



New & Old **SHOPFRONTS**

good for business
Boroughwide



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Planning Guidance

May 2000

Foreword of the Deputy Leader

Shopping is a major activity for the Borough's residents and visitors. The shops and the shopfronts therefore form an important visual element in the public eye, both individually and in terms of their collective design and impact. Well designed and interesting shopfronts with enticing window displays make the street a more attractive place to shop.

There are pressures to change the character of our shopfronts arising from changing trends in retailing, pressures to advertise and display goods for sale, property maintenance and a desire for novelty. Without guidance new shopfronts or alterations to existing shopfronts could be unsympathetic to the architecture of the individual buildings and to the streetscene.

In order to maintain and improve the character of the Borough's shopping areas, it is necessary to stimulate the vitality and interest of the streetscene by protecting the collective and individual qualities of shopfronts, while at the same time recognising modern retailing requirements. These demands are not incompatible. The use of sensitive design and careful attention to detail will give the shop a unique quality which will help promote its image.

This promotion of good quality design, including the design of shopfronts and advertisements, will encourage investment and spending and will bring rewards which will ultimately benefit all of the traders.

This booklet sets out general principles of good shopfront design. It recognises and accepts that companies have invested a great deal to promote their own corporate images. But also asks retailers to recognise that historic towns are investing comparable efforts on their own historic buildings and on the quality of their environment.

This guidance has been revised following extensive public consultation. The guidance aims to improve the quality of the places where we shop.

Roy Osborne

Deputy Leader Planning and Regeneration
Stafford Borough Council

1. Introduction

The design standard of shopfronts is important because successful towns trade on an image of high quality, produced and maintained in partnership. This has a profound impact upon the perception of a place and can damage the visual quality, affect the retail viability and the local economy if neglected. The Borough Council wishes to encourage high design standards to maintain the attractiveness of its shopping areas.



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Public and private sectors need to work together to achieve high quality public spaces.

Guidance contained in this publication will form a material consideration when deciding planning and related applications. It is intended that the guidance will be included as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the Review of the Local Plan with reference in revised policies.

2. Which shopfronts ?

All commercial establishments are included. This covers all shops, financial institutions, petrol stations, places to eat and drink, forecourts to convenience stores and supermarkets. The Borough Council prefers to work with the retailer to encourage individual solutions to suit each individual case. Attention will generally focus on the streetscene and the collective impact of the proposal. This guidance is intended to identify principles which should generally be followed to create successful solutions.



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An attractive streetscene can result from individual buildings of different architectural styles respecting scale, sense of enclosure and location within the network of streets.

3. General design principles

In most cases shopfronts are part of a larger building. The whole elevation should be considered, relating the shopfront to the scale and character of the rest of the building. This does not mean that imitation or pastiche are obvious choices. The composition of the elevation needs to be looked at to balance horizontal and vertical elements. Then a closer look is needed at the neighbours and the wider setting in the streetscene. The Borough Council wishes to see good examples of older shopfronts retained and repaired.



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A traditional shopfront reflects the rules of balance, proportion and harmony.

3.1 The individual unit

All elements of the shopfront need careful consideration. The design should relate well to the overall character of the building and conform to the 'host' building (with help from fascias, windows and stall risers). The detailed design, the choice of materials, the colours applied, type of lettering and the illumination all need careful thought. Traditional materials are most suited for historic buildings. Some flexibility will be allowed for modern buildings when there is evidence of respect for the scale, the proportions and the character of the surrounding shopfront. The colouring of the shopfront should not detract from the overall facade and should have regard for the setting of the building. Corporate house-styles will be considered on their merits but should respect the principles highlighted in this publication. The structural logic of the building above should be respected. Support for upper floors should be expressed in the design. The fascia depth should not generally exceed 1/5 of the shopfront height and the fascia and associated signs should not overlap first floor windows or obscure architectural details. Full advantage should be made of opportunities for passive solar heating, natural ventilation and natural lighting.



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Modern buildings provide an opportunity to create a solution that successfully pays attention to the overall character.



Diagram of a Shopfront.

The space above a shopfront is often a less well used resource. Poorly maintained upper floors greatly affect the appearance and the attractiveness of the shopfront below and the streetscene in general. Ideally upstairs storage should not be visible from the street. Alternatively curtains or blinds can provide useful screening. Redundant wires and brackets should be taken away. In town architectural lighting applied for the whole building elevation is often more successful than illuminated signs only.

Encouragement is given to bring back residential use above shops, more life to the centre and greater security.



An understated treatment can bring ground and upper floors together to greater effect.

3.2 Streetscene and surroundings

The streetscene is made up of individual buildings, each with their own character and place, within an overall townscape whose collective characteristics are greater than the sum of its parts. Topography, light, weather, landscaping (including trees, street furniture etc.) and surrounding buildings all play an important role. The streetscene and the townscape are relevant factors that can influence visitors to pay repeat visits. To gain this benefit it needs to be held in high regard. The Borough Council appreciates the concept of corporate identity and the commercial logic involved. However, standard shopfronts, company logos and house colour schemes can be adapted to respect the building



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The streetscene composed of smaller plots reflects the human scale better.

and its location. Visual continuity can be emphasised by using the common elements tailored to suit the units. Maintaining a regular rhythm and relating visually to the original pattern and the character of the complete group, improves the streetscene without losing individuality.

Where occupiers of premises extend across several buildings, design should respect the individual buildings rather than a solution which treats the whole ground floor as one unit.

4. Associated elements

4.1 Shop signs

Signs are additional help to attract attention to the shop. Where possible it is advisable to retain an interesting original sign and bring it back to life. Signs need to relate to the appearance of the host building. Only a limited proportion of the elevation should be used so that the rest of the building gets attention. Otherwise visually interesting buildings may be hidden by large out-of-scale signs. It is most important to consider the application of lettering, logo and materials with great care. Handpainted signs are often sufficient for the logo to be recognised without dominating the building.



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Incorporating original features produces a richer future.



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Restraint is more attractive and reflects an image of quality likely to be found inside.

4.2 Access

Entrance to commercial premises should be at pavement level, otherwise ramped to ease access. Easy opening doors are essential. Frameless glass doors are discouraged as being potentially harmful to the young and partially sighted. The width of the entry opening should be 850mm at least to allow wheelchairs and twin buggies. (double door access: 1 opening minimum 850mm).



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Older buildings can be brought back in use with improved access facilities.

4.3 Security measures

Laminated glass

Plain glass may be replaced with laminated safety glass. Small paned windows are less susceptible to wilful damage than large sheets and cheaper to replace.

Internal grilles

The internal lay-out remains clear and the goods on display are visible. This is a preferred solution.

Removable / demountable grilles

Open meshed for good visibility, they should be stored inside or out of sight during opening hours.

Roller shutters / grilles

These have a tendency to be bulky and unsightly. If they are vital then the box housing will need to be concealed behind the fascia. Solid metal shutters are unacceptable in most situations. They bring an unattractive and forbidding atmosphere to an essential pedestrian attraction.

Collapsible gates

Useful for recesses in the frontage.

Alarm boxes

The fitting should not obscure or damage architectural details. Alarms have to be located out of human reach or at an inaccessible part of the building. Best results are obtained when integrated into the overall design. The appearance can be influenced by painting the casing to blend in with the background if relocation is impossible.

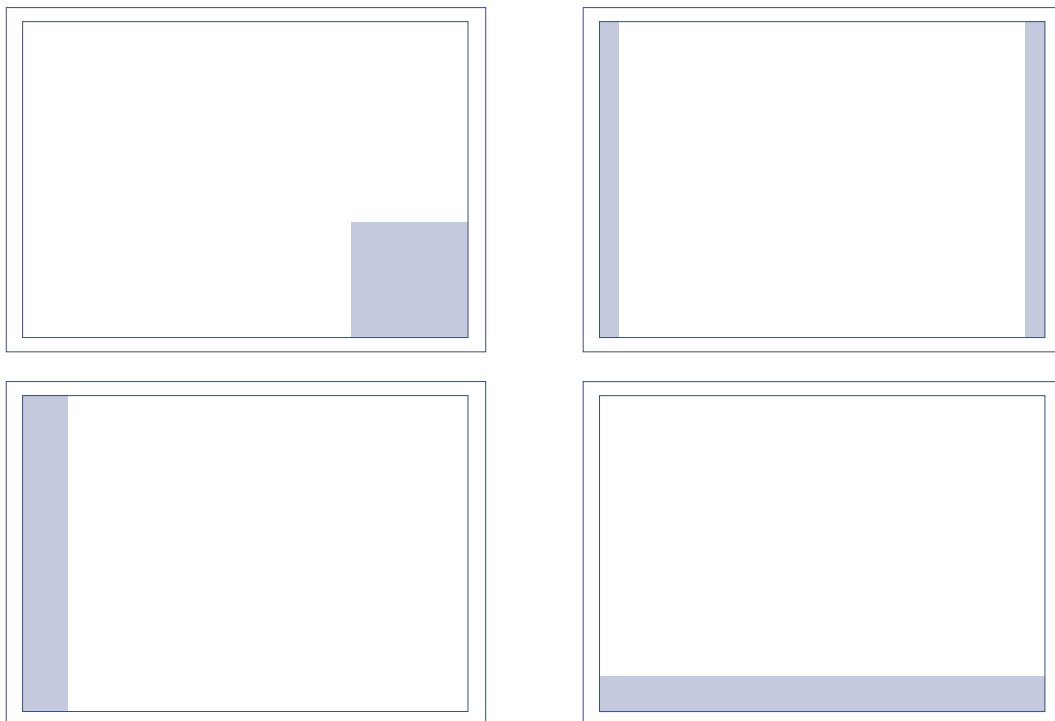
Some early design decisions can be helpful in reducing the risk:

- stall risers provide a solid visual base and raise the window display to a more convenient level for shoppers.
- take into account CCTV, radio links and the local security scheme in operation.
- other measures : many need the potential intruder to be aware of them to be effective (dye marker system) etc.

4.4 Window displays and illumination

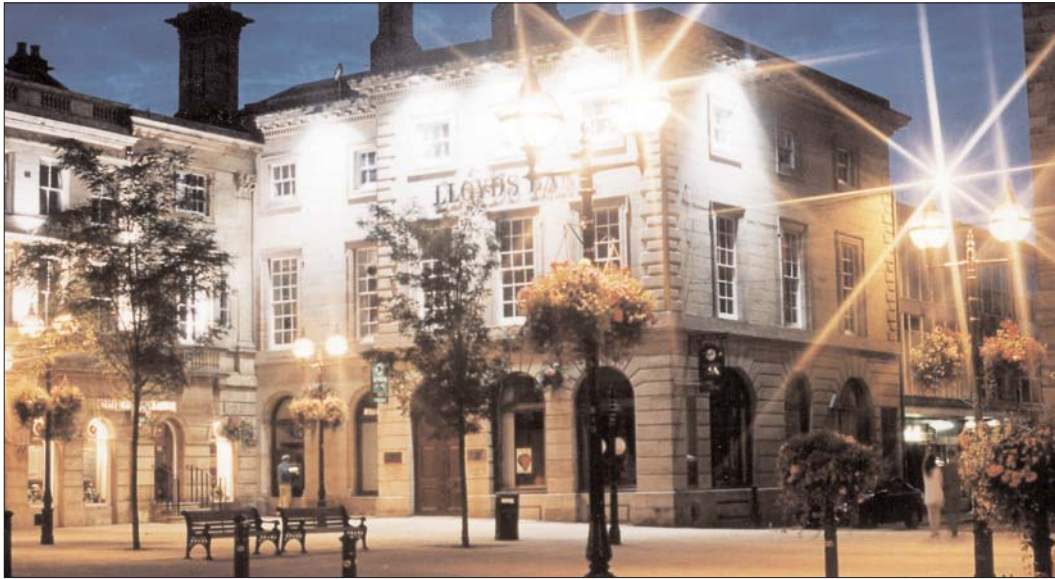
Window shopping is made attractive when attention has been paid to the display of goods. An imaginative approach brings visual interest and variety to the streetscene.

The year round application of window stickers is unsympathetic in historic streetscapes. If such display is essential then these stickers should not take more than 10% of the total glass area and be grouped together.



Some indications of the 10% area for window stickers.

Internally lit displays after closing time can make a shop attractive and brighten up a dark streetscene.



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Evening illuminations stimulate window shopping and improve the atmosphere.

4.5 Blinds and canopies

These are applied to create shade and maintain displayed goods in good order. Orientation of the shop is therefore important. Retractable canvas flat rollers can be acceptable. Fixed plastic blinds and canopies are strongly discouraged.

4.6 Vacant units

The aim is to reduce the impact of vacant shopfronts which can be detrimental. Owners are encouraged to ensure that maintenance and repair is continued pending change of tenant. Temporary displays in the building are preferable to boarded up, blank or bill posted windows.

5. Further advice & information

The standard of design aimed for requires skill and sensitivity. Therefore the Borough Council would like to recommend employing a professional service with a real understanding of the building and the surrounding area. Applicants are advised to contact and discuss with the Council at the earliest possible opportunity any permission which may be needed for their property.



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Remaining features should be revived with care and attention. The help of owners and agents is appreciated.

Categories of consents

Most alterations to shopfronts will need planning permission. More than one type of consent may be required in accordance with the type of building or the location.

5.1 *Planning:*

Planning consent is required for works which materially affect the external appearance of the shop. This could even include altering the glazing, changing facing materials, modifying the door or its position, altering the fascia or installing alarms or shutters.

5.2 *Conservation Area:*

Demolition or partial demolition of any building in a conservation area needs a separate consent. This includes demolition or removal of a shopfront or any features which give character to a building.

5.3 *Listed Building:*

Any alteration affecting the character or appearance of a listed building requires a separate listed building consent. This can include proposals such as changing the paint colour, installing technical devices (e.g. alarms, fans), altering the shop interior or installing shutters, blinds and advertisements.

5.4 *Advertisement:*

The regulations regarding advertisements are complex and come under different legislation. It is therefore recommended to seek advice on whether a consent is required for the display of a sign.

5.5 *Submission of applications:*

When an application is made 4 copies of the following scaled drawings will normally be required in addition to the form and an Ordnance Survey extract:

1. Front elevation of the existing shop front and building (includes roof).
2. Elevational drawing of proposed shop front and building.
3. Horizontal and sectional drawings to a scale of 1:10.

Please note that Building Regulations apply for structural alterations relating to shop fronts.

Other publications & further reading e.g. (glossary of terms)

- Book of Details and Good Practice in Shopfront Design - *English Historic Towns Forum (1993)*
- Shopfronts - *Alan Powers (London 1989)*
- Modern Practical Joinery - *George Ellis (London 1987)*
- Shopfronts - *English Heritage Listed Building Guidance Leaflet (London 1990)*
- Practical Building Conservation - *English Heritage Technical Handbooks, J&N Ashurst (Gower 1998)*
 - Vol 1 Stone Masonry
 - Vol 3 Mortars, Plasters and Render
 - Vol 4 Metals
 - Vol 5 Wood, Glass and Resins



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