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Contemporary fascia board and lettering
1. Introduction

Many shopping parades in the Borough have a special history and character. The traditional high streets belonging to the local settlements of Teddington, East Sheen, Mortlake, Kew, Barnes, Hampton Hill and Hampton village are all recognised as conservation areas, as are Richmond and Twickenham town centres. Other stand-alone shops can also be found in conservation areas. A number of shop units form part of Listed Buildings or Buildings of Townscape Merit.

The changes in retail methods and standardisation of shop design now means local distinctiveness is at risk of disappearing, to be replaced with inappropriate shopfronts and unsympathetic signage.

This document is intended to raise the quality of shopfront design in the Borough, set out guidelines for retailers and shopfitters, and help those responsible for assessing applications for planning permission and advertisement consent.

It is not the intention to inhibit imaginative design but these guidelines outline some solutions which have been found to be successful in the past. Alternative responses can always be considered, providing they represent a high standard of sensitive design. For the purposes of this document, a ‘shop’ is defined as a retail outlet having a fascia sign and/or a display window. Non-retail premises such as banks, betting offices, estate agents, cafés, restaurants, bars and public houses are included.

The erection of a new shopfront, or the significant alteration of an existing shopfront, is development requiring planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 55).

Planning permission may be required for the removal of an existing shopfront. If the shopfront is in a conservation area and makes a positive contribution to the area this will be a material consideration. Obtaining consent for the removal of a shopfront identified as a Building of Townscape Merit or specifically mentioned in one of the Council’s conservation area appraisals is unlikely. Listed building consent will also be required for alterations to shopfronts in listed buildings.

These guidelines form supplementary planning guidance to the Council’s adopted policies for shopping and the environment. The Core Strategy sets out strategic planning policy requirements for maintaining and improving the local environment (CP7). Development control policies relating to shopfronts and advertisements (BLT20, BLT21, BLT22, BLT23) are set out in the Saved Unitary Development Plan. These will eventually be superseded by similar policies within the Development Management DPD.
2. Structure of a Traditional Shopfront

A traditional shopfront is made up of a number of elements which perform different functions and make up a clear structure.

- The entablature (A), made up of the fascia (D), cornice (B) and architrave (C) define the top section of the shopfront and incorporate the shop’s signage, visible to the public.

- The console (E), pilasters (F) and mouldings (G) frame the shopfront, separate it from adjacent buildings and help give the shopfront a distinctive presence in a parade of shops.

- The stallriser (H) protects the shop from damage at ground level and provides a base for the whole structure on which the shop window can be supported.

- Mullions (I), transomes and fanlights allow light into the shop, strengthening the structure and dividing the shop window into sections. Decoration and interest can easily be added within this structure.

3. General Guidance

3.1 Grading of Shopfronts

In assessing applications affecting shopfronts, the Council may use a grading system to establish the quality of the existing shopfront, and as a basis for determining the scope of acceptable change. Some of the borough’s shopfronts have already been assessed in this way.

**Grade A** – shopfronts of the highest quality, where there will be a strong presumption in favour of retention and repair. Alterations to signage may be possible, but the overall character and appearance of the frontage should be retained. Applications for replacement will be refused.

**Grade B** – shopfronts which make a positive contribution to the streetscene, but where there may be scope for enhancement. The grade is appropriate for shopfronts where certain features are of particular interest, such as decorative tiling, or unusual door and window details, but where other elements are less sensitive to change. Wholesale replacement will be discouraged.

**Grade C** – shopfronts which have a neutral impact on the streetscene, and may have limited original features. Alterations or replacement with one of a better quality design may be acceptable.
Design Guidance for Shopfront Design

5

new fascia signage
illuminated or projecting signs

Conservation Area Consent is required for the proposed complete or substantial demolition of any building in a conservation area. In some instances the building may incorporate a shopfront.

Listed Building Consent is required for any material alteration that affects the character of a building which is on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Some listed buildings incorporate shopfronts and permission may be needed for detailed alteration such as re-painting a shopfront in a different colour, installing a security alarm or extractor fan, altering the shop interior, or installing blinds, shutters and advertisements. More stringent controls will apply than to unlisted shopfronts; however it is frequently possible to make improvements through repair and modest alteration.

In support of planning or listed building applications for new shopfronts, drawings should be submitted which adequately demonstrate the proposals. Elevational drawings at 1:20 scale and some construction details at full size may be required. Full details of proposed

Grade D – shopfronts which are considered to have a negative impact on the streetscene. They are often of poor quality and may be of aluminium construction. Proposals for substantial alteration or replacement will be welcomed as an opportunity to improve the quality of the streetscene.

3.2 WHEN PERMISSION IS REQUIRED

It is advisable to check with the Council before you make changes to a shopfront. Planning Permission is often required for alterations or changes that materially affect the appearance of a shopfront.

You may need consent for:

- a new shopfront or alterations to an existing shop
- external security shutters and grilles
- awnings and canopies
- changes of use

Advertisement Consent is a separate procedure which applies to the display of advertisements on shopfronts. You may need consent for:

A contemporary shopfront and signage which is illuminated very successfully
4. Design Guidelines

In addition to the general guidance and planning constraints, outlined in Section 3 above, proposals affecting shopfronts should demonstrate a high quality of design and detailing, taking account of:

a) The existing condition and quality of the shopfront

Check whether the building is statutorily listed, in a conservation area, or is a Building of Townscape Merit. Use the grading of shopfronts, where relevant, to assist in formulating an individual course of action.

b) The streetscene

It is important to consider how shopfronts relate to the character of the street as a whole. The effect of proportions, materials and detailing should relate to and compliment surrounding shops and buildings. For instance, stallrisers and fascias may vary to suit different buildings, but they should always respect group value. Bay widths are a key factor which may be shared by an entire parade of shops and pilasters should be retained or reinstated to divide the elevation accordingly. Proposals which ignore the separate...
1. Preference should be for the retention of any well designed and proportioned shopfronts which in the traditional form may have recessed entrances, fascias, stall risers, pilasters and other architectural embellishments.

2. Before considering a proposal to remove or alter an existing shopfront of any date, an evaluation of its quality should be made. If necessary, investigation should be made in order to establish the quality of any earlier shopfront or features which may remain behind later alterations.

3. The quality of joinery, upon which the appearance of the traditional shopfront has depended, may be difficult to equal. Removal of later alterations, and repair and redecoration of the existing may be the preferred solution and provide the best result.

4. Quality fixtures and fittings of retained shopfronts should not be discarded. Blind boxes, ventilation grilles, hanging signs and their brackets, door furniture, tiling, shutters and engraved, etched or “brilliant” glass are a selection of features worthy of repair or reuse.

c) The character and appearance of the building as a whole

Proposals for shopfronts should respect the design of the building into which they are fitted, its architectural character, age, scale, form and materials. These factors give pointers as to the right design solution (also see Section 3). For instance, structural divisions within the upper storeys of a building should be seen to continue through the shopfront to the ground. It is often best to include a stallriser to provide structure and balance to the overall design and be a security measure providing a hard wearing surface against knocks, when directly facing onto the pavement edge.

d) Individual shopfronts

SHOPFRONT RETENTION

Look for and retain any surviving features which give the building visual interest and individual distinctiveness and can often help attract custom.

Many shopping parades in the Borough have a special history and character such as Barnes
NEW SHOPFRONT DESIGN

1. The new shopfront should not be designed in isolation. Care should be taken to respect the design of the building into which the shopfront is fitted and its neighbours.

   New shopfronts should be satisfactorily detailed in their junctions to adjacent shops. Relative heights of stallrisers and fascias may vary to suit different buildings but should continue to respect group value. Bay widths are a key factor which may be shared by an entire parade. In such cases subdivision of larger units may become necessary. Any change that proposes to ignore the separate identity of two adjoining buildings, in an attempt to give the appearance of a single shopfront is never necessary and will be strongly resisted.

2. The new shopfront must observe the Council’s LDF design policy in which ‘a high standard of design’ is required throughout the Borough. In conservation areas new shopfront design must as a minimum ‘preserve’ but preferably should ‘enhance’ the local character. Issues, of scale, access, relationship to existing townscape, height, form, frontage, materials and detailing will all be considered in the assessment of a shopfront proposal.

   Whether modern or traditional, new shopfronts will be encouraged which are distinctive, original and of a high standard of design.

3. The opportunity should be taken with new shopfronts to enhance architectural merit by removing earlier ill-considered additions, such as surface cabling, redundant services, alarms and obsolete fittings.

4. In order not to obscure the building, all parts of the new shopfront and fascia should be kept below the floor level of the first storey. Important architectural and historic features of the building should not be altered, defaced or obscured. The new design can sometimes be based on features already found on the building.

5. Stallrisers can be an important characteristic of a group of shops and should be given consideration in the new shopfront design. They may be finished in a variety of materials.
Hard wearing surfaces at this level of the shop also have maintenance advantages. Where the preference is for frames and panelled timber construction, the use of appropriate mouldings is to be expected.

6. In some instances the use of frameless structural glazing may be acceptable, which precludes the use of a stallriser. However, the suitability of this type of shopfront will depend on the particular character of the building for which it is proposed.

7. Materials should be compatible with the character of the building and the area. Traditional finishes such as painted timber, glass, render, stone and glazed tile are still the most commonly used material for good shopfronts and will appear in most better quality designs.

Shopfronts have traditionally been constructed in painted softwoods. Many hardwoods do not readily take a painted finish and stained or varnished hardwood joinery is seldom suitable as an alternative to a painted finish. Selected timber should be from a sustainable source.

Slim profile stainless steel framing may be acceptable in some instances; it is often used in conjunction with structural glazing.

Although aluminium and plastic framing may have their uses in certain locations, they will rarely be considered an appropriate material for use in an historic environment such as a conservation area.

Plastic is not a sustainable material and tends to discolour in a short period of time. Also, it does not lend itself to redecoration and the texture is frequently at variance with more traditional finishes.
5. Details

5.1 Security

Shopfront security should not be allowed to compromise the visual appearance of buildings or the character of the wider streetscene. In all cases, security measures should be integrated successfully within an overall design, irrespective of whether proposals relate to a new or existing shopfront.

Projecting shutter boxes have a negative impact on the appearance of shopfronts, while solid shutters generally create a bleak, unattractive and hostile environment in the evenings. Their significant detrimental impact in this regard also inhibits passive surveillance and encourages graffiti. Therefore in most cases permission is unlikely to be granted for the installation of any form of roller shuttering on the outside of a building. If a shutter box is unavoidable, it should normally be located internally behind the shop window.

Perforated shutters are sometimes seen as an alternative to completely solid shutters since, when back-lit from a shop window, they appear to be virtually transparent. However, this affect is limited to a relatively small area in front of the shopfront itself. From an angle they appear to be solid. Also, because of their solid to void ratio they attract graffiti. For these reasons perforated shutters are unlikely to be considered appropriate for use in the Borough.

The security advantage of lattice brick-bond grilles over solid is that they allow greater visibility into shops, doing away with most of the problems associated with solid shutters; they are also less prone to graffiti. There is also a greater opportunity for passive surveillance from passers-by and goods on display are still visible which leads to a more user-friendly environment.

Traditional horizontally-operated lattice security gates can in some cases be employed to protect recessed shop entrances, but they should not extend across windows. On traditional shopfronts, removable timber or metal lattice style shutters is often more appropriate.

The Council considers that the internal grille is the only acceptable form of security in conservation areas, BTMs and listed buildings. The advantage of internal grilles is the minimal impact they have on the external appearance of the shopfront. The disadvantage is that they do not provide the same level of protection for glazing as external shutters. However, one of the...
positive spin-offs of an attractive environment is that there are more people around and natural surveillance increases.

**Appropriate shutters are only one line of defence against vandalism and burglary.**

- The use of laminated/security glass can often minimise the need for other security measures.
- By dividing the shopfront window with mullions and transoms, the area and cost of replacement glass is reduced if the need arises.
- In some cases stallisers can be reinforced internally by brick, concrete block or other means, although with shopfronts of architectural merit, particular care will have to be taken to avoid undue disturbance or damage to existing joinery.
- Bollards or strategically positioned planters to frustrate ram-raiding – these will have to be considered against emergency service requirements and their appearance.
- Although burglar and fire alarms are necessary for many premises they are generally unsightly in appearance, and should be mounted in as unobtrusive a position as possible.

### 5.2 Access

Wherever possible, there should be level access between the pavement and the shop. If a change in level is unavoidable, a non-slip ramp is preferred to steps, which can sometimes be set into a recessed entrance doorway. Where there is sufficient space, both could be provided. A ramp should be no steeper than 1:12 if the flight is less than 5m, or 1:20 if longer. The overall width of any door should be a minimum of 850mm and preferably 900mm. Revolving and heavy doors should be avoided, while glass doors should incorporate a form of visual delineation (e.g. decals) at eye level for safety reasons. Door handles should be clearly visible and easy to grasp and use. Automatic and folding doors may be acceptable as part of a new shopfront, if the style and materials are compatible with the host building.

However, for listed buildings and other traditional pre-1914 buildings, steps may be an important original feature of the shopfront. Alternative solutions to provide level access will therefore have to be sought, in order to comply with disability discrimination legislation and Building Regulations.
5.3 SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING

Well-designed signage contributes to the character of retail premises, and brings visual interest to shopping streets. But poorly sited, over-sized or inappropriately designed and illuminated fascia signs can have a significant detrimental impact on the appearance of an area.

5.3.1 Fascia boards and lettering

a) As a general rule the fascia should be no deeper than the combined depth of the cornice and architrave and should not exceed one fifth of the total shopfront in height.

b) Where a fine quality fascia conflicts with a change in the present business being conducted in a shop, it may be covered over where appropriate and preserved by the new fascia board, so as to be reversible in the future.

c) Acrylic or other highly reflective sheet material should be avoided. The preference is for a painted fascia board, with written signage, or individually applied lettering and logos which should be in proportion to the size of the fascia.

d) The fascia sign should state only the name or trade of the premises and its street number and should not carry extraneous advertisements.

e) The fascia must bear the street number of the shop and be incorporated as part of the overall design.

f) On large buildings, or in other particular circumstances, there may be a case for dispensing entirely with the fascia board, and applying individual lettering directly to the building where this will minimise disruption of existing architectural features. In these cases, the size, positioning, colour and lighting of the lettering should be appropriate for the character and appearance of the building.

g) The standard designs and corporate images of major high street retailers can often be inappropriate in an historical context such as conservation areas, or on listed buildings. Modification of the ‘house’ style will be required in these cases.

h) Internally illuminated box fascia signs will usually be resisted.
Externally illuminated fascia signs are generally preferred throughout the Borough. Normally, only the fascia should be spot lit by down-lighters. Light levels should be strictly controlled as should the number and design of light fittings. Strip lighting should be limited to the shop name lettering only. Individual and fret-cut lettering applied to solid backgrounds, with halo lighting or lighting of individual letters from behind or internally, may be acceptable in individual circumstances. Carefully designed exposed neon may also be considered acceptable.

Where the upper floors of buildings are used for business, signage should be applied directly to the window and be not more than 10cms high. The wording should relate only to a separate business above and not to the commercial use of the building at street level. Upper floor windows should not be used to display goods unless the windows have been specifically designed for the purpose.

5.3.2 Projecting/hanging signs

Usually one projecting/hanging sign per shop is adequate, to a size, style and method of support which complements the fascia and the architectural character of the building as a whole. It should generally be hung at fascia level.

Projecting/hanging signs must be conceived as appropriate and worthy additions to the buildings to which they are to be fixed and add to the quality of the area in which they are located. Signs should generally be painted or sign-written and, if needed, illuminated externally with spot or strip lighting. Internally illuminated box signs are not usually considered appropriate. However, as for fascia signs, individual and fret-cut lettering applied to solid backgrounds, with halo lighting or lighting of individual letters from behind or internally, may be acceptable in individual circumstances.

The content of the projecting sign should be limited to relevant information relating to the shop and services provided.

5.4 Canopies and Blinds

Retractable canopies and blinds can add liveliness to the street. The retention of blind boxes in historic contexts is appropriate. Where blinds are to be newly fitted they should form an integral part of the shopfront.
design, with blind boxes being designed as part of the fascia.

Permanently open ‘Dutch style’ canopies can spoil a shopfront by masking its features and will be resisted.

In order to provide shelter of an external space, a free standing, removable timber post canopy is sometimes seen as a preferred solution. This should not cover the whole of an external space, but be of a size compatible with the building so that architectural features are not continuously obscured from view. Permanently open and fixed post canopies, and ‘Off the peg’ plastic canopies fixed to public houses or other shops are not considered appropriate, particularly when viewed as part of a street frontage or seen from another public viewpoint.

Whether retractable or fixed, a canopy requires planning permission under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If the building is listed it will require Listed Building Consent. If the canopy carries any motif or lettering it will also require consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. (?)

Contemporary signage incorporated with an old Grade II listed building

6. Other issues

6.1 Change of Use

The change of use of shop premises to a non-retail use, such as residential, has design implications for the entire street. Where such change of use is considered acceptable, attention will be paid to whether a shop-like appearance is retained, or whether an appropriate and sympathetic alternative design solution is possible. The grade and quality of the shopfront and architectural character of the building will be the determining factors in such situations. Privacy can still be provided when large shop window areas are retained, with the use of opaque glass or internal screens.

6.2 Cash Dispenser/ATM

External ATMs should only be located on bank frontages where sufficient pavement width will not create blockages, and where the decorative details of existing shopfronts or the proportions of new shopfronts are not compromised. Adjustment of the standard position and size of equipment must be explored in advance of any proposal, which may otherwise result in destructive installation.
6.3 Upper Floors

It is possible that vacant space above shops can be utilised for flats or offices and has the benefit of providing passive surveillance and activity onto the high street. However care should be taken, if an additional means of entry is required, to locate a separate entrance door which is consistent with others in the parade, and does not detract from the proportions of the shop frontage. If necessary, this may require sharing a single recessed point of entry for the door to the shop unit at ground floor and the door to other uses above.

Appendix: Checklist for Retailers

This checklist summarises the Council’s planning guidance on shopfronts, including signage and security to help you. Steps to consider:

- the existing condition – retain good quality shopfronts.
- how other shopfronts relate to the design of the street – respect ‘group value’.
- the building’s architectural character and age, and how shutters and signs would affect its appearance. Do not obscure architectural features.
- keep other details which give your shop distinctiveness and help it stand out.
- use finishes such as painted timber, glass, steel, render, stone and glazed tile, not plastic or aluminium.

Remember poor quality shopfront design, installed without permission, may be subject to enforcement action.

As a general rule; Don’t:

- remove a shopfront of architectural or historic interest,
- fix external shutters,
- use aluminium and plastic materials,
- propose internally illuminated signage.

Do:

- retain and reuse existing high quality shopfronts,
- use traditional materials in new designs,
- use external spot lighting.

Please check with the Council if you wish to make changes to your shopfront as you may need planning permission or advert consent for:

- a new shopfront or significant alterations to an existing shop
- external security shutters and grilles
- awnings and canopies
- changes of use (but check with a planning officer)
- new fascia signage
- illuminated or projecting signs

Contemporary signage
Fascia signage should state the name or trade of the premises and its street number.

An original style awning and other decorative detailing has been retained and reused to good effect.

A good example of how lighting can be used clearly to illuminate the shopfront.

Internal shutters that have been successfully integrated with the character and design of the shopfront.

Signage not only on the facia clearly helps to identify a premises.

This Dutch canopy obscures the shopfront and is not considered appropriate for the borough.

This is an example of where lighting has either not been switched on or not working.

External security shutters appear less integrated.

Fascia signage should state the name or trade of the premises and its street number.
FURTHER INFORMATION

Planning Policy and Guidance
Detailed information is contained in other supplementary guidance and leaflets, available from www.richmond.gov.uk/planning_guidance_and_policies.htm

Borough-wide policies and guidance
- Core Strategy
- Development Management DPD (emerging)
- Design Quality SPD
- Small and Medium Housing Sites SPD
- Sustainable Construction Checklist SPD
- Advice for Householders: Sustainable Development
- Front Garden and Off Street Parking Standards SPD

London-wide policies and guidance
- London Plan (Mayor of London, replacement plan emerging)
- Accessible London SPG (Mayor of London)
- Providing children’s and young people’s play and informal recreation SPG (Mayor of London)
- London Housing Design Guide (Mayor of London, emerging)

Development Control (Planning application advice)
www.richmond.gov.uk/planning_applications_residential.htm
Email: envprotection@richmond.gov.uk
Tel: 0845 612 2660

Building Control
www.richmond.gov.uk/building_control.htm
Tel: 020 8891 7357

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings
www.richmond.gov.uk/urban_design.htm
Tel: 020 8891 7322

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