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shopfront design guide, a supplementary planning document

local development framework



Do I need planning permission to alter or construct a shopfront?

Most alterations and improvements to shopfronts will require permission under the Planning Acts. More than one type of permission may be required depending on whether the alterations fall into any of the following categories.



Original features such as pilasters and fascias often survive hidden under later work

Planning permission is required for works which materially affect the external appearance of a shop.

For example:

- modifying the entrance door by means of a different design or material, relocation or size
- removing or installing steps or a ramp
- installing an awning or security shutters/grilles
- modifying the shop window area including the fascia
- changing facing materials
- altering the alignment of the frontage.

Advertisements

Fascia signs, blinds, awnings and other external features, such as 'A' boards and pavement signs, may require advertisement consent. Illuminated signs will require advertisement consent.

Historic shopfronts

Alterations to shops in listed buildings will usually require listed building consent. This applies not only to the shopfront, but also to internal alterations, repainting (if colour is substantially different) and installation of fascias, signs, blinds, lights, shutters and burglar alarm cases. Where a historic shop is not listed, there will be a presumption in favour of retaining and refurbishing the whole shopfront or any historic parts which remain.



Many replacement shopfronts are out of character with the building and obliterate original architectural detail and decoration.

Submission of applications

- Clear and accurate information will enable the application to be processed promptly.
- Scaled drawings should be submitted showing all existing architectural detailing, plus relevant details of the buildings on either side at a scale of 1:50.
- Applications will also be expected to show clearly all details of the proposed shopfront and its relationship to the whole elevation, including any existing features that are proposed to be altered or removed.
- Plans, elevations and sections should be at a scale of 1:50, highlighting specific architectural detail at a scale of 1:20.
- At least one sectional drawing of the shopfront should show its profile and relationship to the upper part of the building.

Owners/occupiers should seek design advice from the Design and Conservation Team before applying for planning permission as each building will be considered individually.

Even in cases where consent is not required, the advice in this booklet will prove useful to shop owners. This advice will not inhibit imaginative and sensitive design.

Enforcement

Enforcement action will be taken against unauthorised shopfronts installed without planning permission.

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Shopfront design in Lewisham

This supplementary planning document seeks to promote good design in order to enhance the character and appearance of the borough as a whole.

The Planning Policies are:

- URB 7 Access to Buildings for People with Disabilities
- URB 8 Shopfronts
- URB 9 Shop Signs and Hoardings
- URB 10 Roller Grilles and Shutters.

In order to protect the attractive characteristics of the borough's main shopping areas, it is necessary to conserve the vitality and interest of the street scene. This is achieved by protecting the collective and individual qualities of shopfronts, while equally recognising modern retail needs. These two demands are not incompatible. By the use of sensitive design and careful attention to detail, a shop can promote its image through its unique quality.

A guide to detail

Shopfront design encompasses a wide variety of styles and details but certain basic rules apply everywhere. To be successful new shopfronts need not necessarily be imitations of traditional designs. But the Council will normally only give sympathetic consideration to alter, extend or provide new shopfronts if they comply with the guidelines contained in this booklet.

- A shopfront should not be designed in isolation but considered as part of the architectural composition of the building.
- The design should complement the period and style of the building onto which it is fitted.
- Shopfront elements should emphasise the division of the building and visually suggest a



method of support for the facade above.

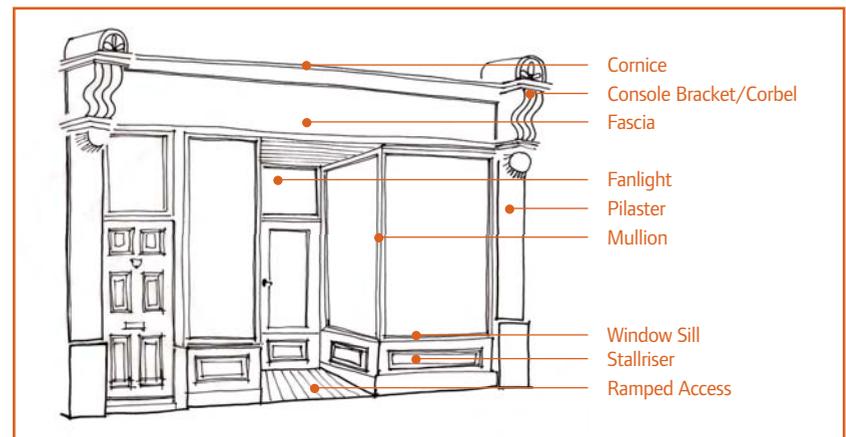
- Shops operating from more than one adjacent units should retain the sub-division of the shopfronts to respect the integrity of the individual buildings.

Elements of shopfront design

Set out below are the broad principles for particular elements of shopfronts which will ensure each shop makes a high-quality contribution to the street scene.

Windows

- Large plate-glass shopfronts without any visual support for the upper part of the premises can have a detrimental effect.
- The window should reflect the proportions of the building and



be slightly recessed within the frame.

- Timber mullions and glazing bars should be used to break up the window into smaller compartments where appropriate.

Stall risers

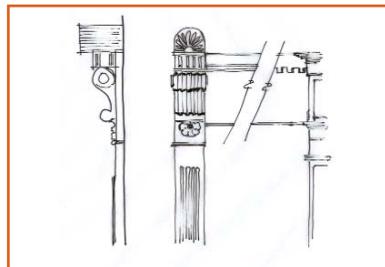
- The stall riser provides a visual and structural base for the shopfront and is an essential element of the design.
- Its height will vary depending on the style adopted, with lower stall risers sometimes taking the form of a deep moulded skirting.
- The stall riser should have a moulded projecting sill to provide a strong junction with the glass.
- Stall risers are often timber and panelled but can also be made from glazed tile or marble, but never brick infilled.



Stall risers are often panelled in timber with a deep moulded skirting or finished in glazed tile or marble.

Pilasters and console brackets

- Console brackets and pilasters are a feature which frame the shopfront and provide vertical emphasis between adjacent shopfronts, while the cornice defines the top of the shopfront.
- Pilasters and consoles should be designed to reflect the level of detail used in other elements of the shopfront and treated in the prevailing material of the building, usually timber, painted stucco or render.
- As with stall risers, this type of architectural detailing may be inappropriate where the building and its location are of a contemporary style, but it can work well as a frame for a contemporary shopfront.



New pilasters and capitals designed to reflect the level of detail and the prevailing material of the building. Usually made of timber, painted stucco or render.



The entrance to a shop gives an important first impression of the shop itself.

Doors and access

The design of the entrance door itself must reflect the design of the other elements which make up the shopfront. Particular attention should be given to the windows such that the bottom panel of the door is of the same height as the stall riser and both door and window frames are of the same material.

- Painted timber, two-thirds glazed doors are recommended for shop entrances. Solid unglazed panelled doors are appropriate for access to living accommodation above the shop.
- To be accessible to disabled people, entrance doors and access ramps should comply with 'BS8300: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of people

with access problems – Code of practice'. This means the door should have a clear opening width of at least 750mm and preferably 800mm. If a ramp to the entrance door is needed, it should not exceed a slope of 1:12.

Fascias

- The fascia must fit the frame, and architectural details such as corbels and pilasters must not be obscured.
- As a general rule, fascia boards should be about 600mm (2ft) high and never more than 900mm (3ft) high (measured from top of cornice to window frame below).
- A shop may occupy several units, but it is important that fascias should not extend uninterrupted across a number of buildings.
- Where a false ceiling is proposed inside a shop, it may not be acceptable to alter the fascia depth in line with it. Careful detailing of the window design, using opaque glass or setting the false ceiling back within the shop could be ways of dealing with the change of level.



Fascias should respect the building and the architectural detailing that surrounds it.

- The colours used in the fascia should not clash with the colours of adjacent fascias. The use of acrylic or fluorescent materials in signs is inappropriate and not acceptable.
- Large areas of acrylic or other shiny material are unacceptable.
- Internally illuminated fascia boxes are always inappropriate for historic buildings and will not be allowed in conservation areas.

Lighting

- Internally illuminated signs on fascias are often out of place and will be resisted.
- Shopfronts can be disfigured by a clutter of swan-neck or long-stemmed projecting lamps or crude internally lit fascias. If a fascia is to be lit, it



A shopfront sign can be disfigured or hidden by a clutter of long-stemmed projecting lamps.

- must be done discreetly so as not to detract from the character of the building.
- Internal illumination of the fascia and signs is not appropriate in conservation areas. Where lighting is proposed, full details of the fitting, method of fixing and luminance will be required in support of the application.
- Back lit or halo illumination of fascia signs may be acceptable if well designed.
- In all cases, external lighting is preferred.

Traditional materials

- Traditional materials should normally be used in conservation areas.
- These include elements such as painted timber fascias, applied metal lettering or hand painted signs



Modern fascia.

Modern materials

- High standards of construction and installation are particularly important. It is therefore recommended that experienced shopfitters and installers are always used when altering or installing shopfronts.
- Modern materials such as plastics, aluminium, Perspex and stainless steel, when carefully designed, can be appropriate for modern shopfronts. The quality and detailing are important.
- These materials are not normally acceptable for listed buildings or in conservation areas because of their incompatibility with traditional building materials and their tendency to disrupt the visual unity of the street scene.

Security

Security should be considered at

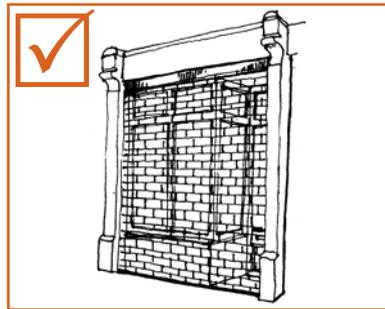


Modern materials in modern shopfronts should be used with care.

the design stage. In this way the overall design of the shopfront is enhanced by the unobtrusive inclusion of security elements. By contrast, a well-designed shopfront can be let down by ill-conceived or 'add-on' security measures which respect neither the building nor the surrounding area.

- Internal shutters are a visible form of security that does not compromise the external appearance of the shop. The installation of 'solid' or perforated external security shutters of the metal roller type covering shopfronts is not acceptable.
- The shutters should be of the open mesh/grille type and colour powder coated. The shutter box should be concealed behind the fascia so that it does not project outwards.

- It is important that the shutter does not cover the whole of the shopfront, only the glazed areas. For a large shop frontage the combination of a number of smaller shutters applied to individual window openings will be preferable to a large single shutter.
- All items of security, including burglar alarms and camera surveillance systems, should form an integral part of the design and be located in unobtrusive positions that avoid interference with any architectural detail.
- Wiring should be internal as far as possible; if external, it should not be visible.



Open-grille shutters are a visible form of security that does not compromise the external appearance of the shop.



Solid external security shutters of the metal roller type, which obscure shopfronts, will not be acceptable.

restricted to the shop name. Clear well-spaced letters are as easy to read as larger oversized letters.

- Samples of lettering should be supplied with applications.

Projecting and hanging signs

The Council is likely to approve signs which are:

1. in character with the scale of the building



The best option for signs is to use individual letters restricted to the shop name.

2. located at fascia level
3. respectful of the architectural features of the building
4. fascia box signs which do not protrude more than 100mm and are not internally illuminated
5. use a style of lettering appropriate to the character of the building.

Highly reflective and brightly coloured plastic signs are inappropriate for conservation areas.

The use of standard corporate advertising and signs can be damaging in some locations. Organisations will be required to show flexibility and consideration to their building and its surroundings.

Plastic and projecting box signs will not be permitted on buildings

in conservation areas. They often block the view of other shop signs and are therefore generally discouraged.

Hanging signs should not damage architectural features and should be located sensitively at fascia level.

It is important that colours harmonise with the detailing and character of the building and surrounding area.



A traditional hanging sign

Free-standing adverts, such as 'A' boards placed on the pavement, are not permitted because they obstruct the public highway.

Canopies and awnings

The design and material of blinds and canopies is an important element in the character of shopfronts. They protect goods from damage by sunlight and can provide interest and colour in the

street scene and shelter for shoppers in bad weather.

Plastic or fixed blinds are not acceptable, and nor are 'Dutch' blinds. Blinds and canopies at first-floor level and above are rarely satisfactory and will be resisted.

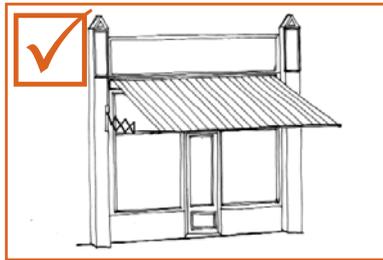
Canvas blinds or canopies of the flat or fan type are usually appropriate but they must be capable of being retracted easily into a recessed area.

Existing original canvas blinds and blind boxes should be retained and refurbished.

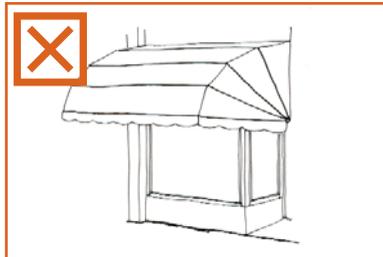
Blinds and canopies should usually be the same width as the fascia but should not cover architectural details.

Lettering may be acceptable where a retractable roller blind obscures the fascia when in use. When included, lettering or symbols should be limited in size. Consent under the Advertisement Regulations may be required.

A licence is required for awnings which sit above the pavement and applicants should contact the highways authority.



Canvas blinds or canopies of the traditional flat type are usually appropriate.



Dutch blinds are not acceptable in a historic location.

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