

Swindon Shop Fronts

- Coding Guidance



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Introduction

- 0.1 This document provides advice on shop front design including signs and security measures. It is one of a series, which gives design advice on various matters. It expands upon policies in the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011. Swindon Borough Council encourages high standards of shop front design to promote its shopping areas. This Guidance is aimed at shopkeepers, businesses and their advisors. **It will be applied whenever planning or advertisement consent is sought for a new, or amended shop front or any element comprising part of a shop front. Where a shop front is constructed, or amended without planning approval, the Council may take enforcement action to remove unacceptable and unauthorised amendments to the shop front.**
- 0.2 On 12th December 2006, Swindon Borough Council's Planning Committee adopted this document as a Development Control Guidance Note. Supporting adopted Local Plan policy, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Linkages to the Development Plan and other documents

- 0.3 The Swindon Borough Local Plan, 2011 contains a range of policies and proposals to guide development in the Borough up to 2011. Policy DS6 'Standards of Design and Amenity' is of particular relevance, providing a context to determine good design in the Borough. Other policies that are of relevance include Policy DS10 'Advertisement Control' and ENV8 'Access for All'. The Council has produced a Supplementary Guidance Note to support Policy ENV8, which is available on the website.
- 0.4 This document is one of series of Guidance Notes and Supplementary Planning Documents should be read in conjunction with the Swindon Design Guide, 2006. The Design Guide establishes key principles to inform design in the Borough.
- 0.5 This Guidance Note also links in with the Council and The New Swindon Company's efforts to regenerate Swindon's Central Area, in particular the adopted Public Realm Strategy that will provide the basis for co-ordinated public realm improvements in the town centre.

Shop fronts are important

- 0.6 Shop fronts help promote a business and contribute to the general health of a shopping centre or parade. They can add to the attractiveness of an area by reinforcing local character. Variation in the detailed design of each shop front is the key to adding interest to a shopping street. This helps to ensure that all shopping centres do not look the same and that each builds on its own individuality, history and character. This will help ailing centres to compete with vigorous competition from suburban retail developments.
- 0.7 Recently, the number of small independent stores has reduced nationally in the face of competition from multi-nationals. The trend has been for a standard specification for shop fronts with a strong corporate style. This practice has tended to dumb down the 'art' of shop front design. It has often resulted in the removal of good historic shop fronts that has in turn reduced the attractiveness and individuality of town centres. Modern marketing strategies often call for little more than a large expanse of glass with a name panel above. Few are designed as part of a building, street or shopping centre, and many lack the basic elements required to ensure good design. In time this practice again reduces the attractiveness of a shopping centre and its competitiveness.
- 0.8 The purpose of this guide is to help reverse this trend, promote well designed shop fronts in our shopping areas and thereby improve the attractiveness and ultimately the competitiveness of Swindon Borough's shopping areas and in particular Swindon town centre.
- 0.9 Shop front design is a complex subject and this is a general guide. Additional advice may be required from the Council's Conservation and Design staff at an early stage in the design process. This guide is not intended to inhibit imaginative and sensitive solutions, but rather to set out a number of principles that are generally found to provide acceptable solutions. These can be adapted to suit various settings and budgets.
- 0.10 The guide comprises three parts.
- Part One** advises on the design of traditional shop fronts usually appropriate for historic buildings, conservation areas and other historic areas such as Swindon Old Town, Highworth and the villages. It will also apply to historic buildings in Swindon's Central Area.

Part Two expands the same basic principles to advise on the design of modern shop fronts appropriate for new developments and modern buildings in areas such as much of Swindon town centre, and district/local centres as defined in the Local Plan. It is intended that these principles will also apply to new shops in indoor parades, which should seek to embrace the key elements of good shop front design.

Part Three provides advice that is generic to both historic and modern shop fronts.

Each part of the guidance contains sections detailing specific aspects and the Council's requirements of shop front design. The Guidance should be read carefully, as several sections may be relevant to individual proposals. The Council will use this document to assess the acceptability of development proposals.

Is permission needed?

0.11 If a shop front is altered or replaced, planning permission will generally be required. This may be to put up a blind, canopy, shutters or grilles.

0.12 If the building is listed, listed building consent will also be required for any alterations both internal or external.

If the building is in a conservation area, conservation area consent would be required to remove a shop front or any part of it.

0.13 Advertisement consent is also likely to be required to put up an advert or sign on a shop front whether illuminated or not. The law relating to advertisements is complex and the Council's Development Management team should be contacted to check. If a proposal deals with a listed building, listed building consent will also be required for the advertisement.

0.14 The Council is able to take enforcement action if unacceptable work has been done without permission. The Council can insist that a demolished shop front or any parts thereof, if protected, are put back, and that any unacceptable work is reversed. This can include removing an unacceptable new shop front. This is done at the owner's expense. In the case of a listed building or advertisement, the owner can be prosecuted.

0.15 Approval may also be required under the Building Regulations for any structural works. The Council's Building Control Officer will provide advice on Building Regulations.

Part One – Historic Areas

Principles to be applied

1. Retain good historic shop fronts

- 1.1 Historic shop fronts add a unique quality and character to a shopping area. For this reason and in recognition of their historic value they should be retained. If they are in a poor state of repair, or traditional detailing has been removed or covered up every effort should be made to repair or replace elements in a historically accurate way. Often repairs or a new colour scheme can give a cost effective and least disruptive face-lift to an historic shop front.



Fig 1. Good historic shop fronts are a local treasure

- 1.2 Where retention is not possible it is often appropriate to replicate a traditional shop front. This is particularly important in a

row of traditional shop fronts or where there is a definable theme of traditionally designed shop fronts in an area.

2. Assess the local area

- 1.3 If a good shop front does not exist, replacement may be an option. In these cases the aim will be to improve the appearance of the local area. A shop front should add quality to the shopping area.
- 1.4 A new shop front needs to have a strong relationship with the architectural composition, style and age of the whole building particularly its upper floors, as well as the surrounding buildings. Older streets tend to have narrow fronted buildings which have an upright appearance called **vertical emphasis**. This emphasis is reinforced by the building's detailing; tall sash windows, a shop window divided by slim vertical bars known as **mullions**, and the upright proportions of a recessed doorway. Modern shop fronts with deep, wide fascias and large areas of uninterrupted glass have a shallow horizontal appearance known as **horizontal emphasis**. This is why these modern shop fronts look odd on an older building with vertical emphasis. Over time this approach will spoil the appearance of traditional shopping areas.



Fig 2. Buildings in an historic street with strong vertical emphasis

- 1.5 If a shop occupies the ground floor of more than one building, the design and proportions of each shop front should relate to each individual building. Single shop fronts that span two or more buildings disregarding architectural detail and decoration will not be acceptable.



Fig 3. Each building has its own shop front

3. Adapt the corporate image

- 1.6 The needs of retailers will be recognised, particularly the requirement for a corporate image. However, in historic areas corporate style may need to be adapted to a particular building and shopping area. As with Swindon's Designer Outlet Centre flexible, quiet and respectful design has proven to be attractive and has enhanced the commercial health of the shopping centre.



Figs 4a/4b. Corporate images need to relate to the local situation

4. Learn from the traditional shop front

1.7 Many of the good principles demonstrated in traditional shop fronts can be applied to the design of new shop fronts. Sometimes a slavish interpretation of these principles will be appropriate with the quality being displayed in the detail. However, the key to good modern polite design will be to reinterpret and use these traditional features in a modern way. Whichever approach is adopted, an understanding of the various elements and their visual and practical purpose is an essential first step.

1.8 A shop front comprises the **architectural frame** or **main frame** and the actual **shop front**, which sits within it. The elements of a traditional shop front are illustrated in Appendix 1, to provide clarity over the use of terms.

The architectural frame

1.9 The main frame comprises the pilasters, fascia and corbels.

- **Pilasters** – separate each shop from its neighbour. They are particularly important within a row of shops as they define the width of each building by coinciding with the party wall. Their bases usually reflect the level of the panel below the shop window called the **stall riser**. Their tops are designed to match the **fascia** where the name of the

shop is displayed. These pilaster heads often project to form a corbel. This allows the fascia to be installed at an angle.



Fig 5. The natural stepping of well-designed fascias add interest to a street

- A projecting **cornice** defines the top of the shop front, distinguishing the shop front from the rest of the building. Its purpose is to shed water away from the face of the shop front.

The shop front

- 1.10 This is the screen or panel that sits within the space defined by the architectural framework. It comprises the window, door and **stall riser**.
- The **stall riser** was originally part of the display table at a time when most shop fronts were open. It concentrates the display of goods at waist height rather

than floor level. It also provides a visual anchor with the ground. The height of the stall riser must relate to the fascia to help to balance the shop front.

- Historic shop windows are often divided. Vertical glazing bars or mullions, sometimes incorporate curved pieces at the top, called **spandrels**. These are the spaces between the curve and the surrounding rectangular framework.
- An awning box may house a retractable awning, or blind which was used primarily to protect perishable goods from the heat and sun.

5. Using these elements in design – The main frame

- 1.11 This establishes the basic design principles for the ground floor of a shopping street and should always be the starting point of any design.

Fascias

- The fascia must be designed as an integral part of the shop front, to ensure that the scale and design is in proportion to, and appropriate for the individual shop front and the building as a whole.
- Excessively deep fascias must be avoided, as they appear to slice a building in two.
- The width of the fascia should be restricted within the pilasters and corbels.
- The depth should be restricted to the depth of the console. If a console does not exist, it is expected that the fascia should be no more than 440mm deep.
- Adjacent fascias should be used as a guide for alignment but not as a standard.
- Fascias must be kept well below the first floor windowsills leaving a suitable margin.
- Modern box fascias, which project from the face of the building, will not be acceptable.
- Where a false ceiling is being fitted within a shop, the depth of the fascia should not be increased. Other approaches such as stopping the ceiling short of the glazing should be used.

Pilasters

- Existing pilasters and corbels should not be covered up.
- The pilasters must be of suitable proportions to support the shop front and separate the shop from its neighbour. If they are not wide enough they tend to look weak and fail to provide visual support for the shop front.

- Pilasters should terminate at fascia level. If they stop short of the fascia the shop front tends to look unfinished.
- Pilasters should be modelled and project beyond the plane of the shop front.
- They should not be clad or treated separately either side of the party line.



Fig 6. Appropriately detailed pilasters

Windows

- Large undivided areas of glass look out of place, are very expensive to replace, and should be avoided.
- Vertical glazing bars or mullions can be used to subdivide large windows so that they relate to the division of the upper floors.

- Horizontal glazing bars or transoms should relate to the height of the door head.
- All glazing bars should be appropriately detailed.



Fig 7. A traditional window

- Glazing should always be transparent. Opaque, frosted or mirrored is unacceptable in all but the most exceptional circumstances.
- Solid or partly in-filled frontages will always be unacceptable.

Doors

- The position of the door is usually central and recessed within the shop front. The recess is often decorated with mosaic tiles. This traditional feature should be retained and where necessary, repaired.

- To ensure a balanced design the door height should relate to the upper floors and the height of a solid bottom panel should be the same height as the stall riser.
- It will not always be appropriate to replicate a recessed doorway in a new shop front for safety and security reasons. A traditional door can be used without a set back if positioned correctly and well detailed.
- If a set back is needed to ensure compatibility with the building or surrounding shops then this should be square or sharply angled, no more than 1.5 meters in depth and should incorporate sensitive lighting.
- Where they exist, a separate access to upper floors should be retained to allow them to be used independently.



Fig 8. Door position and proportions relate to upper floors

Stall riser

- Although heights vary according to the type and age of shop front, they must always be to the top of the pilaster base to link in with the shop front and relate to the fascia depth to ensure that the shop front balances.
- The general design and details of mouldings and sills should respect the architectural period of the property.
- The most common acceptable material is timber although, brickwork or stone to match the upper floors, slate, matt finish tiles, faience or ceramics and good quality terracotta may be appropriate in certain situations.

Details

- The quality of a shop front will be evident in its detailing. For historic shop fronts, doors, entrances, stall risers, glazing bars, pilasters and corbels all tend to be decorated. In addition special features such as ironwork, carved or moulded timber, glazed tiles and coloured glass all add interest and beauty to the shop front.
- These historic details should never be removed and should be accurately repaired when necessary. In designing new shop fronts in historic areas, decoration should be concentrated in these features.



Fig 9. Contemporary upstand



Fig 10. Traditional stall riser



Fig 11. Traditionally detailed stall riser and door

Materials and finishes

- Painted softwood is usually the most appropriate material for the frame and fascia.
- Stained hardwood is historically inaccurate, expensive and can look cheap. It should be avoided.
- Sombre colours such as dark green, maroon, dark blue and brown tend to look best and should be used.
- Highly glossed finishes or harsh and bright colours look poor and should be avoided.



Fig 12. Type, materials and number of colours should be kept to a minimum

- Historic colours and finishes will be required unless an exceptional case can be made.



Fig 13. A good window display

6. Window displays

1.12 A good window display will help business and add interest to the street.

- Avoid putting shelving up to the window, as this will devalue the shop front and the business image. However, if this is unavoidable the shelving must be hidden from view by an attractive image fronting the street.



Fig 14. An unpleasant view is cleverly hidden

7. Canopies and blinds

1.13 Canopies or blinds add interest and provide protection from the weather, and should be retained.

New canopies and blinds

- New canopies and blinds where they are not part of an historic shop front are

unlikely to be acceptable unless they are traditionally detailed. This means they should be retractable, concealed within the fascia and should not obscure architectural features of the shop front. They will also need to be relevant to the area's period and character.

- An appropriate canvas material should be used for canopies and the colour should either match the shop front or be neutral.
- Modern fixed, plastic or shiny blinds are unacceptable as they introduce an alien dominant shape to the shop front, obscure its features and detract from a historic setting.
- Any canopy or blind will need to comply with Highway Regulations, which are intended to protect highway users. Highway Regulations require a minimum of 1 metre in width from the outer edge of the blind to the kerb line, and a clearing of 2.4 metres from pavement level to the underside of the canopy.



Fig 15. Traditional blinds

8. Signs

- 1.14 A sign should be designed as a part of the shop front. The design and positioning of a sign can have a significant effect on the appearance of a building and a shopping centre. Cluttered, inappropriately sited, oversized or brightly lit signs can undermine the character of an area and will be resisted. For a traditional shop front a neat hanging sign is likely to be appropriate. In historic areas, these signs will only be acceptable on the fascia.

Fascia signs

- This is the traditional place to advertise a business. Fascia signs must sit within the fascia panel and should not conceal architectural details.
- Traditional fascias are angled to face the ground. These must always be retained or replicated where they exist.
- Large modern box fascia signs made of plastic or metal are unacceptable as they obscure architectural features, and can look bulky and ugly.
- Signs should be hand painted or comprise individually applied letters using classical styles such as Times Roman.
- Modern thick plastic letters in bright colours are unacceptable.



Fig 16a. Traditional fascia



Fig 16b. Contemporary fascia



Fig 17a. Neat hanging sign

Hanging signs

- A small hanging sign can add interest and individuality to a shop. However, when added to a whole street it can look messy if they are different sizes and heights and they can obscure sight lines. For neatness they should be sited at fascia level comprised of painted timber with a neat bracket.
- If a good bracket exists it must be reused if at all possible.
- Where they are appropriate, only one hanging sign per building will be acceptable.
- Other types of modern projecting signs are unlikely to be acceptable.



Fig 17b. Hanging signs at high level can look untidy and garish colours jar



Fig 17c. A variety of traditional hanging signs can look good

- Any switchgear, and wiring should be neatly concealed.
- Bright lights, intermittently flashing lights, or neon lights will be unacceptable.
- Large swan neck lamps look poor and will be resisted.



Fig 18a. Neat halo lights

9. Illumination

1.15 In an historic setting external lighting will need to be very carefully designed. A good window display with internal lighting will often be very effective avoiding the need for external illumination and will be the preferred solution.

- In considering illumination, preference will be given to businesses with a night use such as pubs and restaurants.
- Small spotlights, halo lights or trough lights would be acceptable only if discretely sited.



Fig 18b. Large swan neck lights look busy

10. Access to historic buildings

- 1.16 People with disabilities need a dignified and easy access to all historic buildings, which includes listed buildings. However, this needs to be incorporated in such a way that damage to original fabric and features is avoided whenever possible. Where alterations are required care should be taken to ensure that materials and fittings relate to the building. English Heritage advises on the most appropriate way to provide access in 'Easy Access to Historic Properties' June 2004. Paragraph 3.4 of this Guidance Note provides general advice on access for people with disabilities.

Part Two – Modern shop fronts

Principles to be applied

1. First principles

- 2.1 Very often shop fronts are not actually designed. They are applied to a building as a standard product often with a strong corporate image. The final product has little relation to the individual style of the building or the shopping street. This results in poor and often cheap looking shops and shopping areas.
- 2.2 New shops and shopping centres give the opportunity to design a shop front as an integral part of the building and street. There is the potential to produce a high quality, individually designed shop front that fits the building and makes reference to the street. The opportunity to create something that looks really good should not be lost.
- 2.3 In new developments the shop front should be designed as an integral part of the building. This should include the mainframe, that is the fascia and pillars, a window, door and correctly proportioned and located fascia panel. The lessee will then add the fascia lettering and any hanging signs at a later date.
- 2.4 For new developments and modern buildings, good modern design will usually be appropriate. The rigid

interpretation of a traditional shop front will result in a “pastiche” copy that will tend to stifle imaginative design and can look odd. Imitations of historical styles in modern buildings are inappropriate and should be avoided. Original and distinctive modern design will be encouraged where the basic principles of scale and proportion are followed and the shop front adds quality to the street.

- 2.5 Removing and replacing shop fronts over time is not a modern phenomenon. Many of our historic buildings have a later shop front of a different architectural style. This tradition should continue as our shopping areas adapt to new retail pressures. However, the key to retaining a vibrant shopping area is to ensure that the standard of shop fronts does not deteriorate over time and that each design is appropriate to its particular circumstances.



Fig 19. Respectful contemporary design

2. Rules of good design

2.6 When designing a modern shop front, the following consideration should be applied:

The Context

- The effect of the design on the rest of the street. It should add quality to the street.
- Shops nearby should be looked at to and ensure that the design proposal is compatible in terms of their age, style, and proportions. These should influence the design.
- Local building traditions must be understood and replicated in shop front design.
- If the shop front relates to more than one building there is a need to consider whether it is right to unify the buildings by using similar designs in each or whether it is better to reinforce their differences through different designs. Linking buildings together through a unified shop front design may create visual discord if the buildings are of different architectural styles.
- It is usually appropriate to restrict the shop front to the ground floor. If it is to be taken through to the first floor there must be a full consideration of the hierarchy of

the shopping area. Two storey shop fronts will only be appropriate on landmark buildings in prominent locations.



Fig 20. Neat modern designs relate well to one another

The Building

- The shop front should be designed as part of the building. It should be appropriate in terms of scale, proportions and design.
- The vertical or horizontal emphasis of the building should be reflected in the design of shop front. It will provide clues as to whether a traditional or modern solution would work best. Usually older buildings have a more vertical emphasis and require a traditional shop front to look right.
- The degree of detailing and decoration on the shop front should reflect that of the building.
- Where a building fronts more than one street, such as a corner building, it must

have a lively display on all sides. This will help to make an active and lively street and maximise the potential to display goods. Proposals, which have blank elevations fronting a street, will be resisted as they create a dead and uninteresting shopping area.



Fig 21. This shop front lacks respect for the two buildings it unites

- The quality rests in the detailing, the choice of elements, materials, decoration, colour and finish which will be critical to the success of the final design.



Fig 22. Shop front appropriate to building and location

Quality and detail

- Corporate designs will need to be adapted to fit the street and building. A limited palette of materials and colour, together with quiet and respectful advertising will help to create quality in a shopping street.
- The shop front should be designed as a whole, not as an assembly of separate elements. A shop front comprises the mainframe, doorway, signs and sometimes blinds and security measures. All these elements need to be designed together.

3. Adapting the traditional design

- 2.7 The principles set out in good traditional shop front design have proved to stand the test of time and are surprisingly difficult to improve on (refer to the section on traditional shop fronts to fully understand the various elements and their practical and visual purpose). The key to good modern design is to reinterpret these traditional features in a modern way to create imaginative

modern shop fronts appropriate to the street and building that they front.

- 2.8 As with traditional design, a shop front should always comprise a main frame, a fascia supported by pilasters or columns, a stall riser, (functioning as an anchor with the ground), a window and door and sign to advertise the building. Each of these traditional features should be modernised and adapted to function appropriately for a modern design solution.



Figs 23a & 23b. Successful variations on the traditional

Pilasters

- 2.9 As in traditional shop fronts a **fascia** supported by pilasters or pillars should be the starting point of design, providing a main frame to the shop front. The proportions of the frame should relate to the building and the street, as it will define the rhythm of the ground floor of a street.
- The pillars must be wide enough to separate one shop from another and look sturdy enough to support the window.
 - They need to rise up through the shop front from the ground through to the fascia. This will ensure a finished appearance.
 - Pillars should terminate with a detail that provides a visual stop at the top and base. A corbel at the top and pilaster base at the ground traditionally did this. These features should be designed so as to shed rain from the horizontal parts.
 - They should sit slightly proud of the face of the building and should be treated the same on either side of the party boundary.
 - A modern interpretation of these details will be appropriate. Modern clean lines for pillars generally work well on a modern shop front.



Fig 24a. Unfinished pilasters look untidy



Fig 24b. A mainframe is sometimes all that is needed



Fig 24c. Using the existing main frame, a simple well designed insert looks attractive

Fascia

2.10 The fascia is one of the most dominant features of a shop front.

- The size of the fascia must be appropriate to the frame and building as a whole. Generally, it should be no more than quarter the height from pavement level to the bottom of the fascia. If oversized it tends to unbalance the shop front and appears to slice the building in two. If it is too narrow, it will look weak.
- A visual gap must be left between the fascia and the first floor windowsills.
- A detail around the edge of the fascia will provide a completed look. This was traditionally done with a timber moulding detail, but a modern interpretation of this can be achieved.
- Oversized box fascias can look extremely bulky and ugly. These are often made of modern materials such as plastic, internally illuminated and can have garish colours. Unless sensitively designed and of appropriate materials and colour these modern additions will be unacceptable.



Figs 25a & 25b. Neat contemporary fascias

Stall riser

2.11 A solid panel below the shop window is essential to provide a visual anchor with the ground and ensure a practical design that can be easily cleaned. In addition, it will help to balance the shop front.

- The height of the stall riser should relate to the fascia. It may be appropriate to line up the stall riser with adjoining buildings particularly in new developments. This can help to unify a street. However, the

deciding factor will be the right design for the building.

- A modern stall riser can often be little more than a solid strip at the base of the shop front. It must be a minimum of 150mm. As long as it serves its visual and practical purpose, it can look appropriate.
- Acceptable materials include timber, ceramics, good quality terracotta, painted smooth render, matt finish tiles, stonework or brick work to match that on the rest of the building.



Fig 26. Shallow up stand successfully anchors shop front

Doors

2.12 The door will be one of the most prominent features of a shop front as it gives an important first impression. Traditionally the door was centrally positioned. Whilst this provides a balanced composition, it is not always necessary to ensure good design.

- As long as the proportions of the door (scale, size and shape) are appropriate to the building and other features of the shop front, it can be accommodated to one side.
- The features of the building above the shop front should be used to help determine the position of the door. Position of windows and other features must be used to define the best position for the door.
- In the case of a very long shop front such as a department store, frequent openings in the shop front, which allow pedestrian access, are essential to keep a vibrant live shop frontage.



Fig 27. A long frontage needs to be punctuated by many entrances

- The entrance wherever possible should be level with the pavement and in all cases comply with advice in this guidance regarding access for people with disabilities.

Detailing

2.13 The level of detailing should reflect that of the main building. A highly decorated building deserves a highly decorated shop front.

- Any local decorative traditions in the area should be researched and must be reflected in the new shop front.
- Modern decoration should focus on traditional areas such as doors, entrances, pilasters and corbels.



Fig 28. Lack of attention to detail is obvious here

Materials and finishes

2.14 All materials must be of a quality to withstand weathering and be easily cleaned.

- Materials must be compatible with the character of the area as a whole and the building.
- The number and type of materials and colours used to finish the shop front should be kept to a minimum.
- Modern shop fronts are often made of materials such as anodised aluminium, timber or UPVC. These can all be used if designed appropriately. Basic milled silver should be avoided as it gives a shoddy appearance and will be unacceptable.
- Colours should respect the area. Generally, muted dark tones such as brown, grey, dark green and dark blue work best. If aluminium is used, bronze, or matt black or grey anodised finishes look best. Garish, loud colours often make a shop front look cheap and will be unacceptable.



Fig 29. Too many colours and materials tend to give a cheap appearance

4. Cash machines

- 2.15 It is not only shops that have shop fronts. Many other uses such as banks, building societies, restaurants, hotels and launderettes have shop fronts. The Borough Council will actively encourage all such commercial and retail uses to have well designed shop fronts appropriate to their function.
- 2.16 Banks and buildings societies often have cash machines within the shop front. If poorly positioned or badly designed these can completely unbalance a shop front particularly if more than one is inserted, and users may have to fight for pavement space with pedestrians. For these reasons, cash machines will only be acceptable in banks and building societies. Cash points are rarely appropriate in retail shop fronts, where there is little benefit to a street scene and where queuing users can conflict with shoppers. Accordingly they should not be added to an existing shop front.

- 2.17 The following principles apply to cash machines in banks and building societies:

- Every effort should be made to design the cash machine as part of the front of the building.
- For safety reasons cash machines must be positioned in a safe and well-lit area,

taking account of neighbouring uses and the approaches.

- Siting must relate to the elements of the frontage such as the door, and features of the upper floors such as the windows.
- The proportions should balance in the shop front and on the building.
- Cash machines must be the same colour as the frontage using a limited palette and following all other advice on colour in this guidance.
- Painted 'exclusion' boxes should be included on the paving outside the cash machine to separate and define the user of the cash machine from general pedestrians.

5. Window displays

2.18 Good window displays attract business and add to the quality of a street. If the windows have an unattractive view of shelving, or are blank, a good shop front is devalued and ultimately the business will lose out on trade.

- For a secondary shop window, if it is not possible to have a full display, some interest or image should be incorporated that will help to provide interest to passers-by.



Fig 30. Although not a full display, street level interest is still maintained here

6. Signs

2.19 Shop signs perform a very useful function in displaying information and can add vitality and colour to a busy shopping street. There is no reason why with care, shop signs cannot be satisfactorily integrated into modern shop front design. However poorly sited, over large, over bright or badly designed signs can have a devastating effect on the quality of a shopping area.

2.20 The most attractive and successful shopping areas are those that have simple, quiet advertising that is well designed and respects the building. It allows the buildings, displays and signs to stand out more and is ultimately more effective. To achieve this, the scale of the fascia sign and other signs in relation to

the building and the street must be taken into account. In addition, all proposals must address the following:

- The fascia should state the name of the business and street number only so that it does not look cluttered. Painted letters or individually applied letters tend to look best. Modern, decorated or oversized letters can complicate a message and look cluttered and are unacceptable.
- Modern box fascias can look very bulky. The depth should be as slender as possible to achieve a good relationship with the shop front. They will only be acceptable where they are appropriate in scale, position, materials, colour and in all other respects.
- The colours should relate to the shop front and building and be limited in palette.
- Large areas of acrylic or other shiny materials should be avoided.
- All materials must withstand weathering and be easy to clean.
- Projecting signs must be located at fascia level. Normally one sign per shop is appropriate. The style of projecting sign should complement the fascia sign.

- The content of a projecting sign should be limited to the name of the shop. Other information can make a sign look cluttered and thereby lose its impact.



Fig31a. Heavy box fascia



Fig 31b. Fascia that does not fit into space provided



Fig 31c. Well-designed signs



Fig 31d. Uncoordinated signs degrade a shopping area



Fig 31e. Neat hanging signs look good on modern or traditional buildings

7. Illumination

2.21 Illuminated fascias must be very carefully designed, as the effect of over lit designs can be significant. It is often better to use neat halo lit letters, back lit letters, or up lighters, which give a more pleasing effect. **The following considerations must be taken into account in determining the acceptability of illumination.**

- Front lit fascias illuminated by swan neck lamps or neon tubes can be over bright and the fixings ugly which will devalue an advertisement.
- Internally illuminated projecting box signs tend to look heavy and over sized. A non-illuminated sign or externally illuminated sign has much more impact as the eye can separate it more easily from the building.
- Luminance levels will be controlled to prevent inappropriate light pollution.



Fig 32a. Large lights look cluttered



Fig 32b. Large internally illuminated fascia



Fig 32c. Well-designed trough lights

2.22 As with historic shop fronts, a well thought out window display with carefully considered internal lighting will often prove effective in avoiding the need for external illumination, and will add interest to shopping areas. This will be particularly relevant to the Primary Retail area in Swindon town centre, where internal lighting can make a valuable contribution to the public realm.

Part Three – Guidance common to both historic and modern shop front design

3.1 The following guidance is common to all shop front design, both historic and modern.

1. Security

3.2 The Council accepts that security measures are necessary and in assessing an application will seek to balance security needs with any detrimental effect on the shopping area. Accordingly,

- Shutters and grilles can have a devastating effect on a shop front and the night environment and for this reason they will usually be unacceptable.
- The best solution is to design security measures as an integral part of the shop front and in the case of a new shop front this approach will be insisted upon.
- Roller shutters fixed externally are unacceptable, as they tend to attract graffiti and completely deaden a shopping area at night. In addition, the box housing looks very unattractive and usually obscures architectural details.

- Open mesh roller grilles, which still allow a view into the shop at night, are an acceptable alternative. If these are fitted internally behind the glazing, they can be very effective and do not affect the appearance of a shopping area to the same extent.
- Dark colours or colours that match the shop front must be used for shutters or external roller grilles.



Fig 33. Housing for roller blind looks ugly

Removable or demountable external grilles

- 3.3 These may be an alternative, as they do not require a bulky housing.
- Where they are acceptable, they should be designed to fit within the pilasters and avoid obscuring any architectural details.

- They should be painted to match the shop front along with discrete fixings, and store them within the shop out of sight when not in use.
- **Traditional timber shutters** should always be kept where they exist.
- **Laminated glass** can be an effective solution, as it does not affect the appearance of the shop front. However, in the case of historic glass it will be inappropriate.
- **Small paned windows** give greater security and are less of a temptation to wilful damage. Introducing mullions may be a solution, but will need to be considered in the context of the shop front as a whole.



Fig 34. Small paned window

- **Alarm boxes** should be sited out of reach and in an inaccessible part of the building. They should not obscure architectural details and their position should be considered as part of the design process.
- **Ram raiding.** Unobtrusive solutions are possible when dealing with a new shop front if the issue is considered as part of the design process. For example, a strengthened stall riser with concealed posts or beams may be an acceptable solution.

2. Access for people with disabilities

- 3.4 In new buildings, access for the disabled is required under part M of the Building Regulations 2004. The needs of people with a disability must be considered and provision made for them. The Council has produced a Supplementary Guidance Note 'Access for All' (2003) to support Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan, which provides guidance on how to do this. This should be taken into account in any proposals.
- In accord with the 'Access for All' Supplementary Planning Guidance Note, a level access from the pavement must be provided if at all possible. If a ramp is needed, this should be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide and at a gradient no greater than 1:10.

- The junction between the pavement and ramp should be treated sympathetically taking onboard the existing surfaces. The Council's 'Access for All' Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (October, 2003) provides details of ramp design, including approaches, landings and half landings as required.
- Doorways should have a clear opening, with a minimum of 850mm.
- Door handles should be easy to operate and set no more than 1 metre above ground level.
- Planning permission and listed building consent are likely to be needed for these alterations.
- Portable ramps are a good alternative where a permanent dignified access cannot be provided. When not in use they must be stored in the shop out of sight.

Contacts

- 3.5 For further information on shop front design please contact the Councils Conservation and Design team, Forward Planning team on 01793 466326.

Glossary

Architectural frame – frame around the shop front comprising pilasters with architectural details such as capital and plinth, corbel or console bracket and fascia (also known as main frame).

Cornice – moulding at the top of the fascia that defines the top of the shop front and gives protection against the weather.

Corporate image – marketing image for a retailer.

Door head – top of the door.

Fascia – provides the space within which the name of the business can be displayed.

Horizontal emphasis – shallow horizontal appearance.

Horizontal glazing bars or Transoms – slim horizontal bars on a window.

Pilasters – upright elements that separate each shop from its neighbours and define the width of the shop front.

Pilaster Heads – a decorated feature at the top of the pilaster. Allows the fascia to sit at an angle looking down to the pavement.

Shop front – screen or panel that fills the space defined by the architectural frame or main frame.

Spandrels – mullions, sometimes incorporating curved pieces at the top.

Stall riser – the panel below the shop window. Its purpose was originally part of the display table at a time when most shop fronts were open. It concentrates the display of goods at waist height rather than floor level. It also provides an anchor with the ground.

Traditional shop front – historic shop front design that relies on a set of principles that are based on proportion, balance and the right relationship of the parts to the whole.

Transoms – see Horizontal glazing bars

Vertical glazing bars or mullions – slim vertical bars that divide a window.

Vertical emphasis – tall upright appearance.

Windowsills – an overhang at the base of a window that gives protection from the weather.

Appendix 1 – Elements of a Traditional Shop Front



If you require Council Information in another format, please contact Customer Services on 01793 463725

আপনার যদি অন্য কোন আকারে বা রূপে তথ্যের দরকার হয়, কাস্টমার সার্ভিসেস্কে (01793) 463725 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

Bengali

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別の構成・形式で資料をご使用される必要がある場合には、次の番号の弊社顧客サービスまでお問い合わせ下さい。電話：01793 463725

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Punjabi

Hadaad u baahatid macluumaad hab kale ku qoran fadian la soo xinir Adeega macmiisha (Customer Services) oo kasoo wac lambarkan (01793) 463725

Somali

اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا ہدی لکھائی وغیرہ میں معلومات درکار ہوں تو براہ مہربانی کسٹومر سروسز سے ٹیلی فون نمبر : 01793 463725 پر رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Urdu

