

PLANNING

October 1996

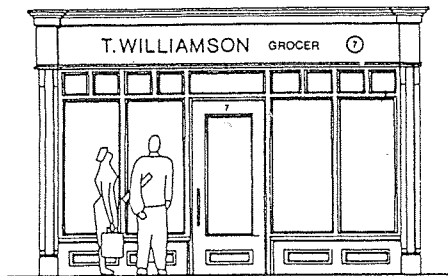
GUIDANCE

SHOPFRONTS & SIGNS

1. INTRODUCTION

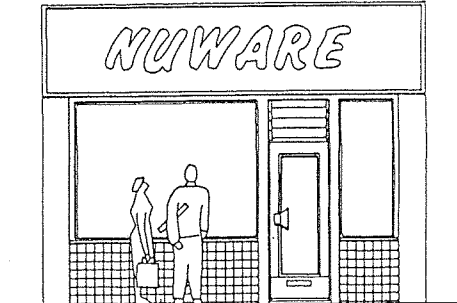
With changes in retail patterns, larger shop units and less independent traders, traditional shopfronts are being replaced with 'standard' frontages of large plate glass windows with plain aluminium frames, oversize fascias and garish colours. These changes reduce the visual attraction of many of our shopping areas.

Good traditional
shopfront →



- well considered fascia and lettering
- shopfront set in a frame
- sub-divided and well proportioned glazed areas
- carefully detailed stallrisers

Poor 'standard'
shopfront →



- large fascia with poor lettering
- poorly proportioned glazed areas
- crude stallriser

This guide seeks not to inhibit imaginative and sensitive design but to offer a guide for shop owners and their designers on factors that should be taken into account when preparing schemes for new shopfronts and signs. While this guide offers advice following a traditional approach to shop front design, each design needs to be judged on its merits and allow for solutions which extend beyond those shown.

Diversity, colour and even vulgarity are part of the tradition of shopfront design and should not be swamped by corporate good taste, any more than by shopfitters' lowest common denominator.

The guide is advisory and intended to apply to all the shopping areas in the Borough at Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Fair Oak, Hedge End, Lowford and West End as well as those shopping areas within conservation areas at Bishopstoke, Botley, Hamble and Netley.

2. THE SHOP, THE STREET AND THE BUILDING

When considering the design of a new shopfront the designer should first consider the context of the shop. Often shops are in groups - matching pairs, terraces, parades or corner shops. Designs should be prepared acknowledging the influence of this context, be it the recognised zone for fascias, stall risers or subdivision of shops by pilasters. This established framework should be respected and where it has been disrupted in the past, be reinstated.

Good example of where the design of shopfronts respond well to the buildings. →



Some buildings were never originally intended to have a shop. Houses had shopfronts inserted or added to them, as is evident in the centre of Eastleigh. Here the designer will often have to create a framework for a new shopfront whilst acknowledging the needs of adjoining shops.

Example of where shopfronts and signs ignore the character of their 'host' buildings. →



The design of a shopfront should take into account the building above and adjoining buildings and should respect the period and style of the building in which it is to be installed. Imitation historic styles, such as 'Georgian' bow windows, Victorian and Edwardian period shopfronts in buildings not of that period should be avoided.

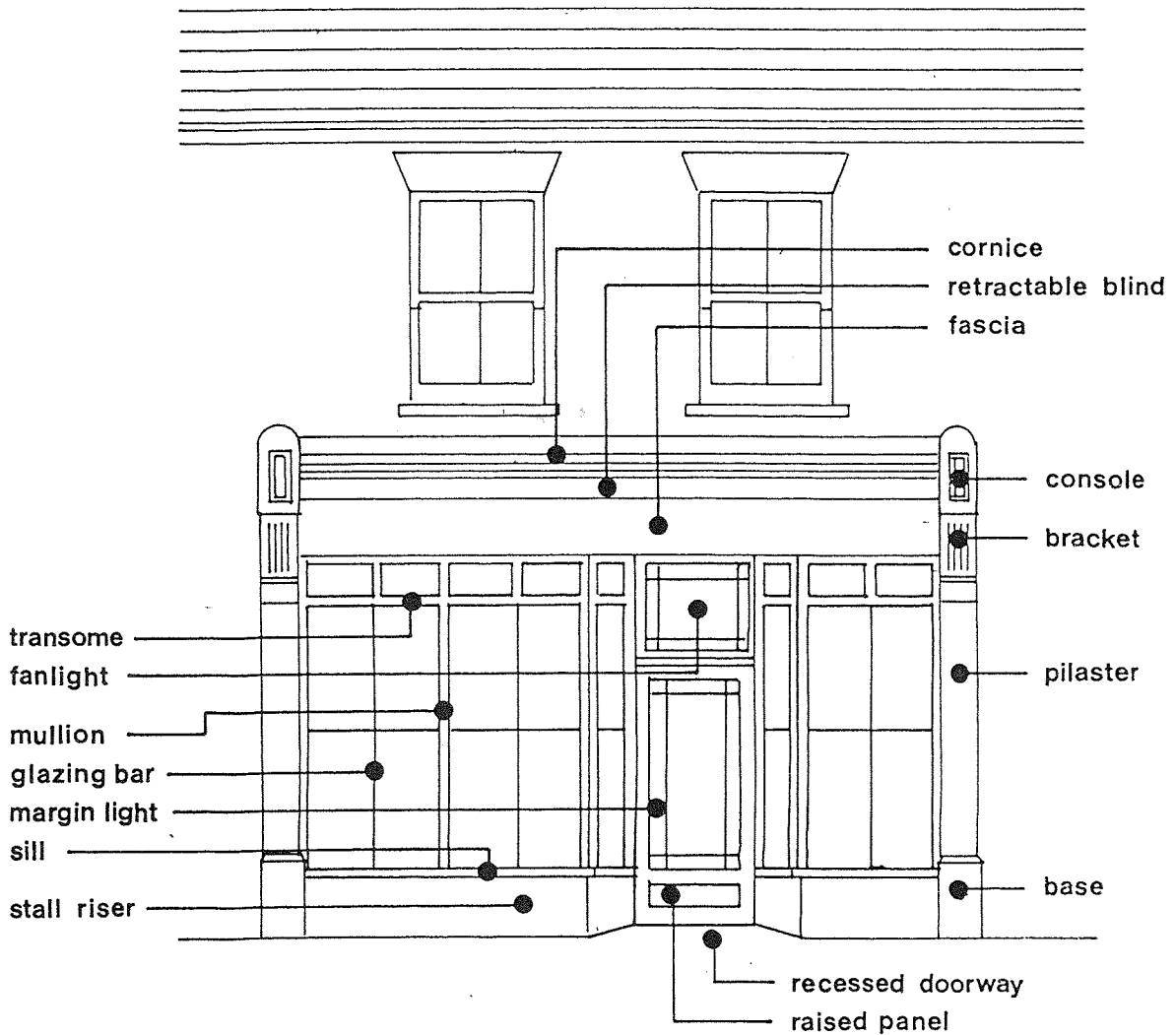
Shops that combine two or more units should still respect the character of the building. Continuity of separate shopfronts can be achieved by the fascia, lettering, colour and fenestration.

Consider the relationship to adjoining shops. Will pilasters be independent of each other or shared? If they are to be shared how will responsibility and treatment of the half width of the pilaster be achieved ?

3. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SHOPFRONT

The basic form of the shopfront was established in the mid-eighteenth century with the creative use of classical forms of architecture. These forms have been gradually simplified over the years.

The shopfront can be considered as a frame enclosing the display windows, entrance door and the fascia identifying the shop.



If a replacement shop front is being considered, first look for any original features such as pilasters and fascias that survive but have been covered up by later work.

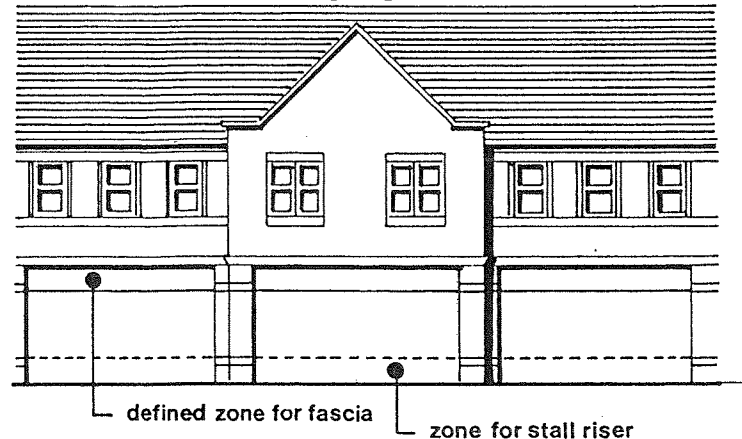
Work out the optimum display area for the merchandise in relation to the entrance and any other entrances required to serve premises on upper floors.

Decide on the information that needs to go on the fascia. Ideally this should be confined to a name, the trade, the postal number and possibly a logo.

4. WINDOWS AND STALLRISER

The shopfront provides the framework for displaying goods. The designer needs to know how the shopkeeper intends to display goods.

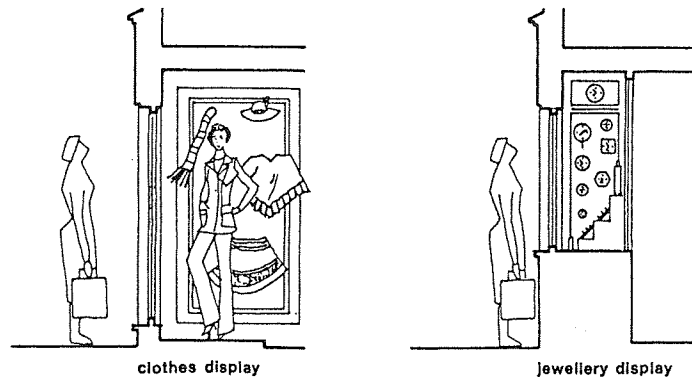
Big shop windows lack interest and unless they are displaying large goods such as cars or a dramatic display, need to be broken down in scale. Subdivision of windows allows for more variety of display and encourages goods to be looked at more closely.



Practically all new shop units leave the installation of shop fronts to the occupier. Here developers should offer guidance to occupiers on how to achieve continuity of design.

Banks, building societies and bookmakers will need to adopt an imaginative approach for window displays to avoid their frontages having a deadening effect on the shopping street.

The nature of the merchandise to be displayed will largely determine the relationship between the stallriser and the window.



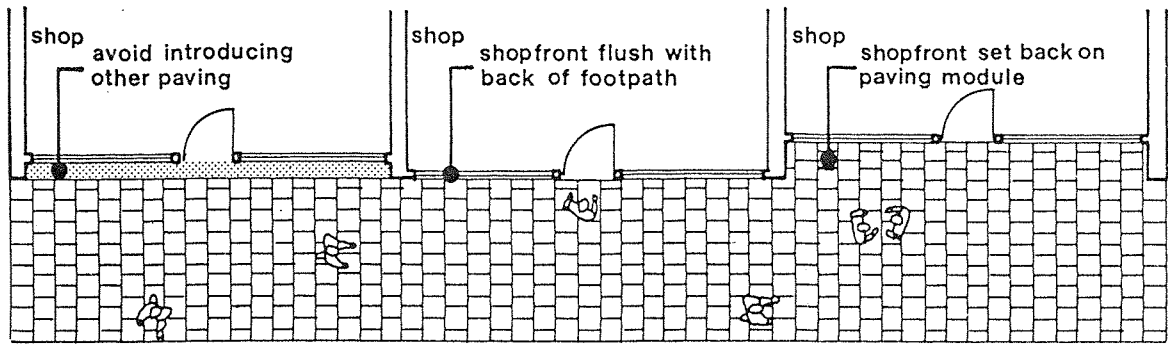
A low stallriser and large window area will be appropriate for mannequins displaying clothes so that the shopper can see them at the correct eye level. A low stallriser also has the benefit of being an aid for disabled people.

The absence of a stallriser, with the window frame going down to pavement level, causes dirt to collect under the sill of the frame, and if made of timber, the moisture and rain which runs down the face of the window is trapped and corrosion sets in.

Smaller items such as jewellery need to be shown closer to eye level and so a higher stallriser and smaller window is required.

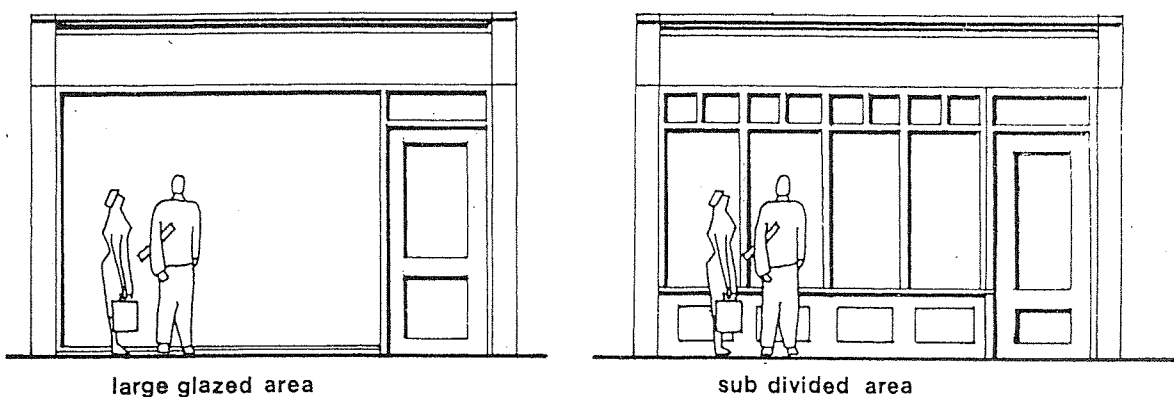
Stall risers provide protection between the pavement and the display window. If the shop has a basement the stallriser can accommodate smoke outlets and ventilators to this area.

The use of painted timber or stone are appropriate materials for stallrisers. The use of mosaics or laminates do not produce a good quality shopfront.



Align the base of the stallriser along the back of the footpath to avoid having to introduce a small section of additional paving. Alternatively the complete shopfront can be set back to allow the paving to be properly extended.

Try and avoid large areas of glass for display windows by introducing mullions and transoms. If windows are damaged smaller areas of glass are cheaper to replace.

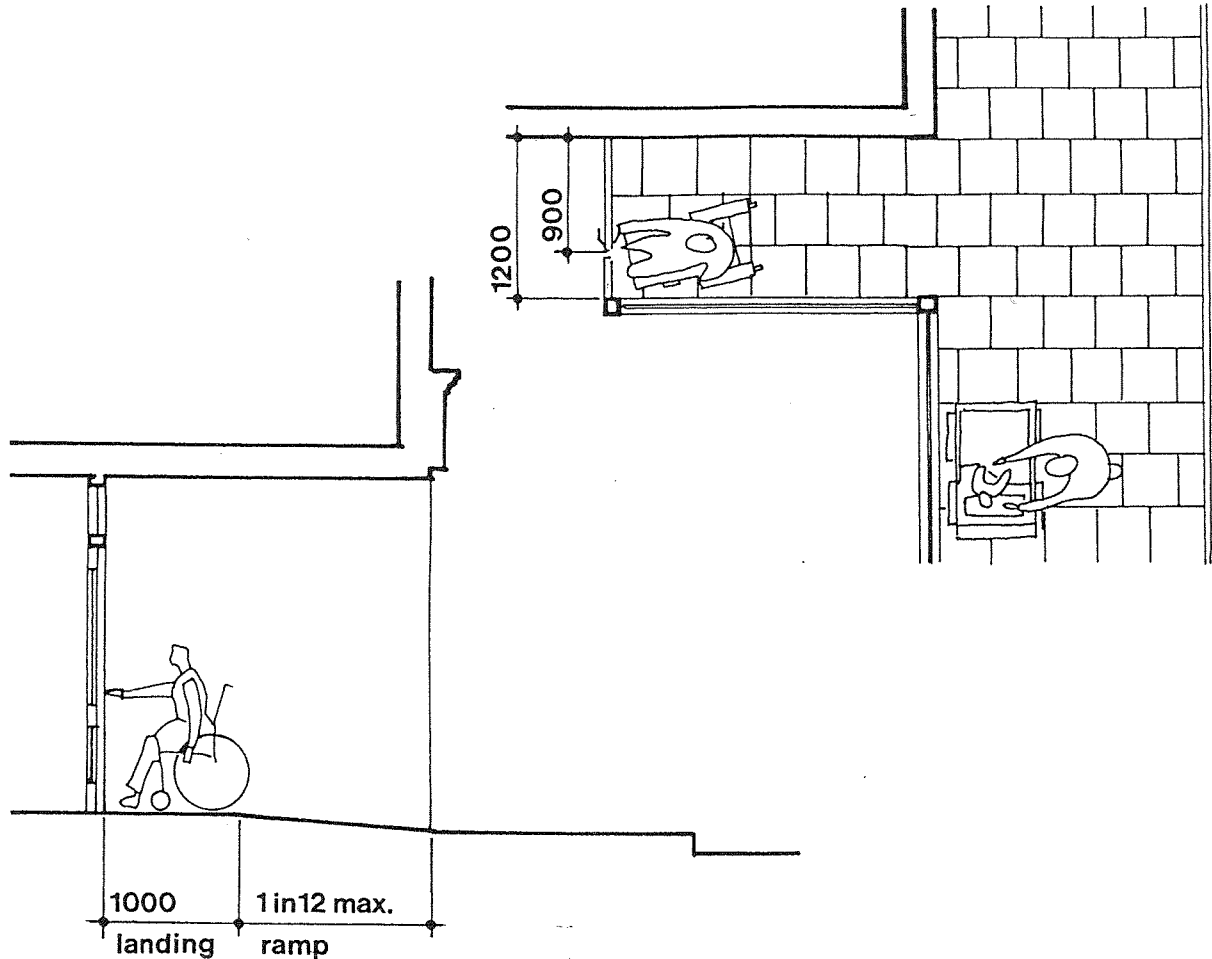


The use of transoms enables natural ventilation and daylight to be provided for the shop.

The use of open shopfronts and 'piped music' inside the shop can lead to excessive noise outside the premises and this trend is not encouraged.

5. ENTRANCE DOORS

Doors can be hinged to open inwards and/or outwards to swing 90deg. 180deg. or 270deg. automatic or manual sliding. (Revolving doors are not normally used for small shops.)



Whatever the door selection it should be able to be used by those in wheelchairs or pushing prams. The clear opening should not be less than 900mm.

If there is a change in level between the pavement and the floor inside the shop a ramp with a gradient not steeper than 1:12 needs to be provided with a landing not shorter than 1200mm by the door to enable the wheelchair user to open the door.

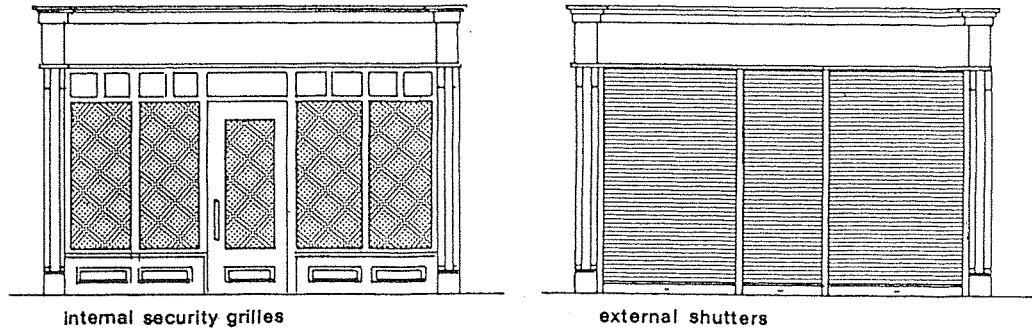
Internal arrangements should also ensure that the wheelchair and pram user can open the door to leave.

To provide a ramp often means that the entrance door will have to be recessed. This can provide additional interest to the design of the shopfront and offers the opportunity of giving more window display area.

6. IRONMONGERY & SECURITY

Attention to detail is important. The siting and selection of ironmongery such as letter boxes, door handles, push and kick plates need to be carefully considered.

Security alarms - if required should be carefully located and incorporated at fascia level of carefully sited at first floor level.



Security grilles - should be fitted internally and be of the open mesh type. They are to be preferred to solid security shutters which can have a deadening effect on the shopping street when shops are closed.

Other security measures can include consideration of the use of laminated glass and the advantage of small panes of glass over large panes.

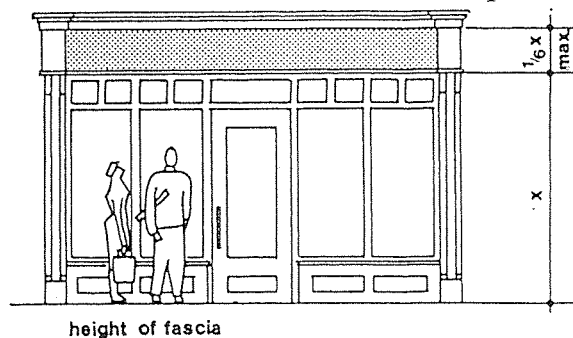
Reference should be made to British Standard 8220 Part 2 - 'Security of buildings against crime - offices and shops'.

Cash dispensers should be considered as part of the overall shopfront design. When placed within a recessed area around the entrance door protection is offered to customers.

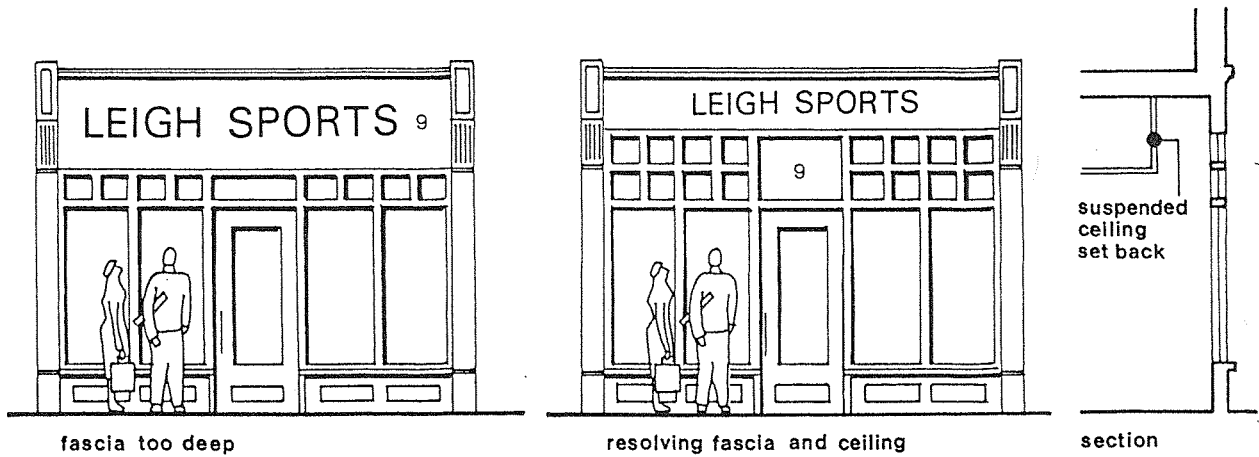
7. FASCIAS

Fascias should not destroy the individuality of buildings by being extended across multiple frontages.

There is much to commend the use of traditional hand painted timber fascias.



The depth of fascia should not be greater than $\frac{1}{6}$ the height from pavement level to the bottom of the fascia.



Fascias should not be made deep in order to bring the lettering closer to eye level. High fascias with well considered lettering are usually quite legible. A clerestory area beneath the fascia provides the opportunity to provide additional light and ventilation to the shop.

Problems with high internal floor to ceiling heights should not resort to the use of deep fascias. The use of suspended ceilings set back from the shopfront can overcome this problem.

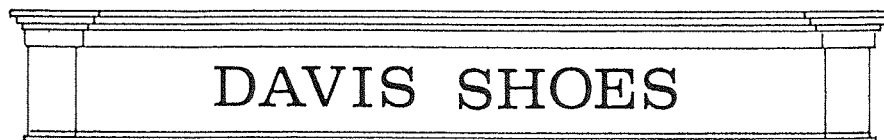
Fascias should not project above the base of first floor windows.

Box fascias should be avoided.

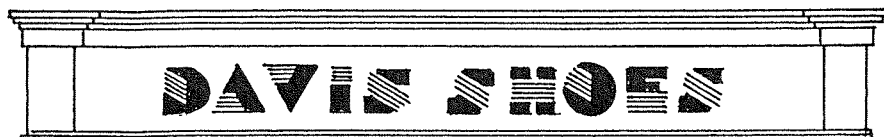
8. LETTERING

Lettering should be in proportion to the size of the fascia and should neither dominate nor be dominated by the background.

Letters more than 400mm high will not normally be acceptable.



clear typeface



unclear typeface

Letters signwritten using clear typefaces on the fascia or the glass or applied as individual letters usually result in elegant and attractive results.

On some buildings there may be a case for applying individual letters directly to the elevation of brick, stone etc. and dispensing with a fascia board altogether.

9. MATERIALS AND COLOURS

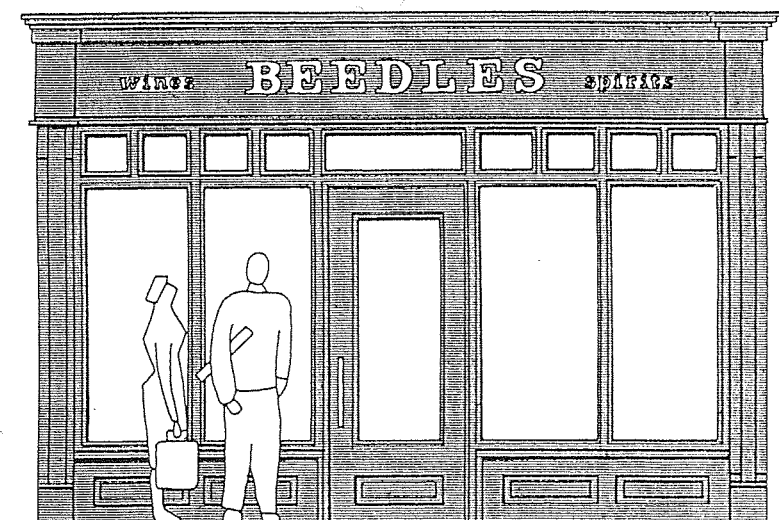
As a general rule materials for shopfronts should be matt and non reflective. There will always be exceptions, such as the use of polished granite or marble. Reflection and interest is provided by the glass and the goods displayed.

Excessive use of satin anodised aluminium and shiny acrylic plastic has reduced the quality of many shopfronts.

Timber has for long been the traditional and versatile material for shopfronts. It is durable and repainting can freshen up the appearance of a shopfront at minimum cost.

Painted timber is preferable to stained hardwood. Occasionally the use of polished mahogany or oak is appropriate. Non-sustainable tropical hardwoods are to be discouraged.

Polyester powder coating with a range of 60 standard matt colours is preferable to a satin anodised aluminium finish. All materials used should be of a quality to withstand weathering (buckling, staining etc.) and be easily cleaned.



The selection of rich dark colours for the frame of the shopfront and the fascia often look best as they leave the window displays and the lettering and signs to provide the highlights.

10. CANOPIES AND BLINDS

Blinds have a practical purpose. They are to protect goods from damage by sunlight. They have a secondary role of protecting shoppers from rain.

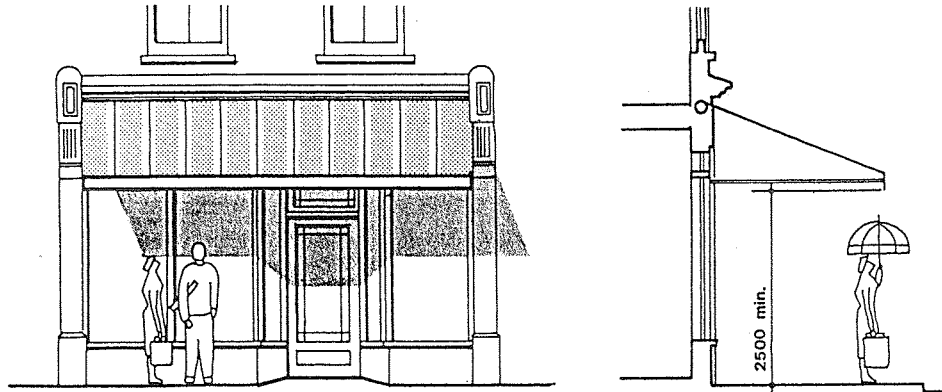
There is no need for blinds on north facing elevations.

Blinds should be retractable so that fascias are not permanently obscured.

The blind box to store the canopy when installed above the fascia, enables this to be read by shoppers when walking under the canopy.

The traditional form of retractable blind is to be preferred to the more modern fixed canopy.

The colour and design of the blind should relate to the overall design of the shopfront.



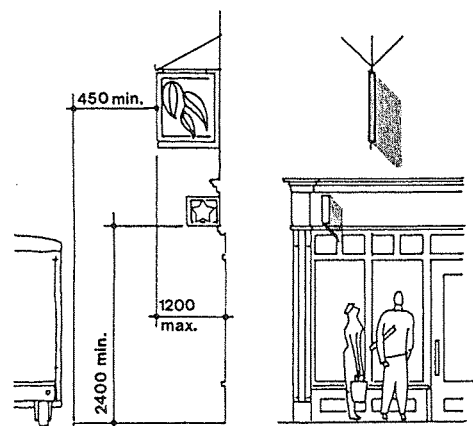
When open the canopy should not be lower than 2500mm at any point to allow clearance for pedestrians with umbrellas in use.

Dutch blinds should be avoided as they require vertical housings and their sidings tend to interrupt the street view and passage of pedestrians.

11. ADVERTISEMENTS AND SIGNS

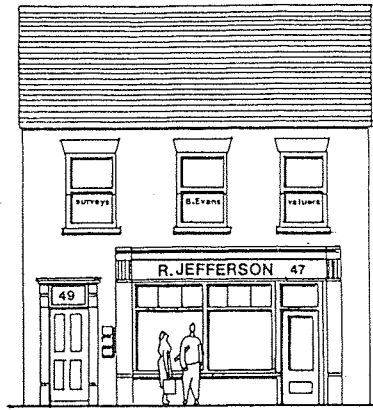
Too many advertisements will normally reduce the attractiveness of a shopping street and result in a visual 'shouting match'.

Not more than one projecting sign is normally needed or allowed on a single shopfront.



Projecting signs should be located at fascia level and project no more than 900mm from the face of the building.

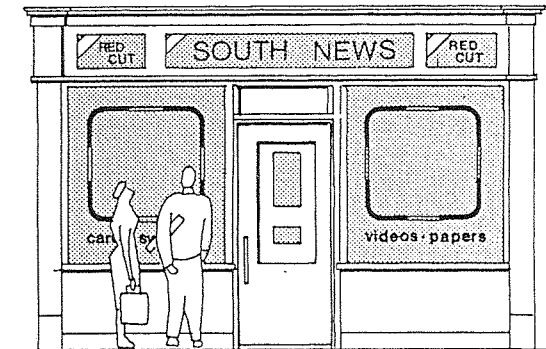
Where appropriate hanging signs may be an alternative to projecting signs. They should not be used as a means of providing additional advertising.



There is often above the shop a second business on the first floor. This can be signed by using lettering on the glass of the first floor windows or by the use of nameplates on the ground floor entrance door.

Displays of goods, sandwich boards or other freestanding signs can add to the liveliness of the shopping street. They can also add to the general clutter of the street scene. If they are causing an obstruction, action under the Highways Act can secure their removal.

Banners above or across shopfronts are not normally acceptable.



Shop windows should not be obscured by large numbers of posters, blanked out by advertising display or obscured by the rear of display stands/shelving. They deny the opportunity to display goods and deaden the appearance of the street.

12. ILLUMINATED SIGNS

Shop signs do not need special illumination if the level of street lighting and the internal shop lights is adequate for trade.

External illumination of hand painted fascia signs or individually applied letters by means of spotlights is acceptable provided that the light is not obtrusive and does not detract from the appearance of the building during the day.

Illuminated letters by concealed neon tube or spotlighting are acceptable in most circumstances.

In certain cases the use of soft floodlighting may enhance certain premises after dark in conjunction with an illuminated sign.

13. LEGISLATION

Owners and designers need to comply with various pieces of legislation when carrying out new work or alterations.

It is advisable to check with the Council on the current requirements.

When submitting drawings detailed plans and elevations of the whole property showing adjoining buildings need to be made. Plans should clearly show the proposed shopfronts and signs with full details of materials and colours.

As colour is such an important aspect of shopfront and sign design it would be helpful to provide one coloured set of drawings.

14. PLANNING

Permission is required for the erection of a new shopfront or for the material alteration of an existing shopfront

15. ADVERTISEMENTS

The regulation and provision for advertisements are set down in Class 4B Part 1 of Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992.

16. LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

If the building is 'listed', consent is required for any alteration work in addition to planning consent.

17. BUILDING REGULATIONS

Approvals are required for new construction work and for means of access

18. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Section 7 of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 and Section 2(2)(e) of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 require suitable and sufficient ventilation to all parts of the premises to which the Acts apply.

19. HIGHWAYS ACTS

Require the highway (carriageway and footpaths) to be kept clear of obstructions

Director of Technical and Development Services
Eastleigh Borough Council
Civic Offices, Leigh Road,
Eastleigh. SO5 4YN

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