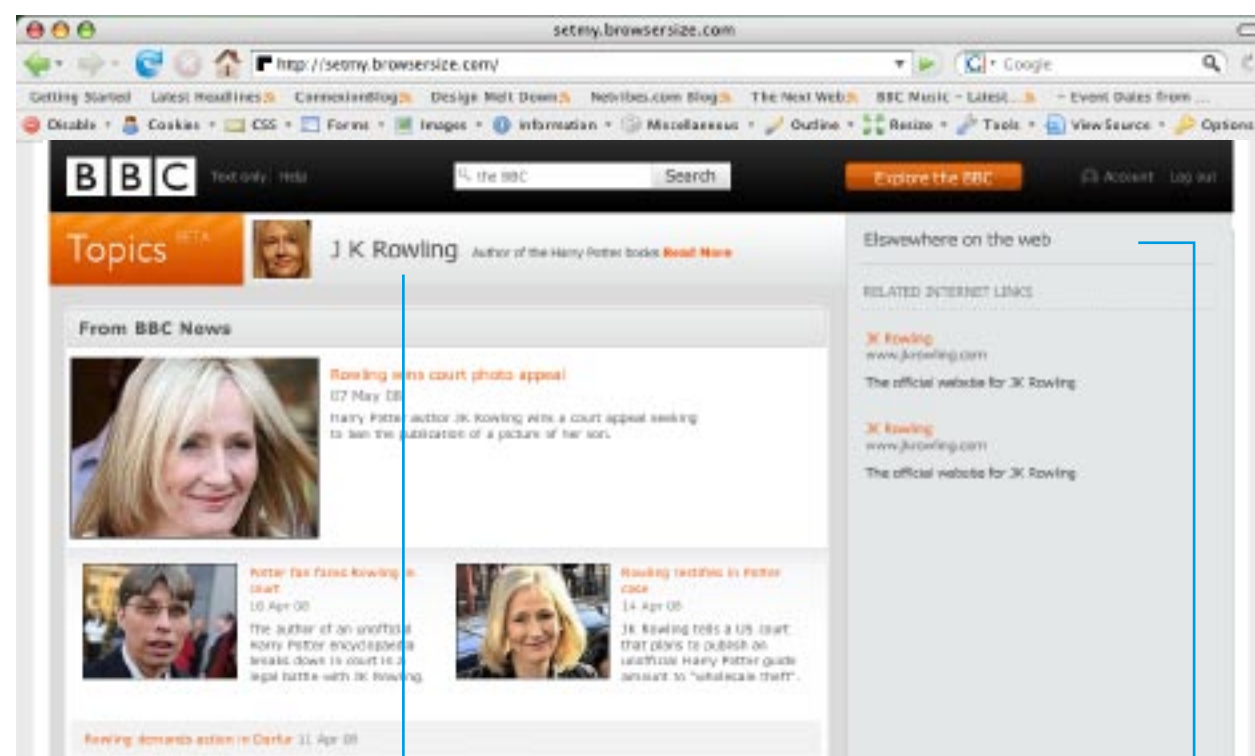
2. If your local masthead is a strip of colour the depth of it **SHOULD BE 49px.**



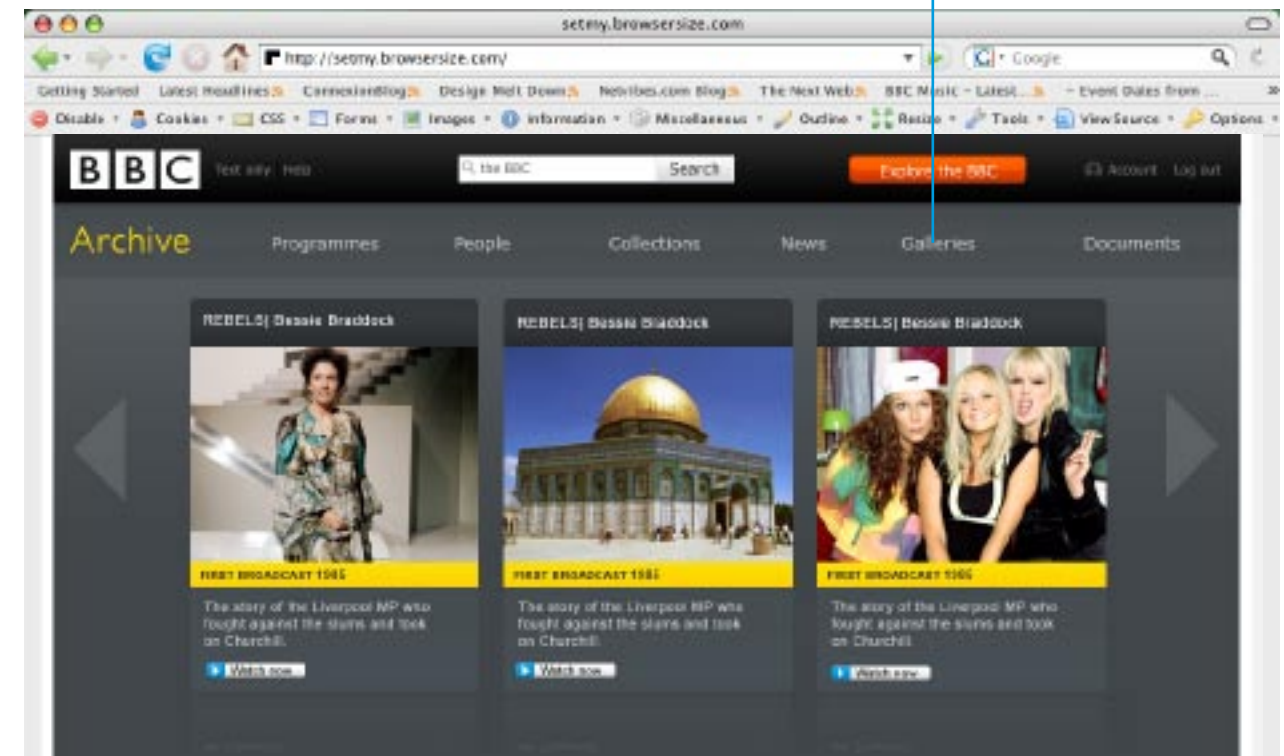
5.1. MAKE BETTER USE OF THE SPACE IN THE LOCAL MASTHEAD

Designers need to make better use of the local masthead space & **SHOULD AVOID** using an empty stripe as you would consequently lose valuable real estate on the page.

The examples below show two of the many ways you can achieve this



Use the space for
sub headings



Use the space for
local navigation

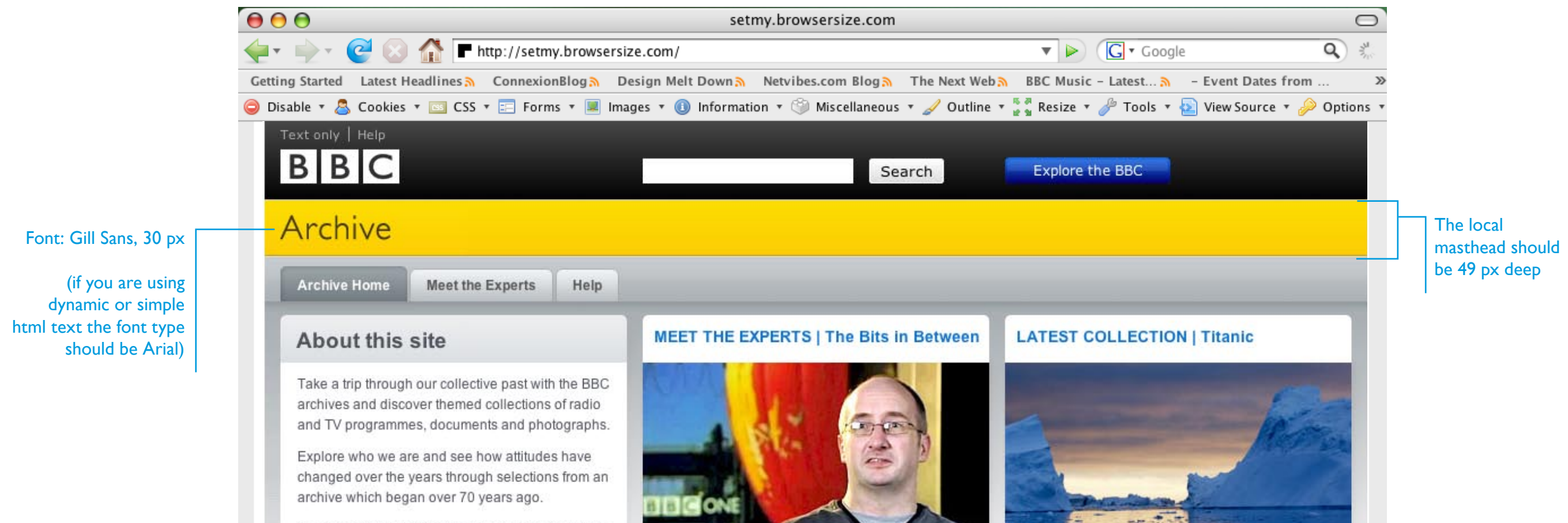
Use the space for
right hand column
information

THE ABOVE VISUALS ARE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

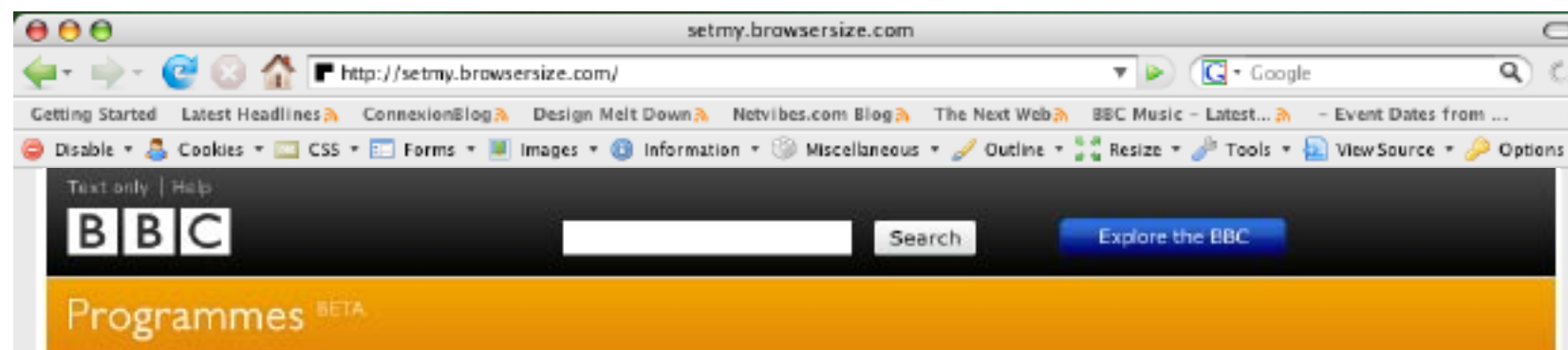
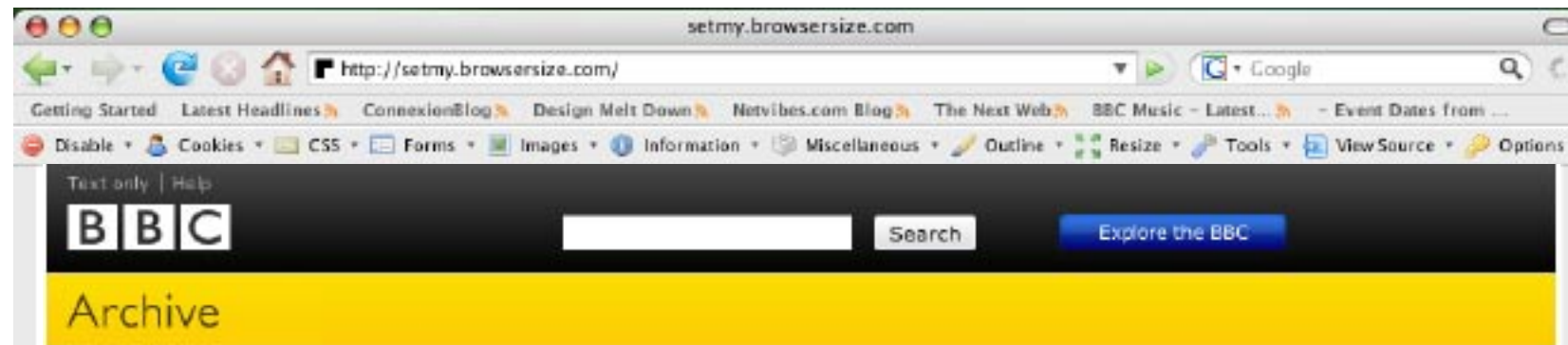
5.2. IF THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO USE AN EMPTY STRIPE...

We recommend that designers avoid using empty stripes (empty blocks of colour or gradient), however if there are instances when it is absolutely necessary to use them, we must make sure that the depth and font size remain consistent.

1. The local masthead when used in a stripe **SHOULD BE 49 px deep**
2. Font type & size **SHOULD BE Gill Sans, 30 px or Arial 30px** if using html text)



How it would work...



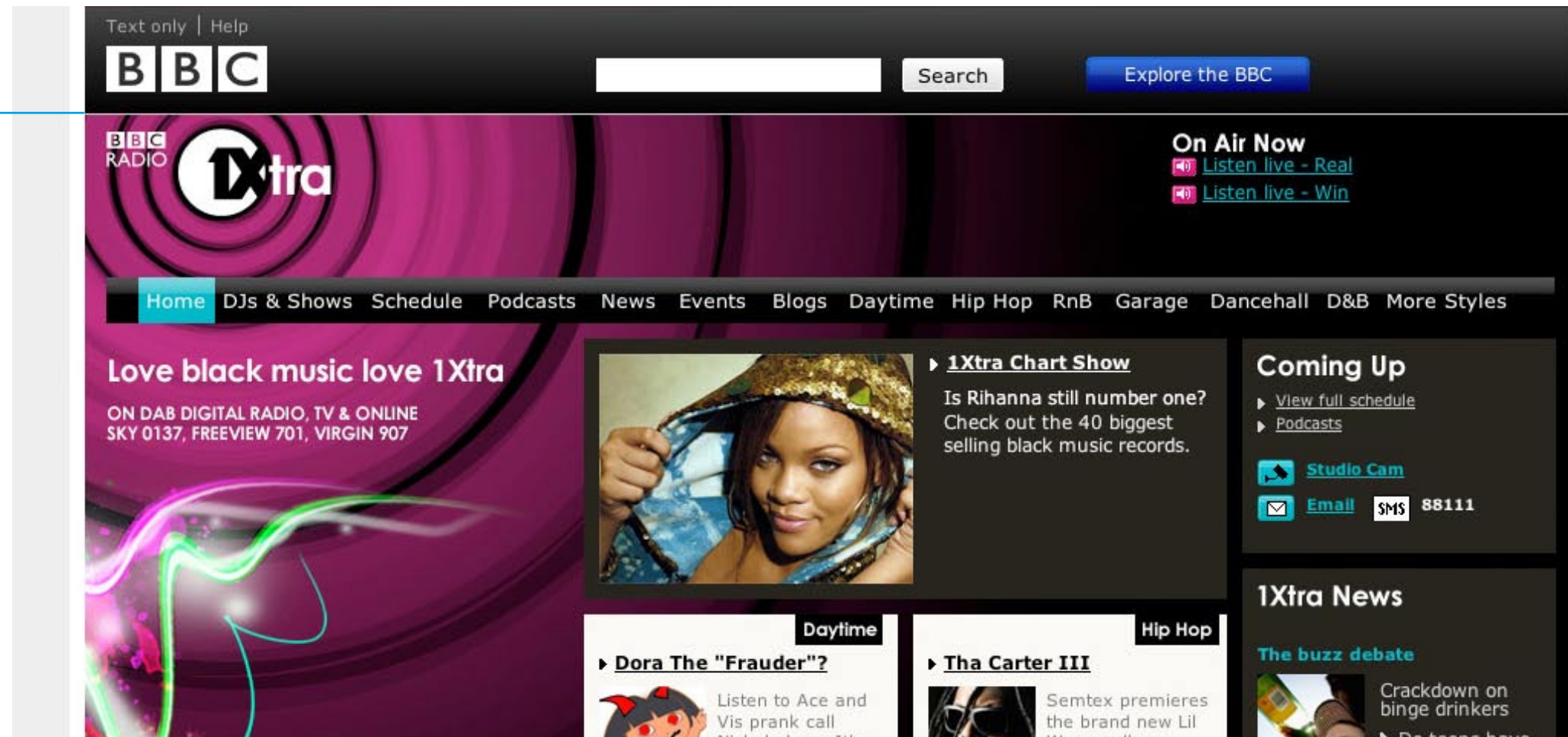
5.3. FREEFORM LOCAL MASTHEAD

A freeform local masthead is usually not strictly confined to any kind of visible horizontal grids (as shown on the example below).

The local branding usually floats on the page background and the visual reference as to where the local masthead ends is more subtle or in some cases not visible at all.

The local branding blends with the background

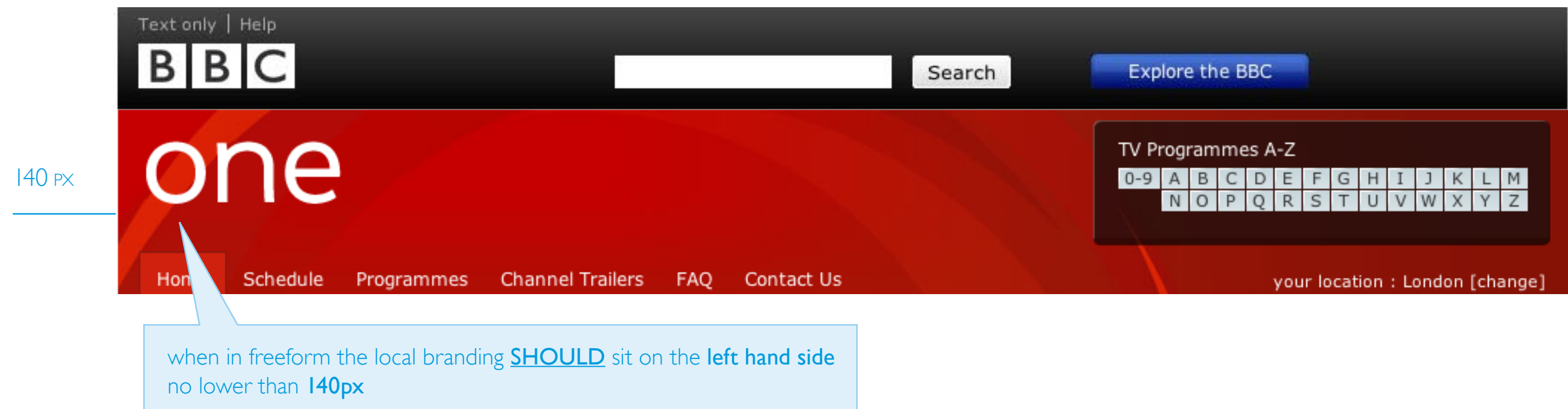
There is no clear visual reference as to where the local masthead ends



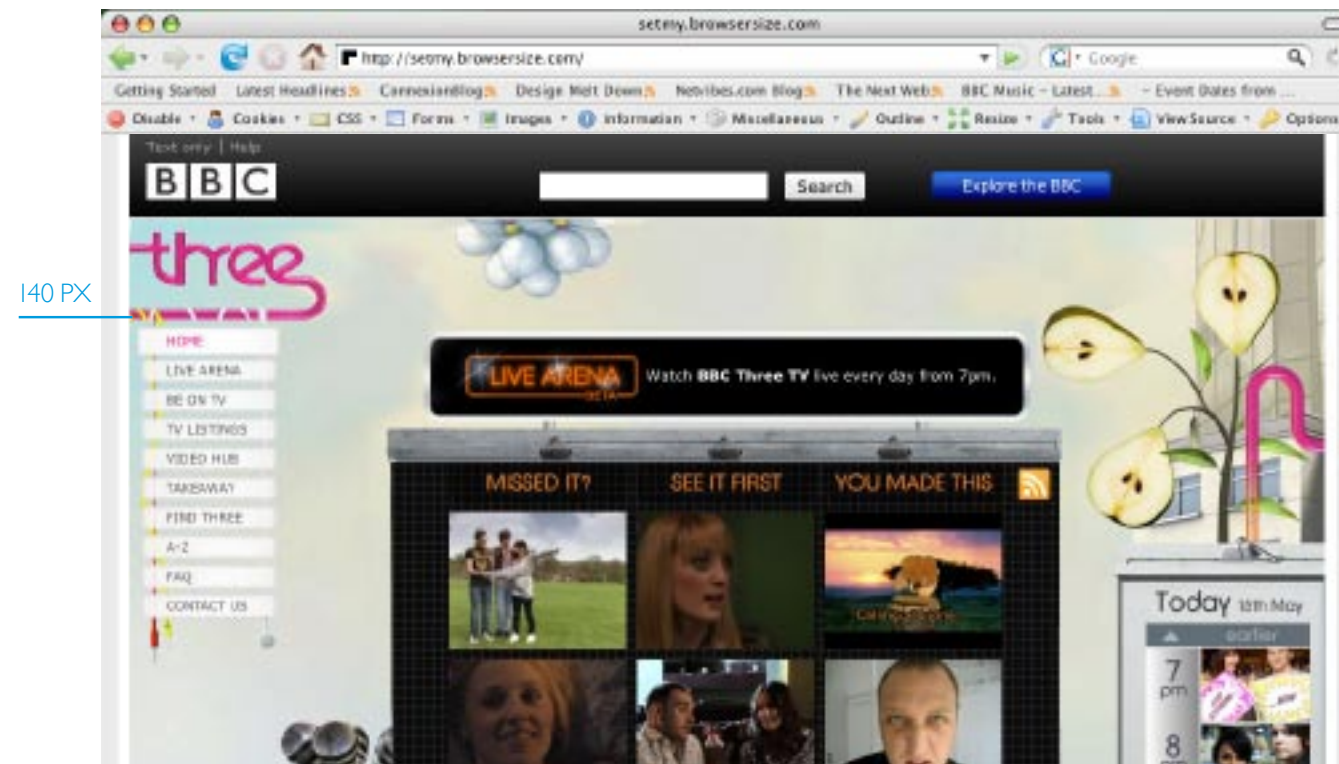
5.3.1. The rules around using a freeform local masthead

The logo **SHOULD ALWAYS** sit no lower than **140 px** unless an exemption has been made. The logo **SHOULD ALWAYS** sit on the **left hand side** under the BBC blocks unless an exemption has been made.

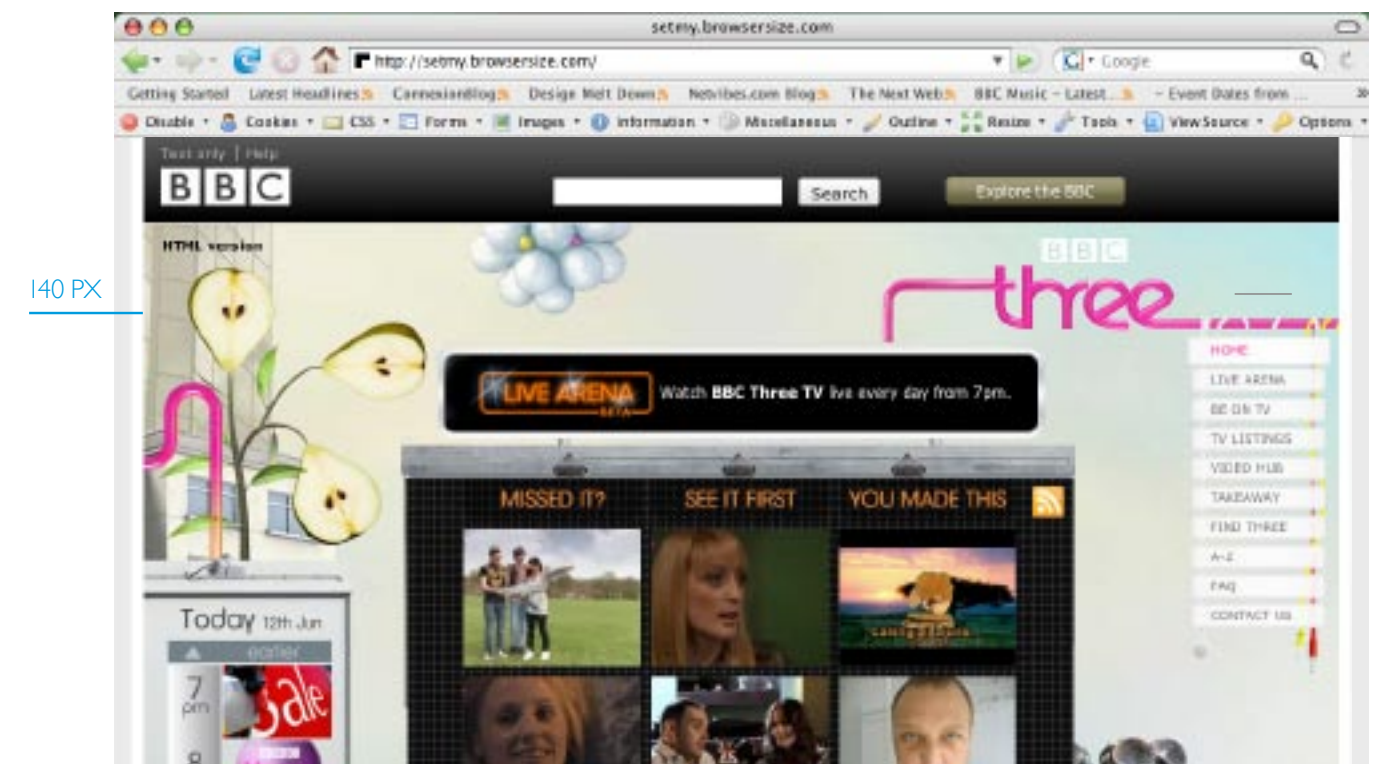
There should be **NO REPETITION** of the BBC blocks on the local masthead unless an exemption has been made



Treatment of the 'left aligned & above 140 px rule'



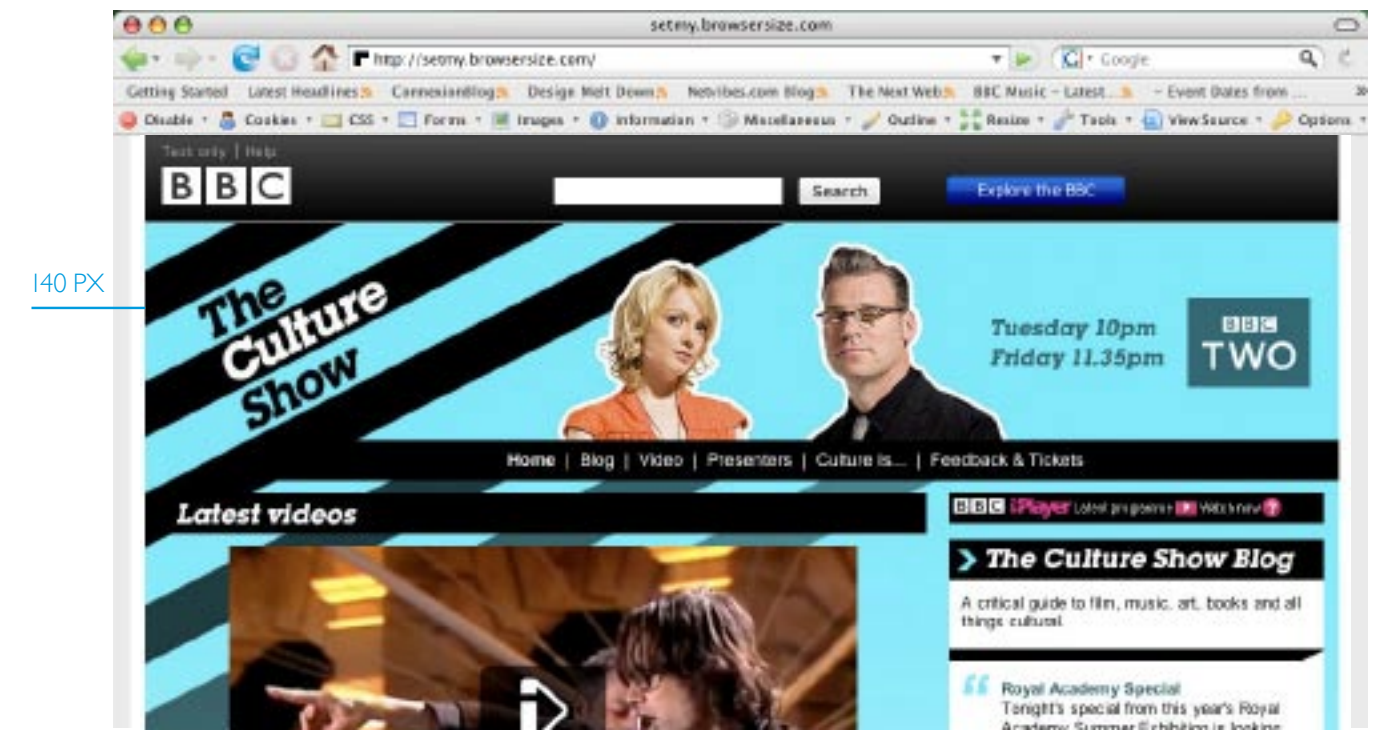
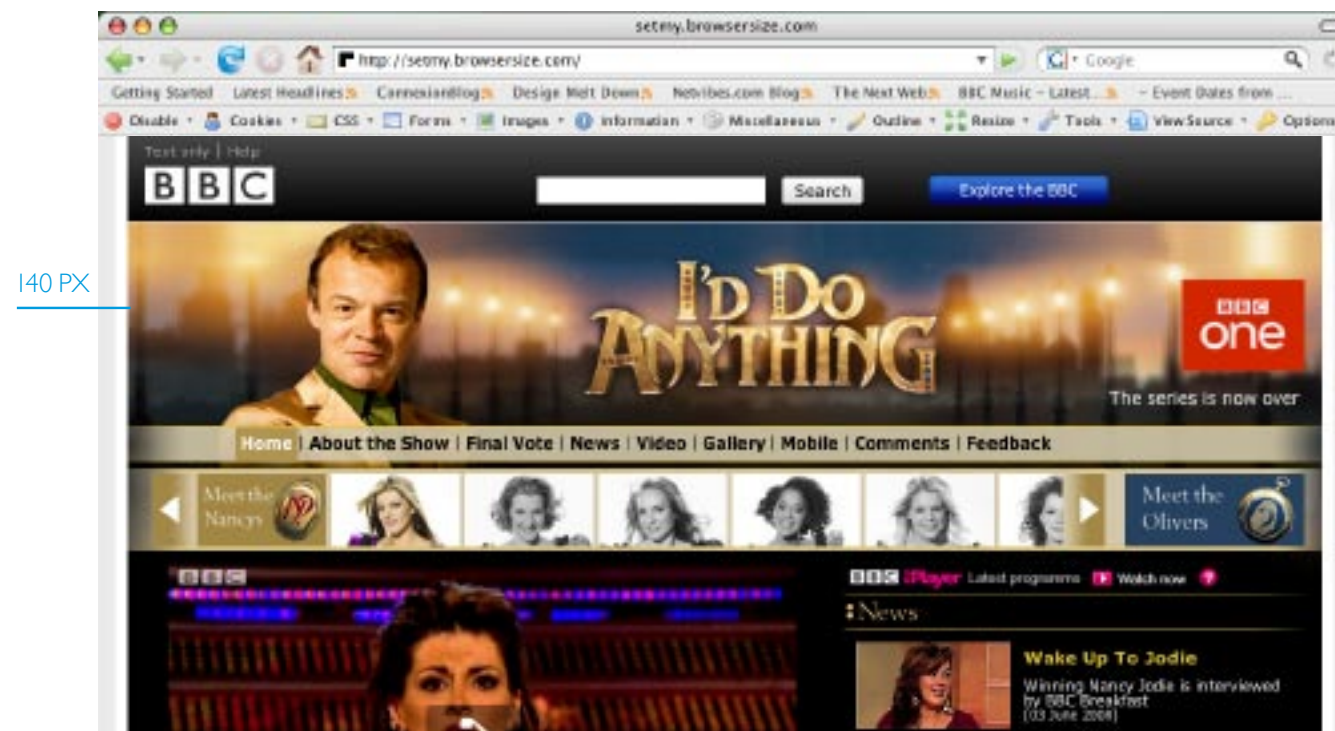
CORRECT TREATMENT



✗ INCORRECT TREATMENT

THE ABOVE VISUALS ARE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Examples where an exemption has been made



6.Footer

—a meaningful end

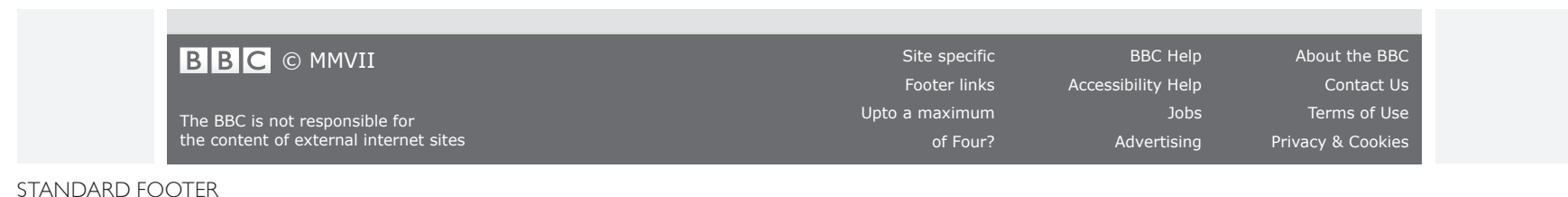
The Barlesque template includes a simple standard footer for use at the bottom of all pages.

There are 7 global BBC links (with an additional 'Advertising' link on international facing sites) on 2 columns, plus an optional column of site specific links (maximum of 4).

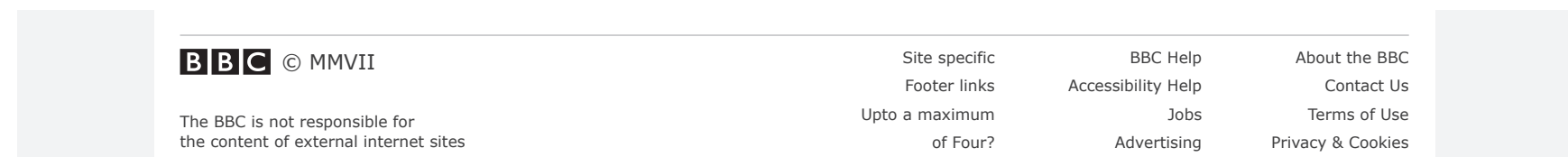
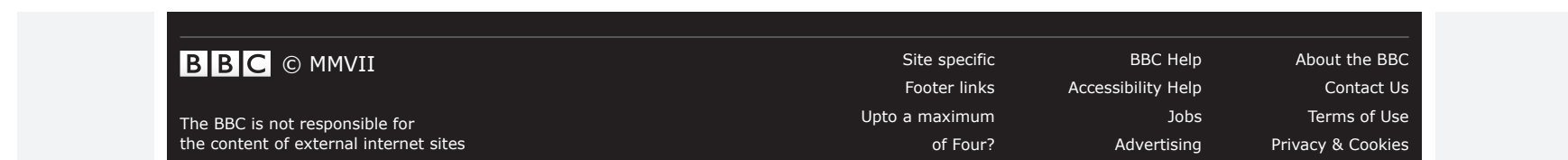
There are 3 colourways for the footer. The standard is grey (#4D4D4D) and should be used as much as possible. The exceptions are a black version and a white version which can be used as an alternative to the grey where it [the grey] does not suit the design of the page.

NOTES

I. 'Send to a friend' is still a supported tool but should be placed in your content area



STANDARD FOOTER



ALTERNATIVE FOOTERS

7. Content

We now have a structure for the page, but to create further useful consistency across sites there are other elements we need guidelines for.

Certain attributes of content elements need to adhere to the guidelines which follow. These include indentation, images, the embedded media player, and advertising. Each of which will be outlined on the following pages.

Using these guidelines together with the structures outlined on previous pages will create a visual framework that affords consistency yet flexibility across the BBC site.

7.1. THE FOLD

—where is it?

The argument that ‘users scroll’ has been used to refute the need to worry about the ‘fold’ in a browser window. Equally user testing has shown that users can experience problems when faced with finding specific information that is not visible in the browser window.

Using current browsers/operating systems we can define a maximum and recommended depth for content that would be visible to the vast majority of users (see illustration, right).

Internet Explorer 7 on Windows XP has the smallest depth of visible content of 617px. The recommendation is to keep all significant content or navigation within 600px to create a comfortable viewing area for the user.

Whether to adhere to the fold depends on the type of page and the design of the page. E.g., a user can expect a news article to be scrolled, but would not expect to have navigational elements positioned below the fold.

Ultimately it is up to designers and design managers to make the best decision for each page and product, based on the audience and page type and function

However, there is a requirement with regard to advertising. When using the 300x250px medium rectangle advert size, at least 50% of the advert **MUST** be displayed above the fold.



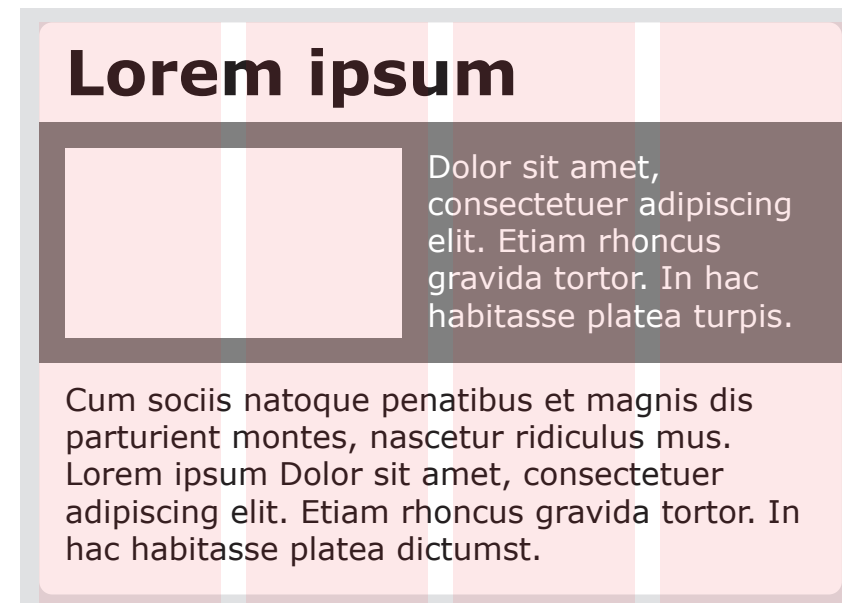
7.2. TEXT/OBJECT INDENTATION

When indentation of images and text are required (within boxes) use a 10px indent from the edge of the box. In addition 10px between images and text should also be employed.

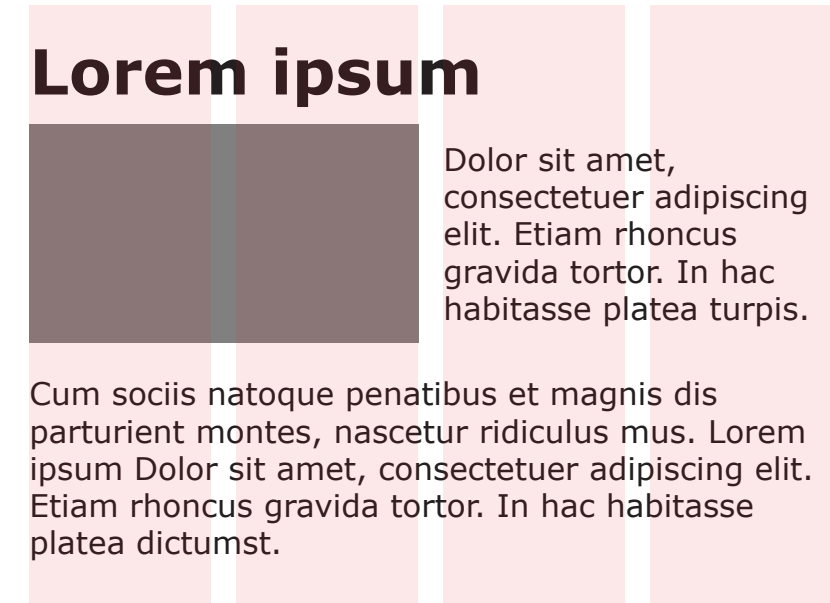
When content is not in boxes, text and images can be aligned to the grid or indented to 10px.

NOTES

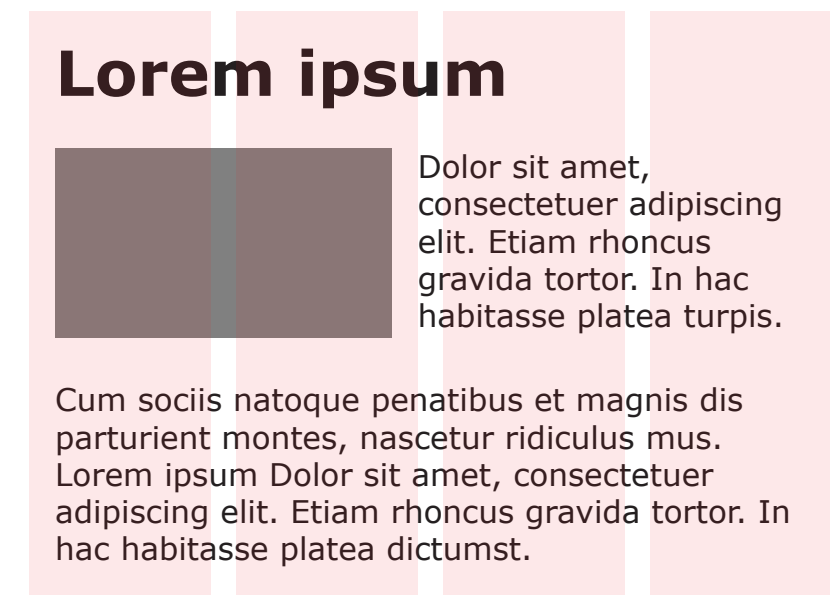
1. This is a recommendation and not a fixed rule.



INDENTATION WHEN CONTENT IS IN A BOX



ALIGNED TO THE GRID WHEN CONTENT IS NOT IN A BOX



INDENTATION WHEN CONTENT IS NOT IN A BOX

7.3. FONTS

Standard body fonts

- Verdana
- No other fonts should be used as body fonts without explicit exemption

MINIMUM SIZES

- 12px should be minimum size body text
- 11px may be used but caution should be shown around using low contrast colours as user research has shown that older demographics struggle to read it

Standard title fonts:

- Arial (preferred), Verdana & Georgia
- Verdana should not be used above 18px size.
- Verdana bold should be avoided above 16px size
- On a 'service' or programme brand site it is acceptable to use the relevant brand font as long as its legible
- Designers must ensure brand fonts are legally cleared for online usage

Page title fonts

- Official logos are automatically exempt from these guidelines
- As a rule of thumb page title typefaces should be at least 2 sizes up from standard title font

Standard BBC brand font

- Gill sans (version tbd) is the official BBC font
- AVOID using Gill bold

Character sets

- MUST be UTF8 character set unless site is in an unsupported language

Flash sites

- Flash sites must ensure typefaces used are easy to read but may use a wider set only if the BBC standard fonts do not fit the brand

IMPORTANT:

1. If you want to do something outside of these guidelines (and the automatic exemptions) you MUST apply for an exemption through the normal procedure
2. Always check type in both rendered and unrendered states on both PC & Mac to ensure presentation
3. Make sure the correct pixel size is represented on the live site

7.4. IMAGES

Images MUST work with the grid and help to create order within the page layout.

You should use an image ratio of 16:9. Aligning with the grid then gives us the five common sizes illustrated on the right (heights based on a 16:9 ratio). Images should also be able to pad against the column edges if it suits the design.

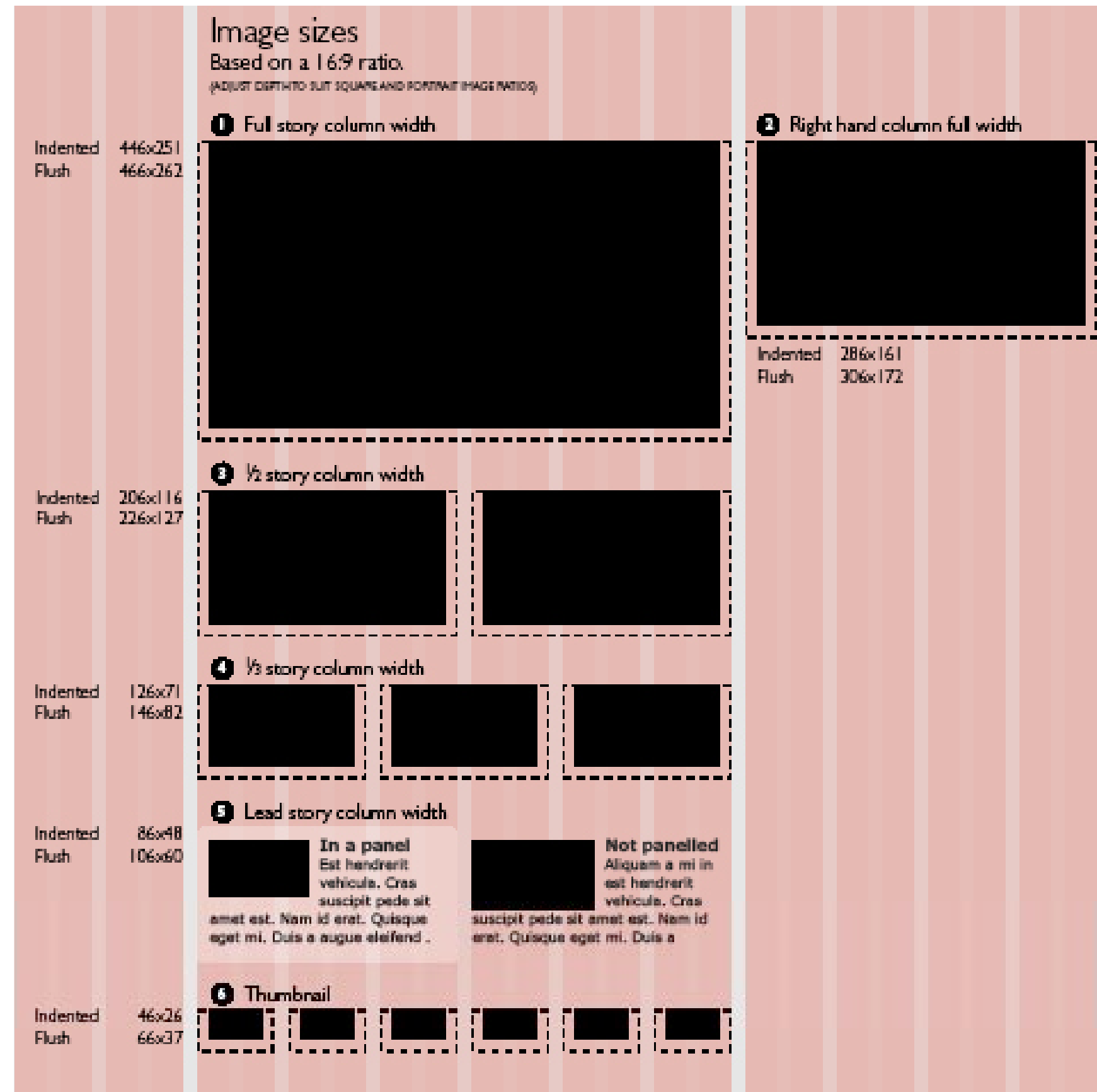
The following dimensions apply to a 16:9 image.

IMAGE SIZES

Indented	Flush
1. 446 x 251px	1. 466 x 262px
2. 286 x 161px	2. 306 x 172px
3. 206 x 116px	3. 226 x 127px
4. 126 x 71px	4. 146 x 82px
5. 86 x 48px	5. 106 x 60px
6. 46 x 26px	6. 66 x 37px

NOTES

1. Does not apply to background images
2. Does not apply to image galleries



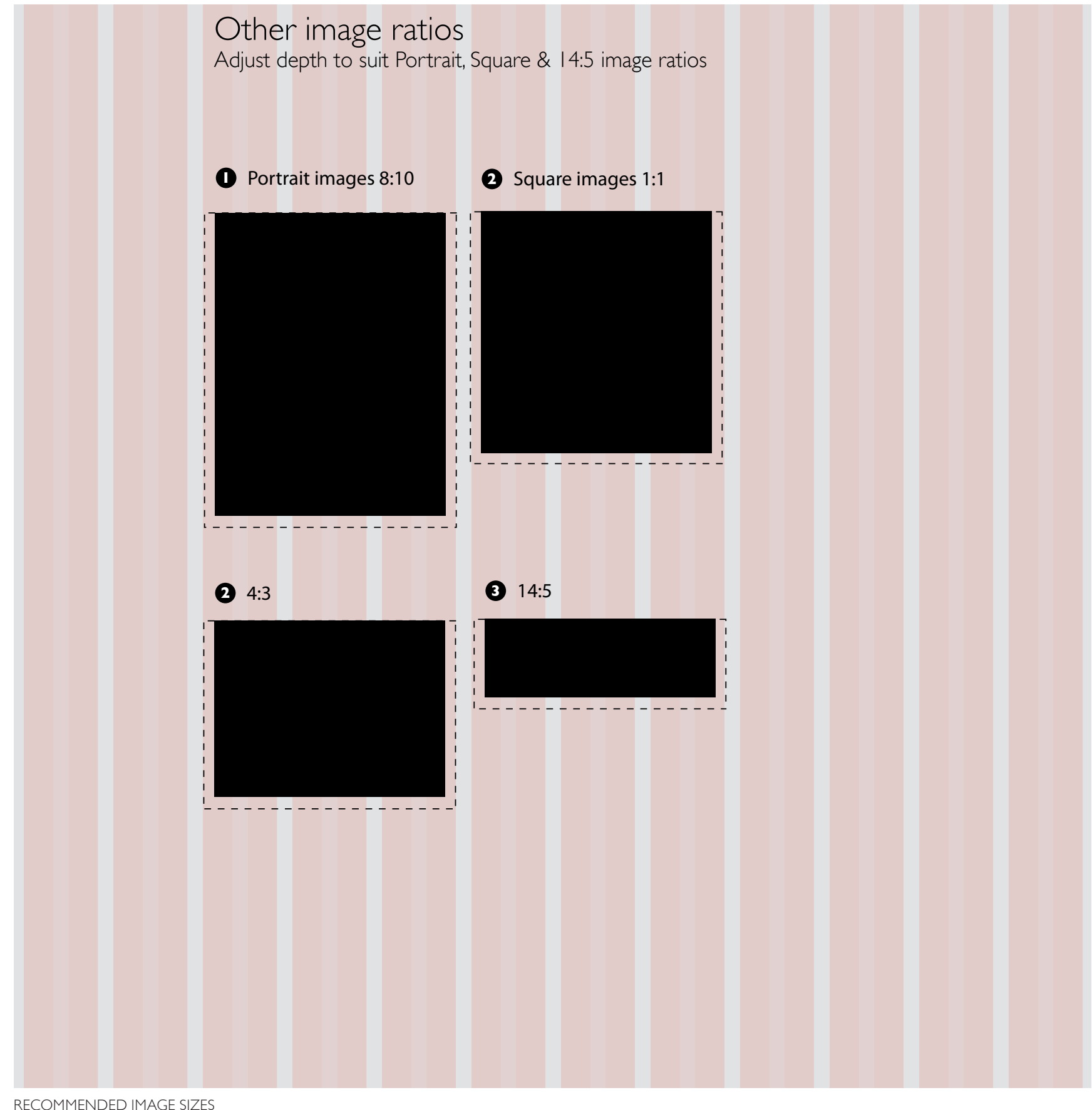
RECOMMENDED IMAGE SIZES

7.4.1. Optional Image Ratios

Where 16:9 are not appropriate 4:3, square, portrait (8:10) and a wider 14:5 images can be used. Simply fit to the grid using the relevant widths above with the height changing proportionately.

NOTES

1. Does not apply to background images
2. Does not apply to image galleries



7.5. INTERIM EMBEDDED MEDIA PLAYER SIZES

—one player, three sizes

The Embedded Media Player [EMP] currently uses a codec which is not fully scalable and as such specific sizes need to be built.

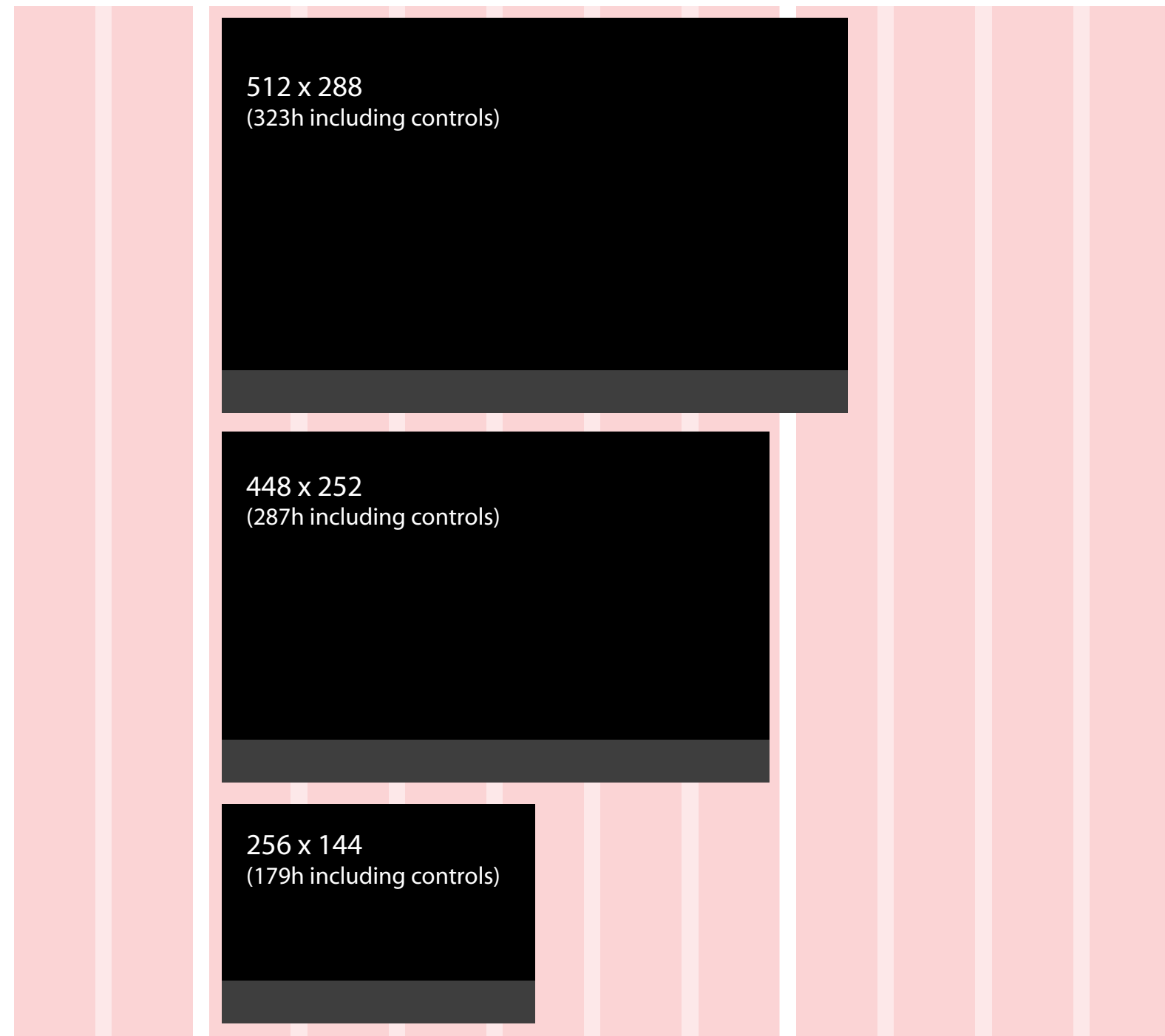
The video sizes that are available to you are 512x288, 448x252 and 256x144.

448x252 is the recommended size for use within story pages (left hand nav + 2 super columns).

Future iterations of the EMP will have greater flexibility in sizes and thus will fit better into pages.

NOTES

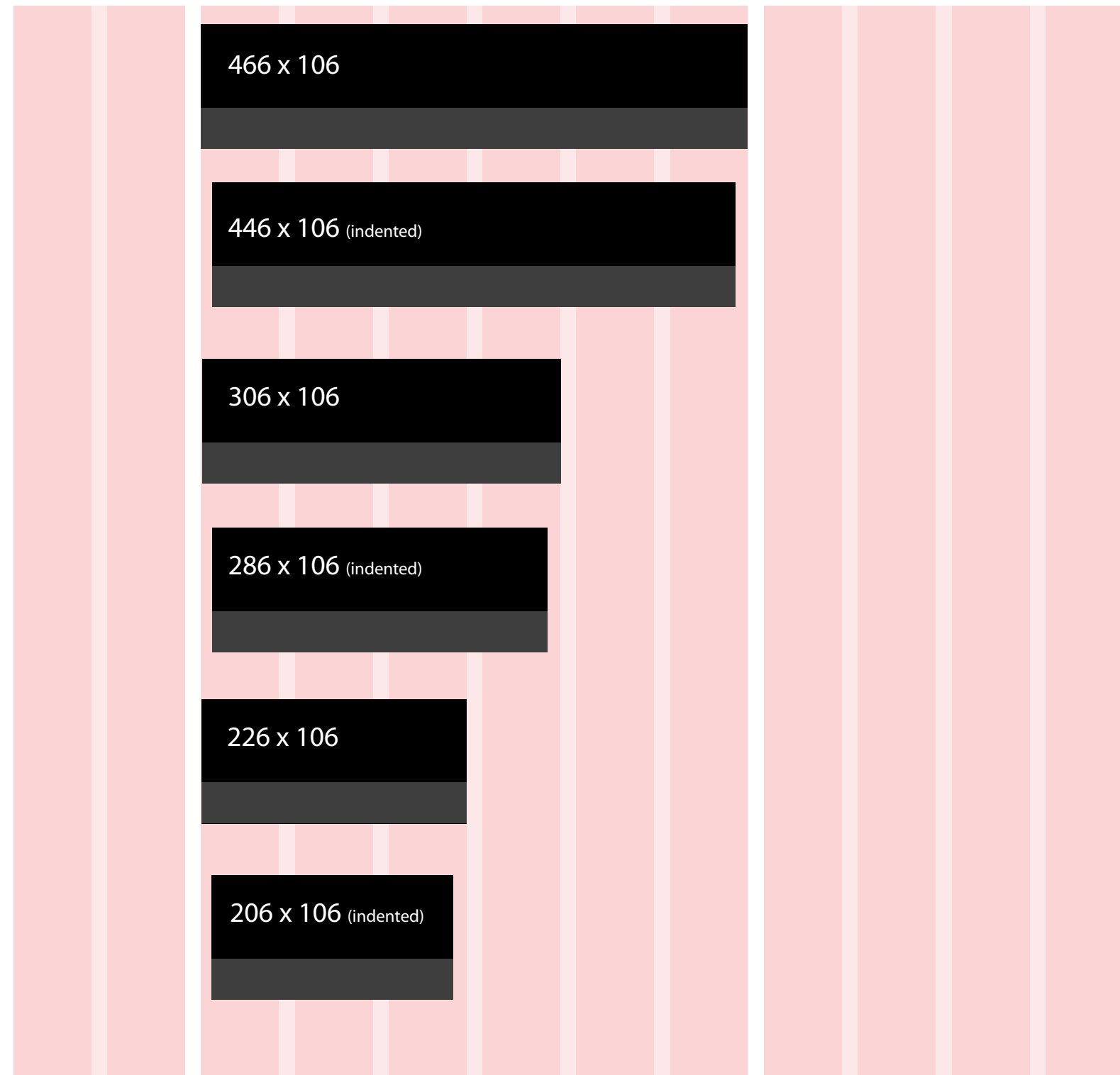
1. The EMP video controls add an extra 35 pixels to the height.
2. The 400x225 size is now deprecated and replaced by 448x252.
3. An additional size of 384x216 is also available but restricted to sites with the Barley page layout.
4. See bbc.co.uk/emp for more information.



CURRENT EMP SIZES

7.5.1 The Audio EMP

The Audio EMP allows more flexibility in terms of usage as it fits to the grid correctly



CURRENT AUDIO EMP SIZES

8. Local Navigation

—what links are included/the basics

Links that MUST BE in place on the Local Nav

- Site name or logo - (Recommended position - Top left beneath the global toolbar)
- Site homepage link
- Site specific links

Links that SHOULD NOT appear in the local navigation

—their new positions...

FOOTER

- Accessibility help
- Contact Us
- Help

GLOBAL TOOL BAR

- BBC Homepage link
- Text only

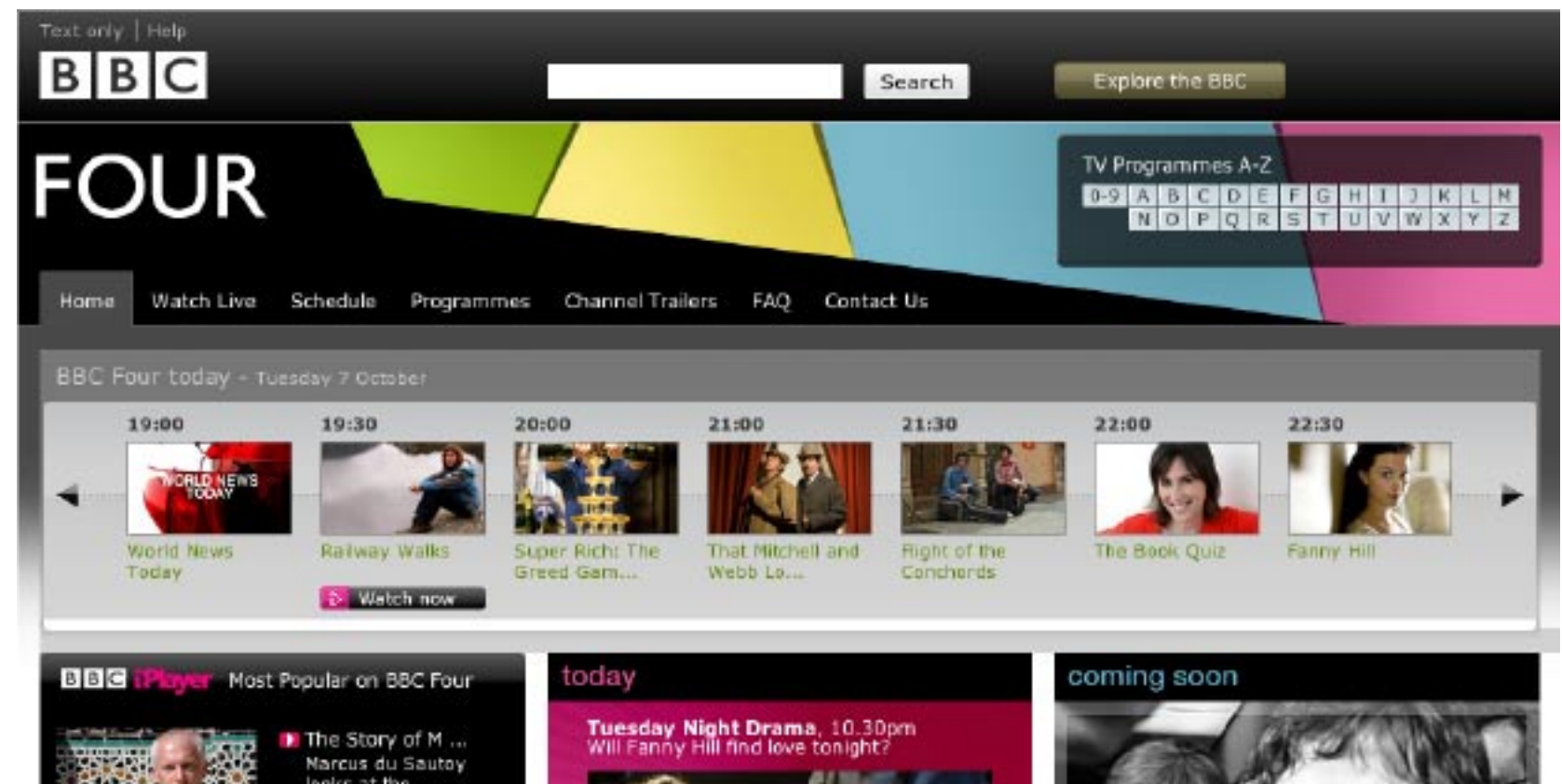
CONTENT AREA

- Audio on/off
- Drop downs
- Like this page? Send it to a friend
- Newsletters
- Printable version
- Related sites / links
- RSS feeds

8.1. HORIZONTAL LOCAL NAVIGATION

Absolute guidelines for the horizontal nav

- The colour contrast between the text & background colours for links, selected links & rollovers **MUST COMPLY** with the Standards & Guidelines or colour contrast.
- Font size must be 11px or bigger (11px Verdana, 12px Arial).
- **ALWAYS** use HTML Links (text links) - this enables the user to resize the text. If there is a need for graphics look at combining HTML text & graphics, as this still allows for resizing.
- The selected link **MUST** always be highlighted
- All links **MUST** have a rollover behavior
- **DO NOT** use fly-out menus



Recommended guidelines for the horizontal nav

- Verdana (up to 16px) is the recommended font for the BBC website. Any fonts that are higher than 16 px should be Arial.
- Use caution when using all capitals. Avoid using them for sites with numerous links.
- Make it visually clear where one link stops & another one starts – leave clear spaces between links (Vertical lines can help with this).
- Aim to have 9 or less links in the horizontal nav
- The horizontal nav must be able to withstand two text size increases without wrapping on a PC in internet explorer.
- Wrapping behavior should it occur – normal text flow, the text goes onto a second line. Make sure the line spacing is related to the size of the text, to ensure that there is no over lapping of text.
- Make navigation labels short and use clear, everyday language.
- Make the words used for navigation links match the main heading of the page they link to.
- Avoid using the same words to start link items, because doing so makes them harder to scan.

8.2. VERTICAL LOCAL NAVIGATION

Absolute guidelines for vertical navigation

- Vertical navigation for local navigation always appears on the left hand side of the page.
- **DO NOT** change the colour of visited links
- The colour contrast between the text & background colours for links, selected links & rollovers **MUST** comply with the Standards & Guidelines for colour contrast.
- Font size must be 11px (11px Verdana 12px Arial) or bigger.
- The leading between links in the Left Hand Nav must be at least 20px (20px)
- Left-align the links
- **ALWAYS** use HTML links (this enables the user to resize the text) If there is a need for graphics look at combining HTML text & graphics, as this still allows for resizing.
- The selected link **MUST** always be highlighted
- All links **MUST** have a rollover behaviour
- **DO NOT** use accordion menus or fly-out menus



Recommended guidelines for vertical navigation

- Verdana (up to 16px) is the recommended font for the BBC website. Any fonts that are higher than 16 px should be Arial
- Use caution when using all capitals. Avoid using them for sites with numerous links
- Aim to have 12 or less links for the primary level of navigation for a site..
- Local navigation links SHOULD be above the fold.
- Avoid using non clickable headings in the Left Hand Nav if headings are needed make it visually clear that they are non clickable
- Show & hide links to provide the clearest navigation
 - Indent show & hide links
 - Highlight the selected section heading
 - Highlight the selected link
 - Change the background color for the show & hide links
- Use the full width of the Left Hand Nav for the click zone
- Make navigation labels short and use clear, everyday language.
- Make the words used for navigation links match the main heading of the page they link to.
- Avoid using the same words to start link items, because doing so makes them harder to scan.
- Follow the recommendations for the ordering of links & naming conventions in the Guidelines & Assets zip

8.3. TWO BASIC PATTERNS FOR THE LOCAL NAVIGATION: A & B

—recommended patterns

PATTERN A — horizontal followed by vertical



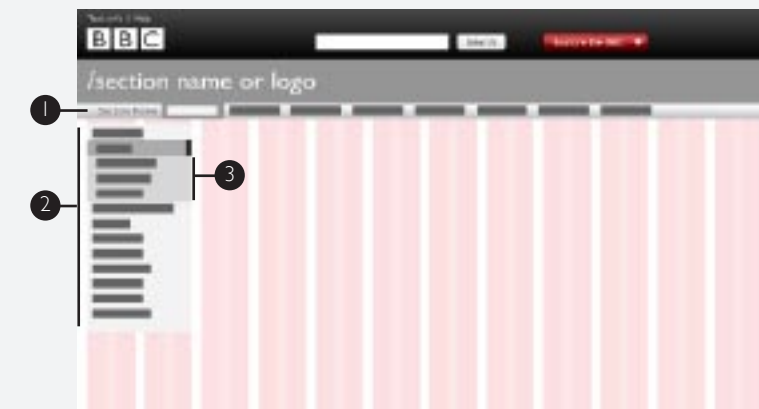
A.1

1. horizontal nav



A.2

1. horizontal nav
2. left hand nav



A.3

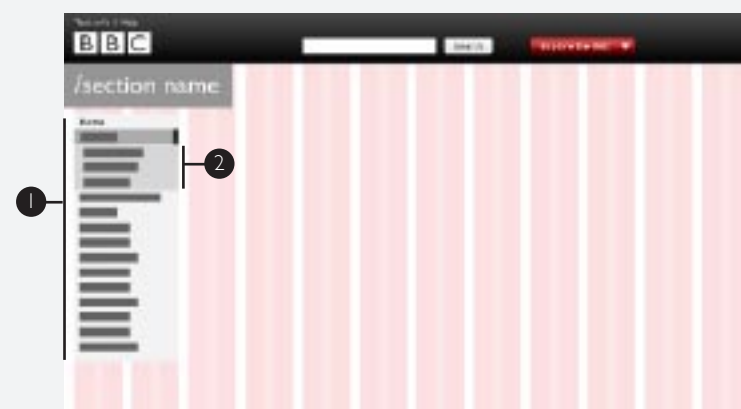
1. horizontal nav
2. left hand nav
3. show & hide

PATTERN B — vertical only



B.1

1. left hand nav



B.2

1. left hand nav
2. show & hide

8.4. BREADCRUMB TRAILS

Recommendation

- Do not use breadcrumb trails for primary navigation
- Where necessary, include breadcrumb trails as a secondary navigation to provide context and make users' orientation more explicit.

Comedy ▶ Hyperdrive ▶ Characters ▶ **Michael Henderson**

Home ▶ Print and Colour ▶ **Barnaby Bear**

9. Advertising

—size and placement

Advertising on the BBC site will only be visible to visitors from outside of the UK. Current implementation is only on a small number of site areas but may be extended.

When the page is viewed by a UK facing audience the ad will not display. In it's place the content will either move up into the space (collapsible columns), or alternate content of the same column width will be displayed.

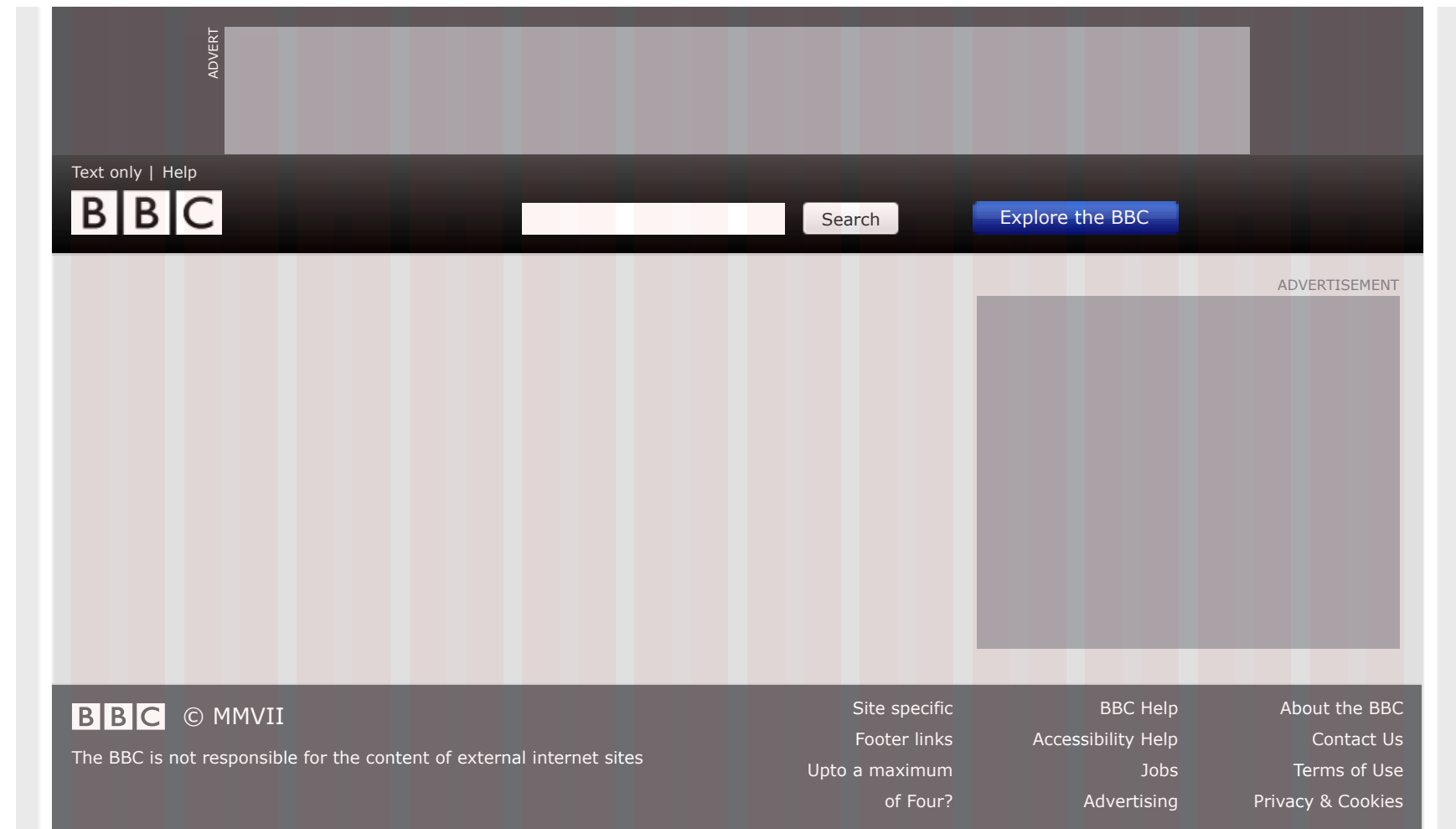
There are four ad sizes and respective placements.

1. Leaderboard (728x90) above the global navigation within the masthead and is controlled by Barlesque.
2. MPU (300x250) in the right hand column, inset by 3px (centred), 14px padding top and bottom.

All ads will automatically display the supporting text 'ADVERTISEMENT' (10px Verdana, caps) above or below the advert (as illustrated, right).

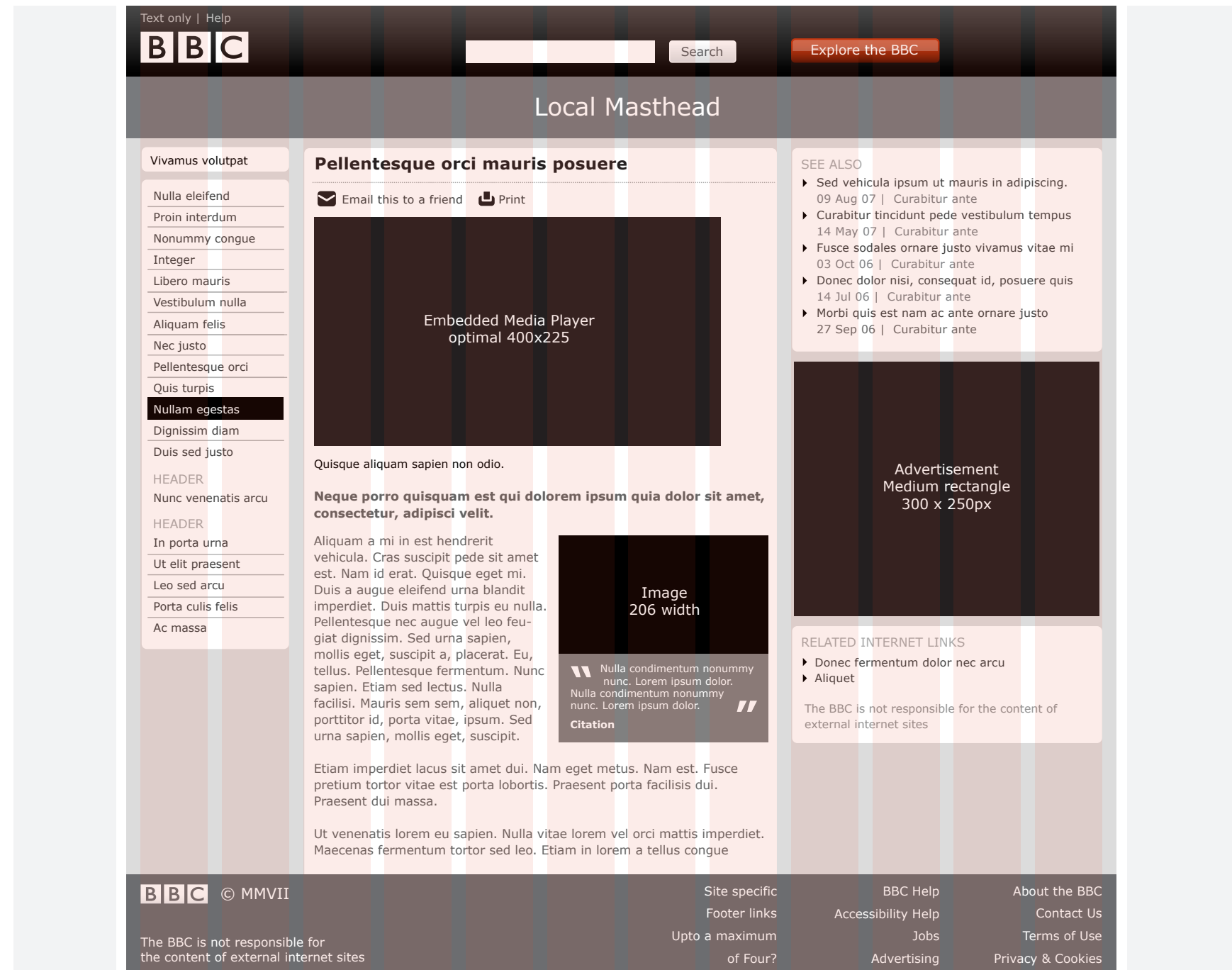
NOTES

1. At least 50% of the MPU **MUST** be above the fold.
2. See appendix 1 for examples of collapsible columns.



10. Putting it together

The design to the right is purely an exercise to illustrate how we can pull all the elements in this document together on one page.

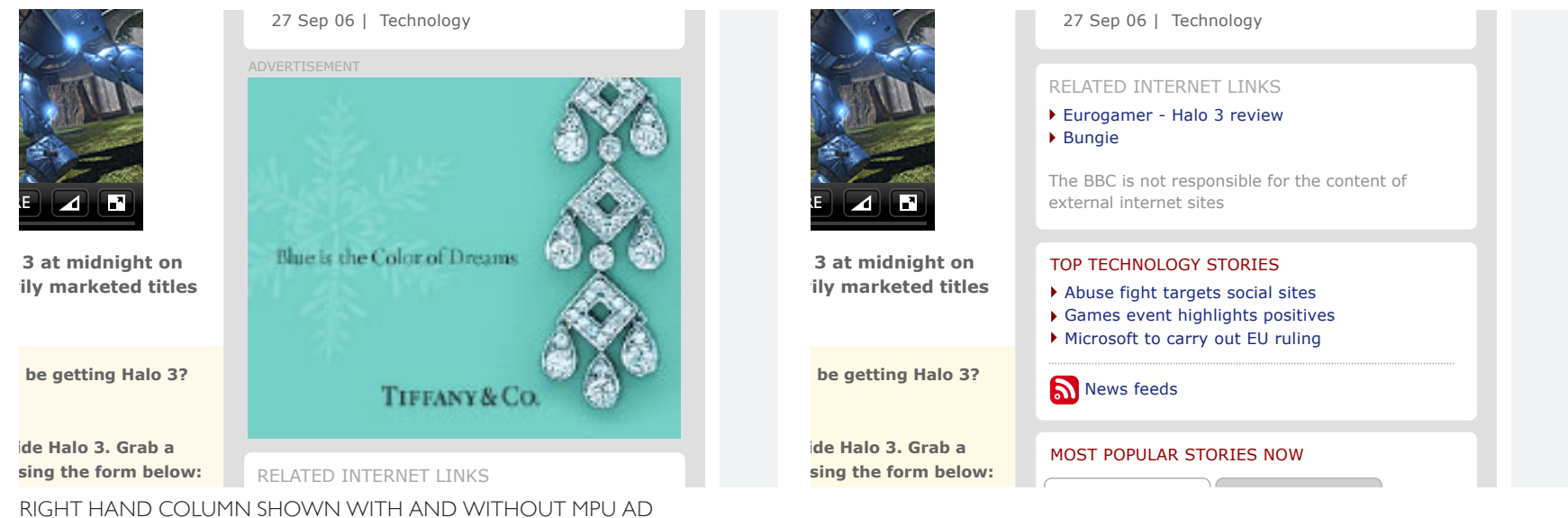


Appendix I

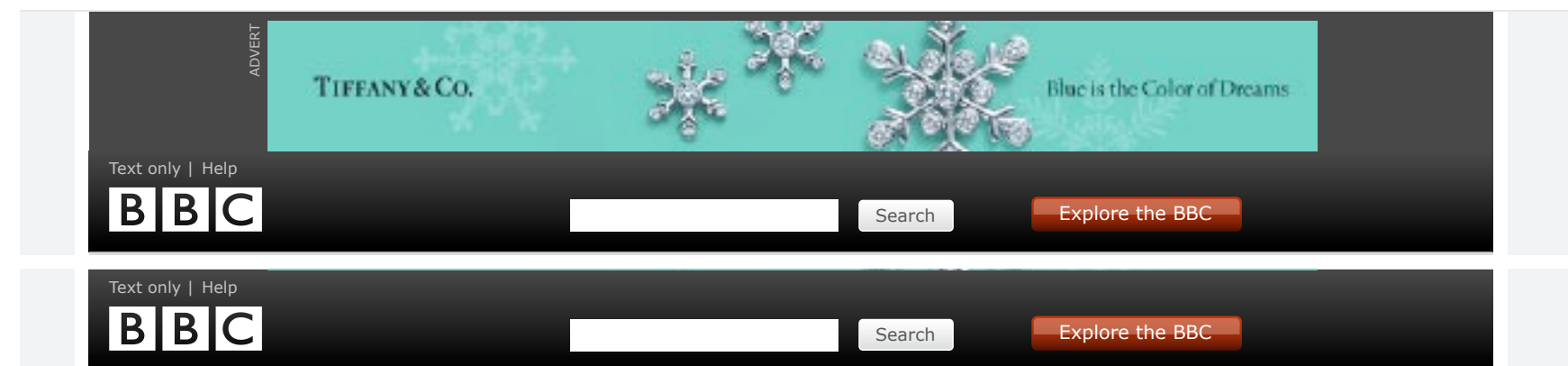
—collapsible columns

Ads will be shown on some sites to international users of the site. When those pages are viewed by a UK facing audience the ad will not display.

In it's place the content will either move up into the space (collapsible columns), or alternate content of the same column width will appear in it's place.



RIGHT HAND COLUMN SHOWN WITH AND WITHOUT MPU AD



MASTHEAD WITH AND WITHOUT LEADERBOARD AD

Appendix 2

—sample local mastheads

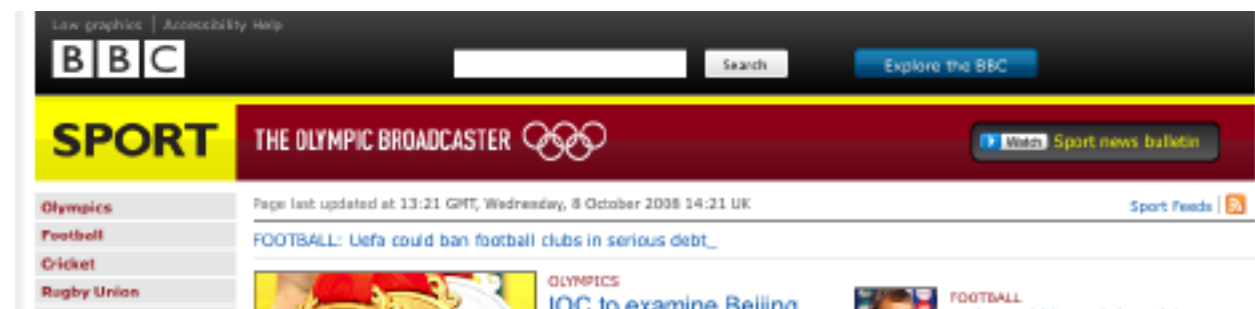
NEWS



BRITISH STYLE GENIUS



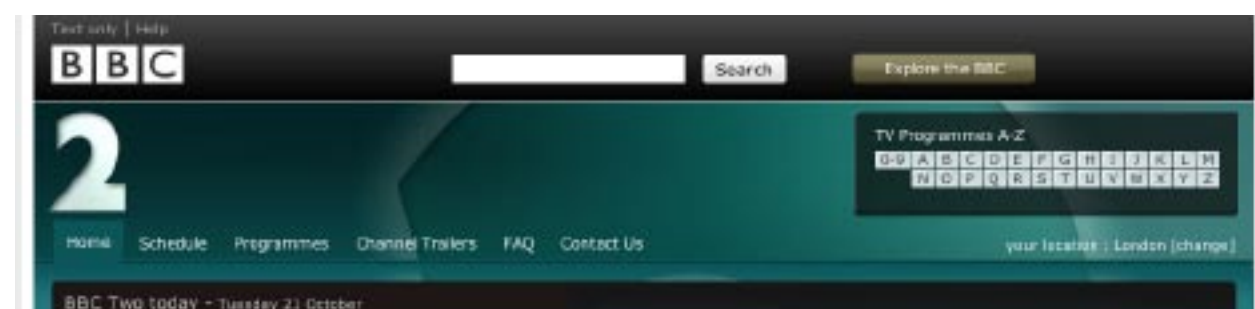
SPORT



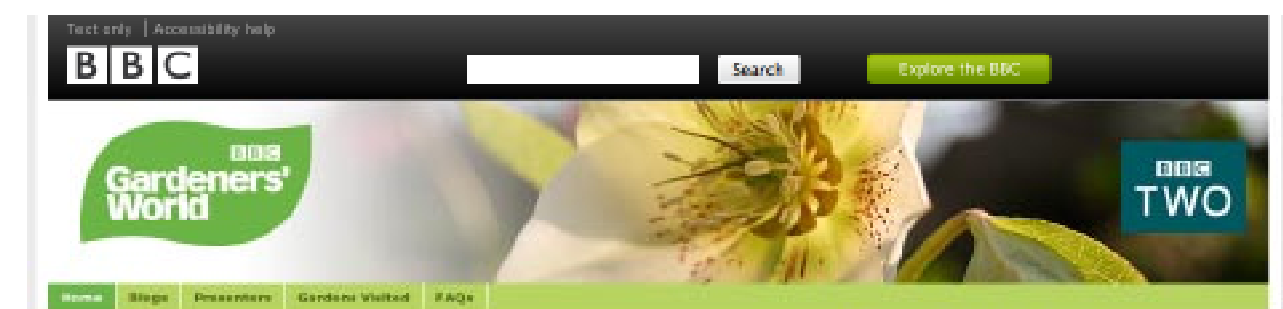
BIG CATS LIVE



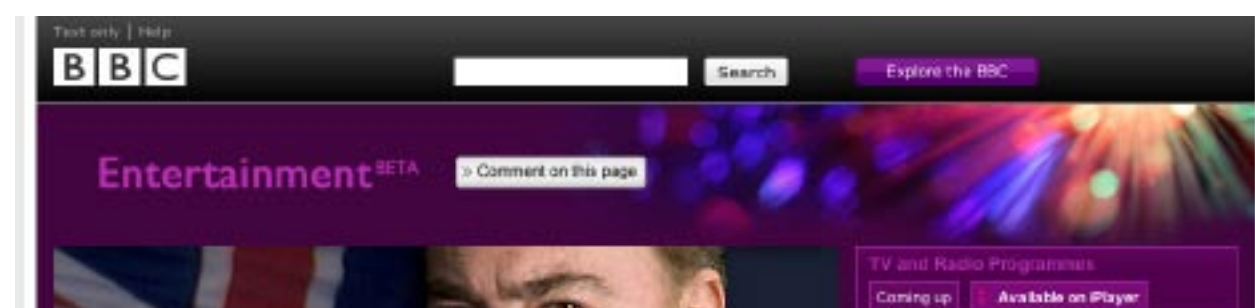
BBC TWO



GARDENERS' WORLD



ENTERTAINMENT



WEATHER

