

shopfront design



SUPPLEMENTARY **PLANNING GUIDANCE**

CANTERBURY
**DISTRICT
LOCAL PLAN**



2001 - 2011
first review
SEPTEMBER 2003



1.1 The Canterbury area is fortunate in having a legacy of fine Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts which enhance the character and appearance of the City, towns and villages.

1.2 Shopping is an important economic activity. The appearance of shopping areas and of individual shopfronts is often an indication of the vitality and quality of a place. Well designed and historically interesting shopfronts make a street a more attractive place in which to shop.



The purpose of this guidance is to help owners and designers achieve high standards of shopfront design and to take a sensible and sensitive approach to shopfront security. For the purposes of this guidance reference to a "shopfront" includes all ground floor built frontages with a fascia and/or display window, including non-retail uses such as banks, building societies, cafes and restaurants.



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...E SEATING
...STAIRS

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more seating
upstairs

9-11am
Eggs on toast

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required.
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2.1 The traditional elements of the shopfront evolved from the market stall set into the ground floor of buildings. Many shops evolved from houses, the retail use located on the ground floor with living accommodation above. Medieval 'shopfronts' had two or more unglazed openings, often with arched heads and shutters. Evidence suggests the possibility of a low shelf, or stall, pegged to the structure. A reconstruction of a medieval shopfront has been installed at Number 44, Burgate, Canterbury.

2.2 Shopfronts developed slowly through the 16th and 17th centuries. The unglazed shopfront remained an integral part of the structural frame of the building and the cill became a fully developed counter. The late 17th century saw a complete timber framed shopfront fitted into a building. Pilasters were introduced to help support the upper storeys.

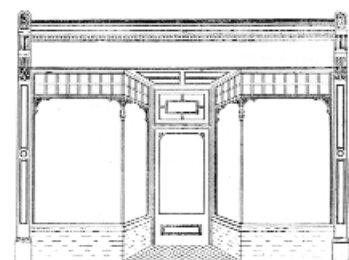
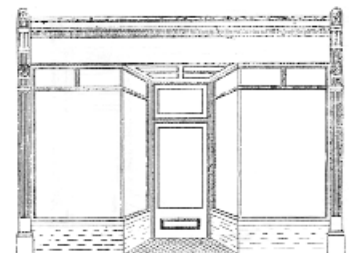
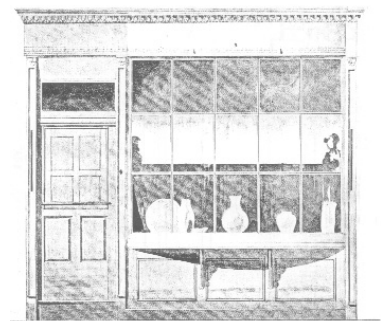
2.3 The first glazed shopfronts appear in the 18th century and are likely to have been made of small squarish panes (due to the cost and availability of glass). Many shopfronts were installed into existing buildings and thus required a design solution independent of the facade above. To achieve this shopfronts were treated as examples of quality joinery attached to the building like a freestanding book case. Bow windows were a popular form and classical elements, such as pilasters, fascias and cornices were incorporated. For village shops the small bay window with a lean-to roof was common.

2.4 With the basic form of the shopfront established refinements tended to follow architectural fashion. Bow windows became shallower, glazing bars thinner and pilasters were elaborate; while stall risers tended to become solid rather than open grilles. Fascias also became more important superseding the large projecting signs which characterised the medieval period.

2.5 By the early 19th century shopfronts were considered as part of the overall design of the building. In the 1820s the largest available panes of glass were about two feet (600mm) high. The development of plate glass meant that one of the constraints on design was lifted. Large sheets of plate glass, 14ft x 18ft (4.3 x 5.5m) became common in the 1850s and this meant that the upper storeys looked as if they were sitting unsupported on a void. Devices such as pilasters, consoles and cornices were used to terminate the shopfront and give it visual support.

2.6 Victorian designs are characterised by the use of plate glass with thin turned glazing bars, recessed entrances or ingos and low stall risers. Varnished mahogany came into fashion towards the end of the 19th century. Victorian shopfronts often contain decorative features such as tiled ingos, etched glass and gold leaf lettering.

2.7 It is possible to find good shopfronts with Art Nouveau or Art Deco styling or influences. However, post war designs have tended towards plainness and cheapness. The introduction of standard 'corporate identity' designs has further undermined the individuality of shopping streets.





retention of shopfronts

Good quality shopfronts of all periods make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of our towns and villages.

2.8 Early shopfronts, pre 1800, are rare and all examples should be highly valued and retained. Many Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts are equally worthy of conservation and should be repaired or restored. Shopfronts often form part of a listed building and are subject to listed building consent procedures.

2.9 When a shop is being converted to an alternative use (for example, office or residential) good quality shopfronts should be retained.

2.10 The replacement of a Victorian shopfront with a modern utilitarian design is both pointless and wasteful. Refurbishing an existing shopfront, including redecoration and new signage can provide a brand new image in the majority of cases.

2.11 Original features such as pilasters and fascias sometimes survive hidden under later work. "New" shopfronts should incorporate them and restore the original details.

2.12 In other situations the City Council will favour the replacement of inappropriate shopfronts with better quality, more sympathetic designs where they would enhance the street or area. Designers should not resort to poorly detailed, pastiche copies of traditional shopfronts. There is a place for both good contemporary design and accurate restorations based on historic evidence.



3.0

principles of good shopfront design

3.1 The design of the shopfront should take account of the character and appearance of the area in which it is to be located. The City Council district contains a wide variety of buildings and streets. The use of standardized, uniform shopfront designs would therefore be inappropriate.

3.2 The shopfront must relate to, and respect, the appearance and architectural composition of the building. The shopfront should be viewed as an intrinsic part of the building, not something that is inserted on the ground floor. The shopfront should appear robust and give the impression of structurally supporting the upper floor. The impression of a heavy masonry structure sitting on a flimsy sheet of glass below is invariably unsuccessful. Where a retail unit occupies more than one building the identity of each building facade should be reflected in the shopfront design. Fascias should not run through and each building should be treated separately. The common identity of multiple shopfronts should be created through the use of colour, lettering and window display. Conversely where more than one unit occupies the same building, or a formal terrace, individual shopfronts should maintain a consistent design theme.

3.3 The key to a successful shopfront design is to remember that the shopfront is a part of the building, which is in turn part of the street.

3.4 It is essential to pay special regard to visual detail if the end result is to be convincing. A shopfront has to be able to bear close inspection and any poorly detailed elements will be apparent. Whatever the style of shopfront it will only be successful if it is carried out with a high standard of craftsmanship and care.



3.5 Shops are in daily use by the public and it is important they are accessible to all. A shop entrance should not present a barrier, and wherever possible the entrance should be at pavement level or be ramped. The use of non-slip materials will be helpful to ensure safety, especially for the elderly and disabled.

3.6 Automatic doors of adequate width may be required in certain locations. Frameless glass doors are not advisable and can be dangerous for the partially sighted.

context

the building



the shopfront

access

elements of a shopfront

3.7 On listed buildings and within sensitive historic areas the requirements for access have to be balanced with the need to preserve the special character or appearance of the building. In such cases sensitive, quality design solutions can often resolve the issues. Specialist architectural advice is recommended in these cases.

The main elements of a shopfront are shown below



pilasters

3.8 Pilasters frame and define the width of the shopfront, give it vertical strength and provide separation from neighbours. They are often decorative elements in their own right; with fluting, mouldings and reeding. The pilaster should be treated as a single coherent feature, neighbours should not clad or paint it in different colours or materials.

consoles

3.9 Consoles (or corbels or trusses) crown and terminate the pilaster and define the width of the fascia. They are a key feature in creating a vertical rhythm in the street. Consoles can be very elaborately decorated details, others are plain and simple. The choice of console should reflect the design details used in the other elements of the shopfront. Consoles are normally constructed of timber, stone or render.

fascias

3.10 Fascias should be of a scale and design that is in proportion to the shopfront and height of the building. Traditional fascias did not generally exceed 400mm in depth, formed in painted timber to receive signwriting. Fascias should not obscure any existing architectural details of the building and should normally be stopped off by a cornice or blind box. The fascias should always be below the level of the first floor window cills and never extend uninterrupted across a number of distinct buildings.

3.11 Factory made box fascias made from plastic or metal which project from the existing fascia and which are normally internally illuminated, are considered to be too large, bulky and obtrusive for most styles of buildings in conservation areas. In situations where the external fascia is covering an internal suspended ceiling the ceiling should be set back at least a metre thereby avoiding the need to install an extra deep fascia.

3.12 It is usual for the fascia to have a decorative cornice to terminate the top of the shopfront and to give weather protection by throwing rain water clear of the shopfront. Traditional roller blinds were often incorporated within the cornice mouldings (and sometimes fitted on top of it).

3.13 The stallriser was originally part of the display table when shopfronts were simply openings in buildings. Visually the stallriser forms a solid base for the building. They vary in height according to the style of shopfront. The stallriser provides security protection to the shop window as well as raising the window display to a convenient level.

3.14 Existing stallrisers, particularly those with decorative features (such as the Victorian tiles) should be retained and restored.

3.15 Stallrisers should be constructed of materials which match the shopfront and the building above it. Timber panelling, brick, render, stone or glazed tiles are typical.

3.16 The cill above the stallriser provides the support for and the junction to, the window frame and should normally be of a deep moulded section. The size of the cill and detail of its section is dependent on the scale and proportion of the other shopfront details.

3.17 The entrance to the shop gives a visual focus to the shopfront. The design of the door should reflect the other elements of the shopfront. On many traditional shopfronts the door is recessed with an 'ingo'. This increases window display, invites customers in and provides relief and visual interest to the shopfront.

3.18 Large sheets of plate glass should be avoided on traditional shopfronts. Glazing can be subdivided with mullions and transoms. This subdivision should be appropriate to the overall character of the building.

3.19 Awnings and blinds can add to the attractiveness of the shopfront. They should ideally be the fully retractable roller blind style with the blind box designed as part of the cornice or fascia. Existing traditional roller blinds should be retained and restored.

3.20 Dutch blinds or balloon canopies made of shiny plastic fixed in position and carrying some form of advertising will not be permitted in conservation areas. A folding canopy may be acceptable where the canopy hood does not project too far forward of the fascia or obscures architectural features. Where the building and surrounding area are of a modern character non retractable blinds can add interest.

3.21 Blinds and canopies should not oversail a vehicle carriageway and whether fixed or retractable be 2.4m above ground level so as not to cause obstruction, annoyance or danger.

cornice

stallriser

cill

door

awnings and blinds



materials

3.22 Timber was the standard material for shopfronts in previous centuries. Timber is extremely versatile and can be formed with a variety of profiles. It is durable and redecoration can give it a new image. In the late 19th and 20th centuries the use of polished hardwood became fashionable. In the majority of cases however, Douglas Fir or British Columbian pine is the most appropriate timber to use.

3.23 Modern materials such as Perspex, aluminium and stainless steel should only be used where appropriate to the style of building and the surrounding location. Such materials are generally unsuitable for historic buildings as they are difficult to sensitively integrate into the appearance of the building and street.

3.24 Designers should take account of the existing materials of the building above and of the wider streetscene. The arbitrary use of highly polished materials such as marble, granite or tiling is not recommended.

3.25 Colour schemes should harmonise with the building and with other buildings in the street. Strident or garish colours should be avoided. Traditional rich dark colours such as dark green, navy blue, dark red and black give a solid frame to the shopfront and are visually 'recessive' highlighting the window display. Normally the same colour should be utilized for both the pilasters and the fascia. Traditional shopfronts often had architectural details, such as mouldings, capitals and fluting picked out in gilding or contrasting colours.



4.1 Shopfront security has become an important issue in recent years. In order to combat the threat of theft and acts of vandalism (particularly breaking shopfront glass) a variety of security measures have been introduced. The use of solid roller shutters is a common response to the problem of increasing security. Unfortunately such shutters can have a detrimental impact on the appearance of a building and the character of an area.

4.2 Crime prevention is a material consideration when planning applications are being considered by the City Council. The City Council will balance the need for crime prevention with the need to protect and enhance the visual quality of the area.

4.3 The following guidance is intended to help shopkeepers protect their property and minimize the visual impact of security measures.

4.4 Laminated glass is made by combining two, or more sheets of glass with layer(s) of PVB (Polyvinyl butyral). The performance of the glass varies according to the thickness of glass and number of PVB layers. Glass thickness of 7.6mm is considered adequate for "normal" security. For shops with high risk goods such as jewellers, the glass thickness could be increased to 11.3mm 5 ply laminate, which provides good resistance to attack. The advantage of utilizing laminated glass is that security is upgraded without affecting the appearance of the shop. Small paned shopfronts can be more difficult to break than large sheets of 'plate' glass, and are also cheaper to replace. The introduction, or reinstatement of mullions and/or transoms can give greater strength to a shop window.

4.5 The use of lift-off 'traditional' wooden window shutters may be the solution in certain 'high risk' situations. Solid shutters were used in Georgian and Victorian times as a means of protection. Such shutters

security glass

solid timber shutters



removable or demountable grilles

should be well designed and painted (and possibly signwritten) to match the shopfront. This solution is particularly appropriate where there is evidence that such shutters existed previously.

4.6 A combination of security glass, internal grilles and traditional measures (such as lift off shutters) offers the most acceptable solution of providing shopfront security and are the City Council's preferred methods within conservation areas.

4.7 Removable, lift off, grilles do not require bulky housings and are generally acceptable outside conservation areas where the window glass is at risk from breakage. The grilles should be painted to match the shop and the fittings should be concealed (and not damage any architectural features).

4.8 The installation of permanently fixed external grilles is not considered acceptable.



4.9 Shop doors, particularly if glazed and recessed in an 'ingo' are often a weak point for burglary or vandalism. Lattice grilles or gates are the preferred options to provide security to door recesses. The use of lighting can also act as a deterrent in such situations.

4.10 Where the window glass is not at risk of being broken but the goods displayed are of high value an internal security grille may be the solution. Internal grilles have a limited impact on the appearance of the shopfront and normally do not require planning permission. (However listed building consent will be required if the installation of the grille affects the appearance or character of the building.)

4.11 The grille is fitted behind the glass and rolls up into a box hidden behind the fascia in the window soffit. Lattice or 'brick bond' grilles enable window shopping and passive surveillance of the shop out of hours.

4.12 The installation of external roller grilles requires planning permission and will not be acceptable on listed buildings or buildings which make a positive contribution to a conservation area.

4.13 External grilles may be acceptable providing the box housings are concealed behind the fascia, or are fixed below and flush with the fascia. The roller grille fixings, guide channels and housing should be carefully located and colour finished to match the shopfront (as should the grille itself).

4.14 If roller grilles cannot be accommodated consideration should be given to side-hung scissor type grilles or gates.

4.15 The impact of solid roller shutters, when closed, is unattractive and produces a dead frontage in a street. They are generally unacceptable, particularly in conservation areas and main shopping streets.

4.16 Most break-ins occur at the rear of shops where they are often vulnerable with poor physical security. Blanking off the interior shop from the street can increase the risk of theft via the rear. Solid roller shutters can create a fortress like atmosphere which have an adverse effect on the environment and become targets for graffiti. Where solid shutters become prevalent, they can deter the public with a consequent loss of vitality and 'passive surveillance' by window shoppers.

internal security grilles

4.6

external roller grilles

solid roller shutters

cross section of a 19th century fascia containing a roller shutter and a roller blind

burglar alarms

ram raiding

4.17 In circumstances where solid roller shutters are considered to be acceptable the shutter box should be built in and the fixings and guide channels be carefully located. The shutter box must not be fixed onto the fascia projecting into the street. The shutters should be coloured to match the shop and ideally be of the perforated "visi-screen" file that allows a view into the shop when backlit.

4.18 Shopfront security should be seen as part of an overall approach to improving security to the property. Consideration should be given to the installation of alarm systems, CCTV and glass security strips (which set off the alarm when broken).

4.19 Burglar alarm boxes should be carefully positioned where they do not obscure or damage architectural detailing, and be painted to match the background surface. The installation of an alarm box would not normally require planning permission but may require listed building consent. They should not be installed on the main elevations of Grade I or II* listed buildings.

4.20 Ram raiding appears to be more related to certain types of goods and shop premises than others. In many cases existing street furniture such as planters, posts, bus shelters and electricity boxes reduce the risk of ram raids and additional precautions may not be required.

4.21 If physical obstruction is considered to be necessary to prevent ram raiders then the provision of bollards or planters may be considered. The provision of additional bollards on the public footpath will however require consent from the Highway Authority. Such consent may not be given if the additional bollards (or planters) create an obstruction. As an alternative to bollards which can add to street clutter, traditional stallrisers may be reinforced behind timber panels.



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- 5.1** Advertisements and shop signs can contribute significantly to the character of an area if designed properly. Shopkeepers need to advertise their presence, but a proliferation of poorly designed and incongruous signs can spoil an area.
- 5.2** Signwriting is normally applied direct to a fascia or occasionally onto painted brickwork or as part of a hanging sign. The majority of shops are, more or less, symmetrical and centrally placed traditional lettering will appear logical.
- 5.3** Hand painted fascias should be used on traditional shopfronts in conservation areas. Lettering should be in proportion to the size of the fascia with margins all round. In some cases it will be necessary to adapt "house-styles" to suit particular buildings and locations. Signwriting is preferred to manufactured lettering.
- 5.4** Signage painted directly onto render or brickwork is a traditional device which can be used to good effect. Such signs are best located within a panel or related to an architectural element such as a string course or parapet.
- 5.5** Individually cut out letters of painted wood or metal can also look appropriate when applied direct to a wall of an existing building. However they should be related to, and framed by, the architectural features of the building rather than being arbitrarily applied to large plain surfaces. Traditionally gilded lettering with a half round section is particularly appropriate for pubs and hotels.
- 5.6** Internally illuminated box signs, illuminated letters and neon signs in windows are considered to be unsuitable in conservation areas and on listed buildings. Signs illuminated externally by means of hidden top or bottom trough lights, or by carefully positioned discrete spotlights are normally more satisfactory. However, such illumination should only be considered for premises that are open at night - for example pubs, restaurants, chemists and cinemas/theatres etc.
- 5.7** Hanging signs should normally take the form of a swinging board hung from a simple wrought iron bracket. Signboards are better with a vertical emphasis and can be of painted timber with panels or mouldings or metal with a decorative moulded edge. Hanging signs should be restricted to one per shop unit and usually hung level with the first floor windows. Traditional trade symbols, now rarely seen, can add to the charm and character of an area. These can provide minor landmarks in the street as well as forming good advertisements. The signs themselves should be well crafted "objets d'art" if they are to be effective.
- 5.8** Signs for upper floor businesses can be in discreet lettering applied directly to window panes. The most appropriate signage for professional businesses in former domestic buildings is a brass or bronze plate at the side of the entrance door. Alternatively, gilt lettering can be applied directly to windows or fanlights.



consultation

The City Council went out to public consultation with this Supplementary Planning Guidance in parallel with the first deposit draft of the Canterbury District Local Plan from 3rd May until the 14th June 2002. The consultation arrangements and availability, therefore, corresponded with the Local Plan consultation arrangements. As with the Local Plan consultation, comments received in response to the 26th March 2002 reports to the Development and Planning Committee were also accepted. The guidance was placed on deposit at the Council's offices in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable, the libraries and the Kent County Council offices at Invicta House, Maidstone.

The consultation was drawn to the attention of the public by means of an article in District Life, published in March 2002 and delivered to all the households in the District. In addition, the Council has written to all individuals and organisations who either commented on the Local Plan Issues Paper (2000) and asked to be kept informed of the Local Plan progress, or submitted site representations during the pre-deposit consultation, to inform them of the consultation period. In addition the City Council has also written to residents groups, amenity societies and other local groups informing them of the consultation period.

The City Council has produced a summary of the consultation, including copies of representations and committee reports. This is available on request from the Local Plans Team on (01227) 862199.

contacts

Customer Call Centre

Telephone: 01227 862178

Email: development.control@canterbury.gov.uk

Web: www.canterbury.gov.uk

Conservation Advice

Telephone: 01227 862178

Email: conservation@canterbury.gov.uk

Highways

Telephone: 01227 862409

The policies set out in the First Review Revised Deposit Draft Canterbury District Local Plan (March 2003) address the broad principles of City Council policy. It is the purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance to amplify and explain the policies in the Canterbury District Local Plan (November 1998) and the First Review of the Canterbury District Local Plan and provide detailed advice on; shopfront design, shopfront security, and signs and advertisements. The Guidance has been formulated in accordance with the latest relevant Planning Acts and guidance from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions, and English Heritage. It also reflects the advice on best practice from organisations such as the English Historic Towns Forum, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, the Civic Trust, the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group.

The relevant local plan policies in the First Review Revised Deposit Draft Canterbury District Local Plan are:
BE11 Shopfronts, BE12 Advertisements and BE13 Blinds and awnings.

The City Council will resist the alteration or replacement of existing shop fronts of visual or historic interest. Where new shop fronts are proposed they will be expected to comply with the principles of good design and respect character and setting stated in Local Plan policy BE1.

Advertisements should be appropriately designed and located in the interests of visual amenity and public safety. Consent will be granted for proposals that satisfy the following:

- a) The advertisements do not constitute an injury to public safety and do not visually harm their landscape or townscape setting;
- b) The cumulative impact of the advertisements would not be detrimental to the character of the building, or locality, where they are to be displayed; and
- c) Within conservation areas and on listed buildings, the design, size, scale, materials, colour and means of illumination of signs and advertisements are appropriate having regard to the character and appearance of the area and building in and/or on which they are to be displayed.

Blinds, awnings, and security shutters will not be permitted unless:

- a) They can be installed without damaging the character of the building;
- b) The visual amenity of the area is not harmed;
- c) The proposal is designed as an integral part of the building;
- d) There is an overriding justification for them.

Policy BE11

Policy BE12

Policy BE13

