



SPG Note 9: Designing a shop front

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INTRODUCTION

9.1 Shop fronts have an effect on the quality of the environment. If the visual quality of shopping streets is to be enhanced, well designed shop fronts using appropriate and sympathetic materials are essential.

9.2 Measures to achieve shop front security are a particularly obvious part of the fabric of the City Centre and local shopping centres. There is no perfect or single acceptable design solution, and proposals need to be tailored to the specific security issues involved and the character of the individual premises and street.

9.3 This Note sets out detailed design guidelines to help those altering or installing a shop front. This Note applies to ground floor frontage development of other uses found within shopping centres which includes Classes A1 (Shops), A2 (Financial and Professional) and A3 (Food and Drink) of the Use Classes Order. Shop front design is considered in the Built Environment chapter. The relevant Policies are as follows:

BE1 (a) High standards of design will be sought for all development.

(b) The design of development must be acceptable in terms of:

- (i) its relationship to adjacent or surrounding buildings in terms of scale, density, height, massing, layout, rhythm and proportion, or other important building detail, as appropriate;**
- (ii) its relationship to existing natural and urban features, public landmarks or views that contribute to the amenity of the area or the proposed development;**
- (iii) protecting the amenity of surrounding occupiers;**

continued...

- (iv) the building details;**
 - (v) parking and servicing;**
 - (vi) access;**
 - (vii) safety and environment for road users, pedestrians and cyclists;**
 - (viii) security of the environment;**
 - (ix) boundary treatment;**
 - (x) landscape;**
 - (xi) creating an identifiable sense of place if there is no adjacent or surrounding built form;**
 - (xii) retaining existing Urban Greenspace, townscape or historic feature contributing to the character of an area;**
 - (xiii) fitting in with a good quality environment or improving a poor environment, as appropriate, particularly if publicly visible, in terms of scale, density, height, massing, layout, rhythm and proportion, or other important building detail, as appropriate; and**
 - (xiv) giving special treatment to corner, gateway or landmark sites.**
- (c) The general design considerations of this Policy apply to development considered under Policies BE2 to BE15, BE17 to BE21, BE25 to BE28, BE30, BE31, BE33 and BE34.**
- (d) The degree of importance of these components and appropriate use, will depend upon the sensitivity of:**
- (i) the proposal in relation to its context; and**
 - (ii) the local environment.**

BE11 (a) Shop front development will be allowed if designed to:

- (i) be of a good standard of design and materials;
- (ii) be well related to the building and its surroundings; and
- (iii) make security measures as unobtrusive as practically possible.

(b) Shop front development will not be allowed if it includes:

- (i) solid external shutters;
- (ii) uncoloured shutters; or
- (iii) shutter boxes projecting from the wall of the building or its fascia.

Need for consent

9.4 Generally planning permission is needed for any change in the external appearance of a shop including the installation of shutters or blinds. In a Conservation Area special consent may also be needed for altering a shop front. Any alteration to a Listed Building, including internal works affecting the character of the building, will also require Listed Building Consent.

GENERAL ADVICE

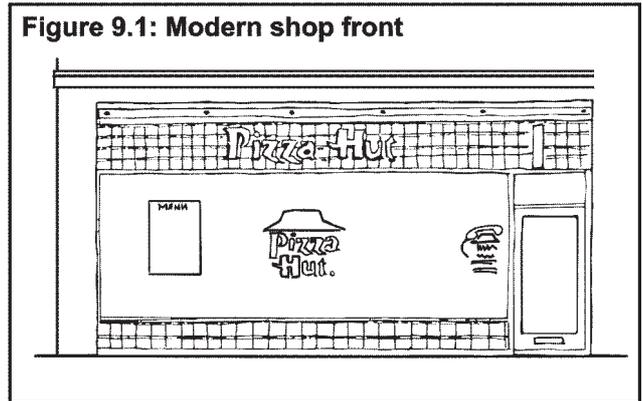
The traditional shop front

9.5 Most of the City’s shopping centres are dominated by terraces of tall narrow buildings with a strong vertical emphasis. Some of the old established shopping centres include a number of traditional shop fronts. They should be retained if possible and alterations should complement existing style and detail.

The non-traditional or modern shop front

9.6 New construction methods and materials have led to large scale introduction of the ‘standard’ non-traditional shop front within shopping streets. This type of shop front usually consists of a large uninterrupted

Figure 9.1: Modern shop front



expanse of plate glass, often incorporating a doorway flush with the street line. The framework is usually aluminium or plastic (figure 9.1). If this is applied to an old building, it gives a visually unstable, top heavy appearance.

9.7 New shop fronts should incorporate elements of the traditional shop front in order to relate them better to the rest of the building. In many circumstances however, retaining, repairing and adapting traditional shop fronts is better than installing a modern replacement.

9.8 Selecting from the past elements of traditional shop fronts, as well as encouraging innovative and imaginative new ones generally leads to good design. Many national businesses promote their corporate identity by using standardised shop front designs, colours, letters, and logos. However, these are not



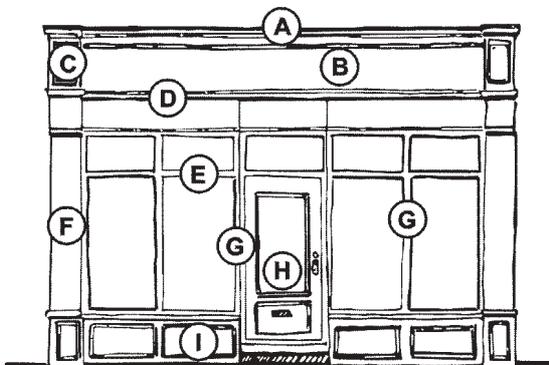
Reinstated shop fronts in keeping with existing building – Monument buildings

necessarily acceptable in all locations. Retailers may need to modify their 'house styles' to comply with this guidance and ensure that the shop front design reflects the character of the building and the area nearby.

9.9 If a shop front is as old as the building itself, or it is of good quality, it is often worth retaining. An existing distinctive shop front that is repaired and decorated usually looks far better than a standardised replacement. If a group of shops have been designed as a single piece of architecture then retaining the shop fronts and restoring or reinstating them in accordance with the original design should be investigated.

9.10 A shop front should be treated as being an integral part of the building and should relate to adjoining shop fronts, especially if these form part of the same building. A shop front design should also take into account the relationship with the whole elevation of the building, from the ground to the roof, including the whole width of the building.

Figure 9.2: Components of a traditional shop front



- A - Cornice
- B - Fascia
- C - Console bracket
- D - Architrave
- E - Transom
- F - Pilaster
- G - Mullion
- H - Recessed doorway
- I - Stall riser

ADVICE ON DETAIL

9.11 There are certain components of most shop fronts common to traditional or modern shop fronts. Figure 9.2 illustrates the various components of a shop front. Detailed advice on the various elements of a shop front is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Fascia

9.12 The fascia forms a space for advertising the name of the shop and the nature of the business. Together with the cornice this gives a strong line at the top of the shop front.

9.13 In traditional shop fronts, the fascia is angled downwards. The sign should present its message clearly and the quality of the sign is itself an advertisement for the quality of the goods to be found in the shop.

9.14 Modern fascia panels often use materials and colours bearing little relationship to the overall building. They can dominate the shop front framework, competing with one another for the shoppers' attention. This can have a degrading affect on the street scene as a whole. Combined with the plain treatment of the shop front fascia sign, the visual message to the shopper is that of an anonymous shopping street (figure 9.3).

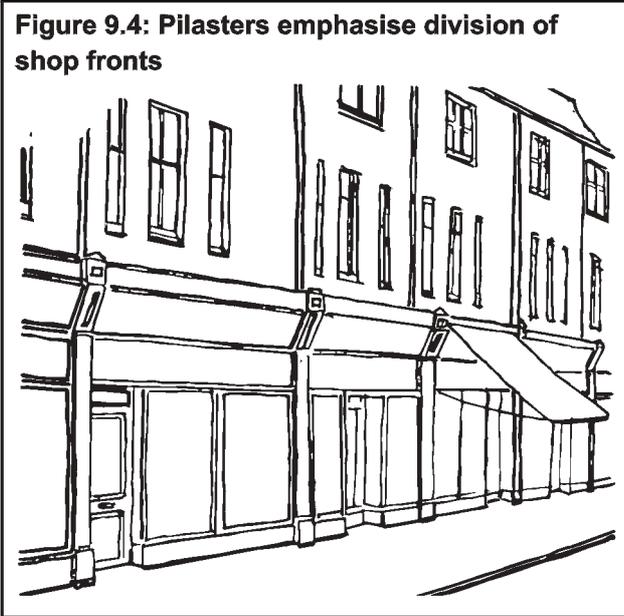
9.15 The fascia should generally be:

- confined to the width of the shop front opening

Figure 9.3: Shop fascia



Figure 9.4: Pilasters emphasise division of shop fronts



between intervening pilasters, retained or reinstated (figure 9.4);

- not so high as to obscure first floor window sills or other architectural features of upper floors and there should usually be a space between a shop window/fascia and window sill above;
- designed not to extend across more than one shop front, even where they are in the same ownership or use;
- lined up with the predominant building line of neighbouring shops. If a particularly high shop front is to be lowered, this can often be achieved by the introduction of a sub-fascia rather than deepening or removing the existing fascia; and
- designed to create an area at fascia level allowing the insertion of an illuminated box sign.

Stall Riser

9.16 Stall risers provide a visual base for the whole shop front and protect glazing from kicks and knocks.

Doorways and entrances

9.17 Doorways and door design are important to the appearance of a shop. They should form a strong visual element in the shop front. In general, the style and materials of the door should match the rest of the

shop front. Older traditional shop fronts often have a recessed doorway creating an inviting entrance and a distinct three dimensional quality. Keeping such original features as entrance recesses often helps to maintain the character of an area. Misuse of recessed doorways can be overcome by installing a gate.

9.18 The design of new doors and doorways should take into account people with disabilities. Using stepped entrances should be avoided by providing a ramped threshold. The doorway should also be wide enough to allow for the passage of wheelchair users, preferably through a single leaf door. This can also help customers with pushchairs. Recessed doorways help take up changes in level that could not be catered for if a doorway opened straight onto the pavement. (SPG Note 8 refers in more detail to access arrangements). Other points to consider include avoiding heavy doors, doors with strong spring closures, positioning suitable lever door handles at a sensible height, and installing distinctly marked plate glass.

Windows

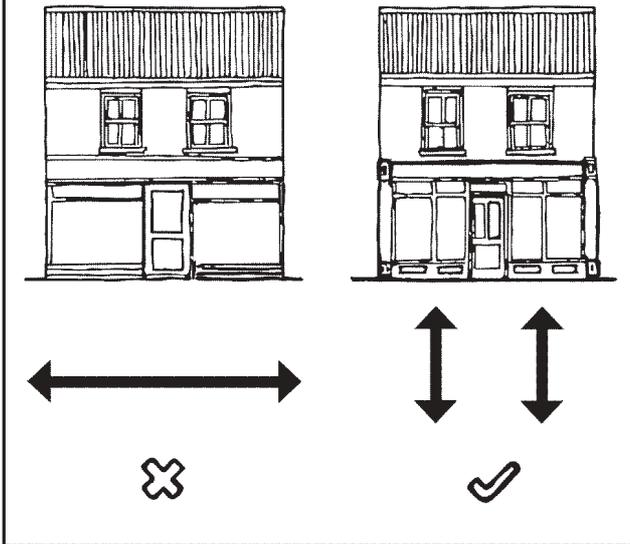
9.19 Large areas of plate glass with a horizontal emphasis are usually out of proportion with the rest of the elevation, especially if used in old buildings. Subdividing large areas of glass with mullions as part of the window frame, giving each individual glazed section a vertical proportion can produce a more elegant effect (figure 9.5).

9.20 Support for the upper floors should be expressed in the design. An uncomfortable impression of a heavy upper structure poised on a flimsy sheet of glass should be avoided. Strong framing of the display window gives visual support to the upper part of the building.

Materials

9.21 Materials are significant in forming the character of a shop front. Choose colours, textures and forms that complement or enhance the existing detail of the building and surrounding area.

Figure 9.5: Vertical and horizontal emphasis



A blind or canopy

9.22 The shape of a blind or canopy should fit in with the character of the building, not obscure any architectural feature or shop sign and be in a colour and materials in keeping with the existing shop front as a whole.

9.23 Non-retractable blinds are popular because they are a relatively cheap form of advertising. However, they are often not suitable for traditional buildings, particularly within a Conservation Area as they can harm the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings.

Security measures

9.24 Security should be achieved without spoiling the character or appearance of a building; otherwise the shopping area as a whole may become unattractive to customers, whose trade is vital to the continued viability of shopping.

9.25 Incorporating suitable security measures is more difficult on an existing shop front if the original design does not allow for this. New designs should provide specifically for security.

9.26 Security can be provided with a minimal adverse impact on the street scene in many ways. The

following measures are recommended as ways of preventing theft and reducing the likelihood of damage. A combination of these measures will often provide adequate security:

- Laminated or toughened glass – this will resist casual attempts at vandalism;
- Additional glazing bars or mullions – these reduce the area of glazing and strengthen the shop front and can be further reinforced by steel. They minimise access and the cost of replacement glass that large panes create;
- Internal, removable grilles – these are relatively cheap to provide and, in some cases, they can be left in place permanently;
- Internal roller shutters – open grille, concertina lattice or brick bond shutters can be raised during trading and lowered at night. They are an effective deterrent to theft and therefore also deter damage. If the window is alarmed this will sound when the glass is broken or the shutter disturbed. They also allow window shopping without being unduly



Solid roller shutters can have a deadening effect on the street scene

prominent. It is also important to consider design and colour for internal shutters, open mesh in a black or very dark coloured finish allows goods to be seen without detracting from the appearance of a shop front; and

- Low value displays – removing display goods is time consuming and counter productive to window shopping, but lower value goods and attractive displays can be less enticing to thieves.

In most cases internal measures will not need permission unless a building is Listed.

External security measures

9.27 External grilles or shutters almost always require planning permission. Their effect on the appearance of a building or area varies depending on the type of shutter used, its finish and the treatment of the permanent fixtures (shutter box and guides). They are difficult to fit to existing buildings without adversely affecting the appearance of the building and the surrounding area. Consequently, these security measures should be proposed if the alternative measures in paragraph 9.26 can be shown to be inappropriate for particular circumstances.

- External removable grilles – these consist of an open mesh and can be fitted using relatively unobtrusive brackets as the only permanent features. Window displays can be seen, although the grilles often look untidy. They are a low-cost,

low-impact measure;

- Solid external shutters (figure 9.6) – these are rarely acceptable, especially across the full width of a shop front. They prevent window shopping, they stop light spilling out on to the footpath, they hinder surveillance of the premises and they obscure the design and detailing of the shop front. They are particularly unsuitable when unpainted and when the shutter boxes and guides are attached to the building without proper incorporation into the shop front and fascia design;
- Perforated lath shutters – these have most of the drawbacks of solid shutters and the same comments apply. They allow some light out and some visibility through, but they are only effective when external lighting is less than that inside the building, such as in shopping malls. They are rarely suitable in traditional streets; and
- Open grille or lattice shutters (figure 9.7) – these also have the drawback of needing a shutter box and guides. They do allow window shopping but are usually unpainted which is not acceptable.

9.28 Using uncoloured shutters will rarely be acceptable. Colour choice is often as important as the actual design of the shutters themselves. Black is a neutral colour often suitable in playing down the visual impact of the shutters, although very dark colouring may also be appropriate.

Figure 9.6: Solid roller shutters

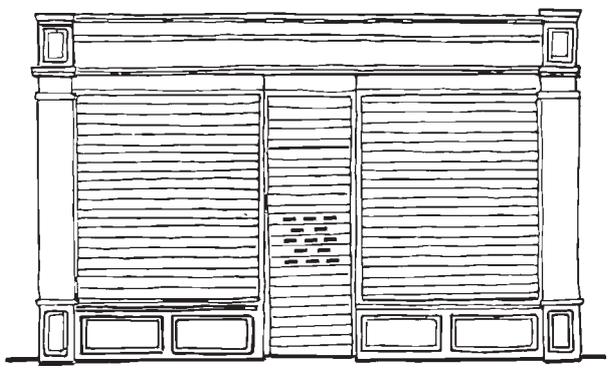


Figure 9.7: Lattice roller shutters

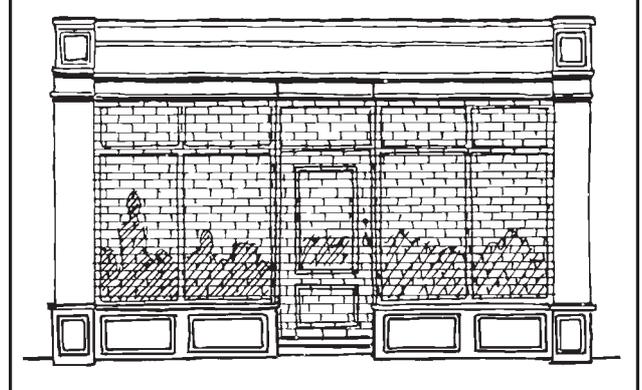
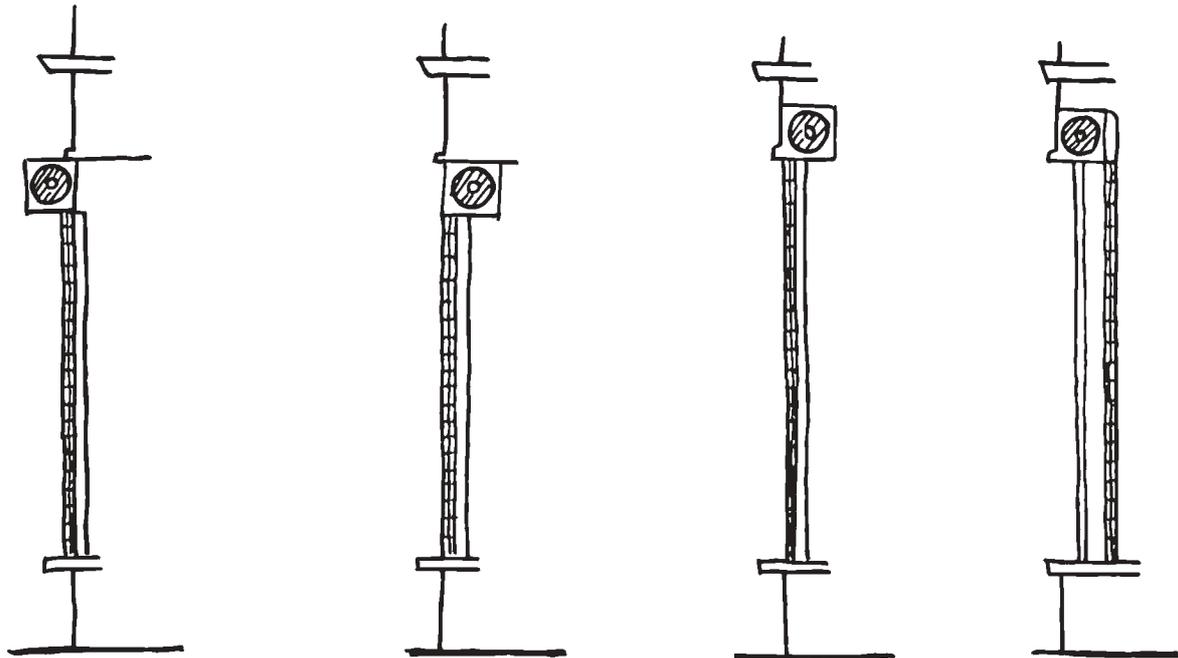


Figure 9.8: Roller shutter box design - cross section



Not Acceptable

Project mechanism:
 - obscures top of shopfront
 - intrusive in street scene

Acceptable

Where mechanism cannot
 be placed behind fascia

Best Practice

Shutter mechanism placed behind fascia
 and invisible from the outside

Fitting external shutters to existing buildings

9.29 Shutter boxes and guides should be integrated into shop front design. In cases where installation is not possible without extensive works, developers will be recommended to consider a range of alternative measures. In some cases, the shutter box can be concealed within the existing fascia or by adapting the fascia (figure 9.8). However, this is only acceptable if a projecting fascia fits into the street scene and the detailing is appropriate. An unpainted and undisguised shutter box is not acceptable.

9.30 Guides should not be fitted onto existing surfaces or glazing bars if this would adversely affect the detailing of the shop front. They should be painted in a suitable colour.

9.31 It is often possible to limit the width and length of the shutter to fit with existing pilasters or sills. It is not normally acceptable for shutters to extend the full

height and width of a shop front.

9.32 If solid shutters are acceptable, a planning condition is normally imposed requiring a painted finish. The painted finish should complement the rest of the shop front and could include a company logo or sign.

Fitting external shutters in new developments

9.33 New development offers the opportunity to provide for security measures from the outset, minimising their impact on the design and the cost and difficulty of installation.

9.34 Space should be allowed above and alongside shop windows, inside the unit, to allow for the fitting of internal shutter boxes, guides and motors (Figure 9.8). This reduces the need to resort to external measures.

9.35 Spaces should be allowed either below or behind the structures over the shop window or behind the fascia to allow for installing a roller shutter housing. This also enables illumination for the fascia sign without

the need for this to project. Providing this space will not automatically lead to the approval of an external roller shutter.

Other security measures

9.36 Entrance doorways and stallrisers can be strengthened to resist ram raiding. Reinforcements can be provided by hidden steelwork, brick or blockwork walls or columns. Providing bollards or pillars can be a deterrent but care must be taken to avoid obstructing pedestrians, especially those who are visually impaired.

9.37 Alarm boxes should be carefully sited and preferably coloured and integrated into the building or shop front.