



Shopfront and Advertisement Design

A Guidance Note



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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide potential applicants with an indication of the criteria against which the District Council assesses applications for new shopfronts and shop signs within Conservation Areas. It applies to all Conservation Areas in the district, including Petworth and Midhurst along with Chichester City itself.



The purpose of this guidance is not to stifle creative designs or approaches to shop front and shop sign design, although given the character of the area there is an emphasis on a traditional approach. It is to provide a framework to help applicants in proposing designs and ideas which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the shopping areas.

As well as conserving the character of the area the aim is to present the best possible advertisement for businesses by providing an attractive and legible environment in which to shop. It is widely accepted that an attractive well presented shopping street will provide people with a more pleasant shopping experience with the result of higher custom.

Although this guidance note is aimed primarily at Listed Buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas the basic design principles are relevant to all shopfronts in the district.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with policies BE8 and BE9 of the Chichester District Local Plan.

Principles of the Traditional Shopfront

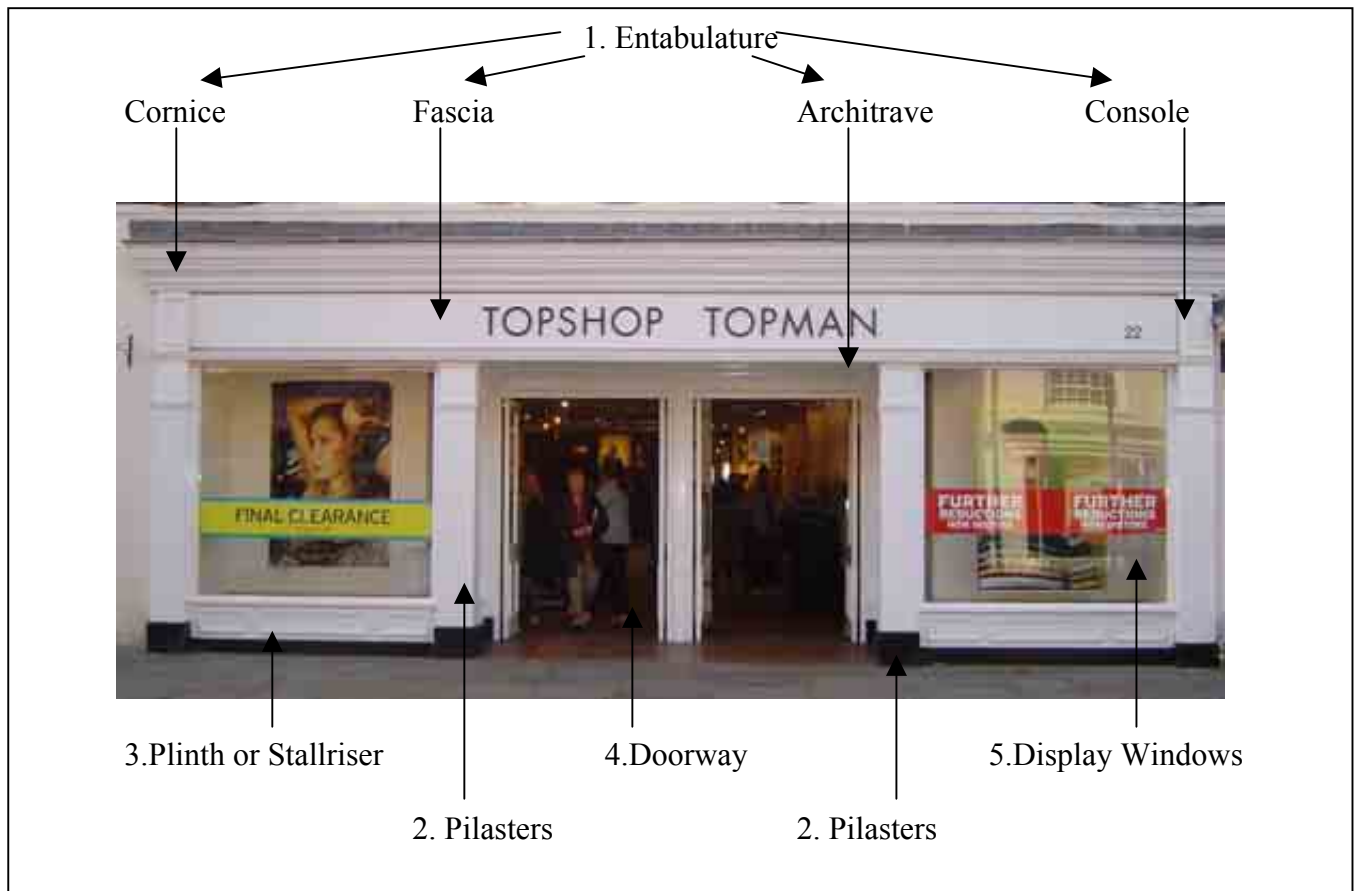
The development of the purpose built modern shopfront can be traced back to the eighteenth century when they began to appear on the ground floor of traders homes. The prevailing classical ideas of the time heavily influenced these shop fronts with architectural “orders” of antiquity. The shop fronts consisted of various components which made up the frontage. These were used to create a frame for the window displays, in much the same way a frame is used to display a painting, and to highlight the entrance to the shop.



The use of classical orders was also successful in terms of providing a satisfactory relationship between the shop and the building as a whole. The principle of providing a visual frame is also important for the architectural appearance of the whole building frontage. The upper part of the building needs to appear to be supported by the ground floor and appropriate shop frames can provide this apparent support.

These components and principles can still be applied today for the reproduction of traditional style shop fronts or by creative interpretation as the basis for more contemporary shop fronts.

Shopfront components



1. The Entablature – This forms the top of the shopfront and normally comprises of three or four elements, cornice, fascia, architrave and occasionally a console. The cornice and architrave are mouldings framing the fascia board upon which signage should be sited. Traditionally the mouldings of the cornice or architrave are used to house and conceal the box which contains retractable blinds or awning. The console sits above the pilaster to provide side mouldings to the entablature.
2. Pilasters – The sides of the architectural frame are formed by columns. More often they are the flattened equivalent known as Pilasters. The pilasters comprise of three elements; plinth, trunk and a capital (above the pilasters can also be the console).
3. Plinth or Stallriser – These are found at the base of the shopfront and normally rise to the height of the plinth of the column. The name stallriser derives from the original function of this low wall as support for stall boards.
4. Doorways – In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with the arrival of artificial light, shop interiors became deeper in plan. It was at this time entrance doors became recessed. The recess allows for more display space

and acts to invite the customer into the shop. The recessed doorway also adds interest and balance by giving the shopfront depth.

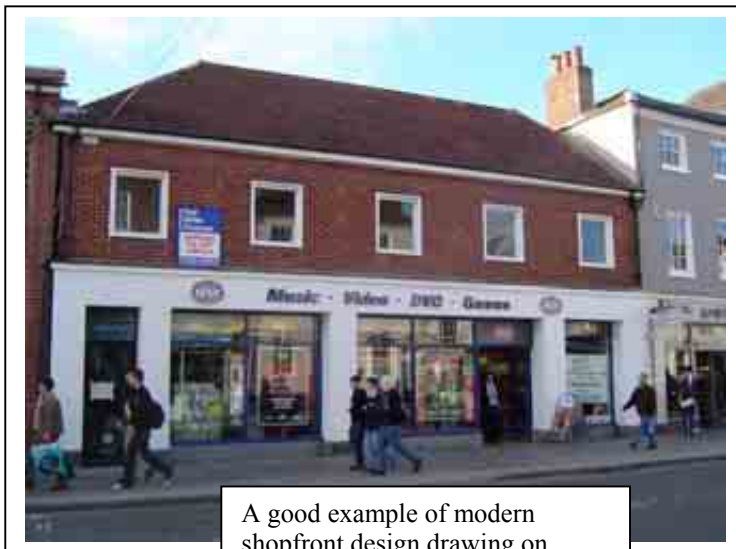
5. Display window – The appearance of display windows has changed considerably over the years with the decline in window tax and advances in technology. Original Georgian shopfronts had small windows made up of small window panes. There were sometimes bow fronted to maximise display space. Through the nineteenth century the size of the glass panes grew until the stallriser could have been reduced to a low, ornate rail. Even then the window glass was usually housed within a solid timber frame with vertical mullions and a horizontal transom at the same level as the top of the entrance door, to divide the glazing. The glass gap in between transom and the architrave was often embellished with stained glass and moulded tops of mullions.

Shopfronts: Design Principles

- Shopfronts should be in keeping with the rest of the building
- If in doubt follow classical designs
- The shopfront should be in proportion
- Large undivided glazing should be avoided
- A stall riser should be used
- The shopfront should be set in one plane
- The detailing is the most important consideration when designing a shopfront

Character of Street and Building

The design of the shopfront should take into account the rhythm and characteristics of the street e.g. width of the buildings, horizontal or vertical elements. Most traditional shopping streets contain a great deal of variety. Although the Chichester City shopping area contains mainly 18th and 19th century buildings there is variety in the height, width and style of properties, therefore identical designs are not necessarily the ideal solution in terms of street scene. The exception maybe of a terrace of properties providing retail units have been designed as a single composition. In all cases shopfronts should not extend over more than one building, if adjacent properties



A good example of modern shopfront design drawing on traditional principles

are occupied by one business this must be portrayed by means other than a single shopfront spanning the two units.

In terms of traditional shopfronts, these or any remaining features should be retained and repaired. It is often cheaper to repair an existing shopfront than to replace it. In a number of instances a traditional shopfront may have been covered up by a later more

modern inappropriate frontage, if this is the case then the reinstatement of the original shopfront would be required. Replacement shopfronts in a traditional style should be historically accurate and correctly detailed, carefully considered details and mouldings do not necessarily add much to the cost but can add to a considerable impression of quality.

The existence of a shopfront or any feature of a shopfront which is out of keeping with the street or building is not a valid reason for its replacement with an equally inappropriate feature. The first opportunity should be taken to eliminate bad design and improve the appearance and quality of the shop.

Shopfronts applied to historic buildings need to be in keeping with the style and scale of the building. If the shopfront is being applied to a modern building there may be a greater scope for flexibility. However the design still needs to take into account the style and scale of the surrounding historic buildings and street scene. It is always a good idea to use the principles for the traditional shopfront as a reference when designing a modern shop frontage.

Materials

The selection of materials for the shopfront should always take into account the style of the shopfront, the building in which it sits and the character of the street scene. Do not use too many materials in the design, a masonry or brick stallriser matching the rest of the building with other detailing in



A traditional style timber shopfront

timber may work in some circumstances. Try to avoid the use of reflective materials, i.e. plastics, mosaics polished stone, ceramic tiles and smoked or mirrored glass. Again in some circumstances the use of ceramic tiles may be appropriate, for example if the shop has previously been a butchery the stallriser may already be clad in ceramic tiled. In this case their retention is important to the history and character of the building.

Timber is the traditional material for shopfronts. It is the most versatile and appropriate material for all situations whether a historic building or conservation area or for a contemporary design. The timber should be softwood and finished with paint. Stained hardwood tends to be unsuitable for shopfronts as it is not a traditional material, however in some circumstances it may be acceptable. Timber from unsustainable resources should be avoided.

Stone and brick can be used. In terms of stone smooth dressed stone only should be used with rubble stone being unsuitable. Care should be taken with the selection of stone with preference given to local materials. Brick should only be used in brick buildings and should use matching course, pointing and materials. In Listed Buildings and conservation areas full details of pointing, coursing, bedding and mortar mix will be required.

The use of metal within traditional shopfronts is not acceptable however they can be appropriate for modern shopfronts. Aluminium should be powder coated rather than self-coloured or anodised. Powder coating provides a good finish and is available in a wide range of colours. Unfinished galvanised steel should be avoided, again powder coating is available and provides a suitable finish. Chrome, stainless steel and other polished metals are usually too hard and shiny in appearance and should be avoided.

Colour

Painted shopfronts should be a dark colour. This helps to emphasise the light in the shop and accentuates the products for sale. Generally suitable colours are grey, dark green, dark red, dark blue, cream or white. They should be all one colour except where detailing is picked out by contrasting colours.

Windows and Doors

Large expanses of glass are generally out of keeping with historic buildings. To retain a traditional appearance windows should be divided into smaller units by way of vertical glazing bars, in some older properties further division may be suitable with the use of horizontal glazing bars to provide small window panes. Glazing bars have the added advantage of being a security feature with smaller glazing panels cheaper to replace than larger ones.

Premises which do not require a window display such as banks, building societies and betting shops need to be very careful when occupying buildings with traditional



A traditional window and door

shopfronts or large expanses of glass. It is not acceptable to blank off large areas of glass or apply solid panels behind the glass. This leaves the impression of a blank hostile frontage. This can normally be resolved by reducing the glazed area and increasing solid framing around it. The framing will require careful detailing, possibly with panelling or embellishment. Automatic cash dispensers must be carefully integrated into the design of the

whole front in a discreet functional way, either through existing sections of the glazed frontage or within the recess of the door.

The traditional door is normally part glazed with the lower portion being of timber to provide a kick board. Fully panelled, solid doors, possibly with a fanlight over are suitable for side entrances giving access to the upper floors.

As stated previously the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the arrival of artificial light and shop interiors became deeper in plan. It was at this time entrance doors became recessed. The recess allows for more display space and acts to invite the customer into the shop. The recessed doorway also adds interest and balance by giving the shopfront depth.



A traditional side entrance

Stallrisers

The stallriser should be considered as an integral part of shop front design and therefore moulded timber panels are normally the best form of construction. However stallrisers can be plain timber or masonry construction depending on the building and street front. To achieve a balanced composition, as a rough guide, the stallriser should not be less than 50cm high. They provide a solid base for the display window above and can be reinforced to safeguard against ram raiding reducing the need for freestanding bollards which in turn reduces street clutter. It also provides physical protection at ground level and gives visual weight to the base of the composition.



The blind on the left is an example of bad practice the one on the right is the more traditional alternative

Canopies and blinds

The main purpose of shop blinds is to protect goods from sunlight or protect shoppers from the rain. The traditional form of blind is one of retractable roller or fan type canvas blinds. These are pulled down from the fascia (or more accurately either the cornice above the fascia or the architrave below). Dutch blinds and balloon type plastic blinds are not traditional streetscape features. These modern style canopies tend

to dominate the street scene because they are generally large obtrusive features which are often used for additional advertising space. The use of bright, shiny materials are out of character with the conservation area and as such the installation of these blinds will be resisted, especially given that there is an acceptable traditional alternative.

Illumination

In well lit shopping areas such as Chichester City Centre additional lighting of fascias and shop signs is superfluous. Bright lights are an alien feature in the historic street scene, therefore any proposals for internally or externally lit signage is not likely to be acceptable. Elsewhere in the district subtle minimal impact lighting may be acceptable. General exceptions would be businesses that trade during the evening, for example late night chemists, restaurants or pubs. Lighting can be provided by trough lighting or a minimal number of discreetly positioned spotlights. Internal or halo illumination or swan necked lights are not acceptable. Businesses will normally be expected to turn off external lighting during hours the business is closed.

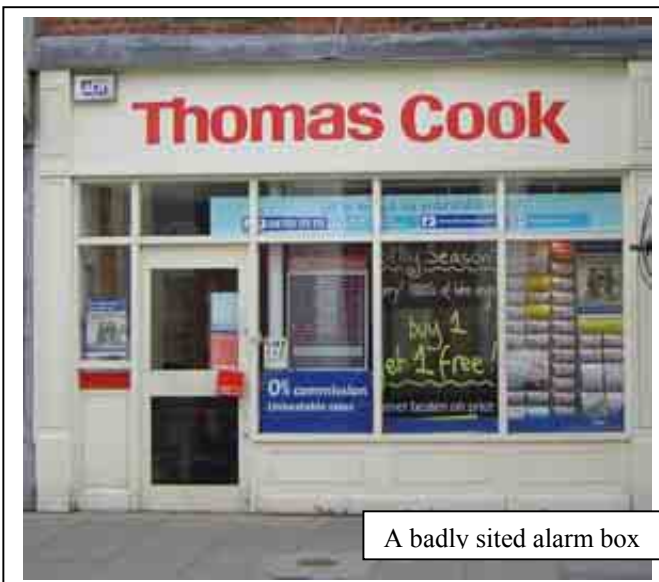
Security

The Council appreciates the need for security. However the character and appearance of existing shopfronts can be detrimentally altered by badly designed ill-conceived security measures. Security measures should be appropriate to the likely risk. Before deciding what measures to take it is advisable to consider the security of the building as a whole taking advice from the police, insurance company or the Police Crime Prevention Officer who operates the secured by design scheme. In many instances break-ins take place to the rear of the property while the front is more at risk from casual vandalism.

With the advent of CCTV in city centres the need for serious measures to deter the casual criminal has been reduced. However shop owners should still explore the need

for additional security measures for individual properties. In terms of design and the character of the area this should be considered carefully when deciding on what security systems to install. If security requirements are included at the initial design stage for a new shopfront, innovative and attractive solutions can usually be found.

Internal systems including alarms, special glass and in some instances internal grills are the best form of security when dealing with historic areas. Alarms can be linked directly to the police, triggered by contact, infra-red or movement sensitive devices. Care should be taken over the siting of alarm boxes. They should be visible without being obtrusive and sited to be inaccessible except with the use of ladders, suitable locations depend upon the individual buildings however just below eaves level is often the easiest and least prominent site. The boxes may be required to be a colour which suits the building or the setting.



A badly sited alarm box

Toughened, laminated or anti bandit glass can be used instead of ordinary float glass. The strength and effectiveness of this glass depends upon thickness and type. The frame strength also needs to be adequate in relation to the strength of glass. Planning permission is not normally required to replace the glass, however if the building is Listed and may retain its old glass it is desirable to keep this, as such Listed Building Consent is normally required for any alterations. Please contact the Conservation Officer at the District Council for further information.

In some circumstances internal shutters may be suitable. These should be of an open mesh design to allow the shop window display to be visible and light to filter through. They should be the same colours as the shopfront. Internal grills do not normally require planning permission, again Listed Building Consent may be required for installation in protected buildings. Please contact the Conservation Officer at the District Council for further information.

External shutters which completely obscure the shopfront present a hostile, bleak street scene and can be counter productive. It invites graffiti and fly posting and can deter people from entering these areas in the evenings when general surveillance is a good form of security. The installation of shutters may damage an historic shopfront and any proposal affecting an historic shopfront or Listed Building should be discussed with the local Conservation Officer before any work commences.

The shopfront itself can be designed to contain security measures. A re-enforced stallriser can protect from ram raiding and ground level attack. The smaller panes of glass and glazing bars can help to strengthen the shopfront making window breaking more difficult and is less inviting for graffiti, smaller panes of glass are also cheaper to replace than large expansive panes of glass. Generally high footfall outside the

shop is a deterrent to casual criminal activity therefore the more inviting the street appears the more likely people are to use it well into the evening. Another way of increasing general use of the street outside shopping hours is to encourage residential units above the shops, this provides natural surveillance outside shopping hours and again can be a deterrent for criminal activities. To discuss living above the shop please contact the local planning department.



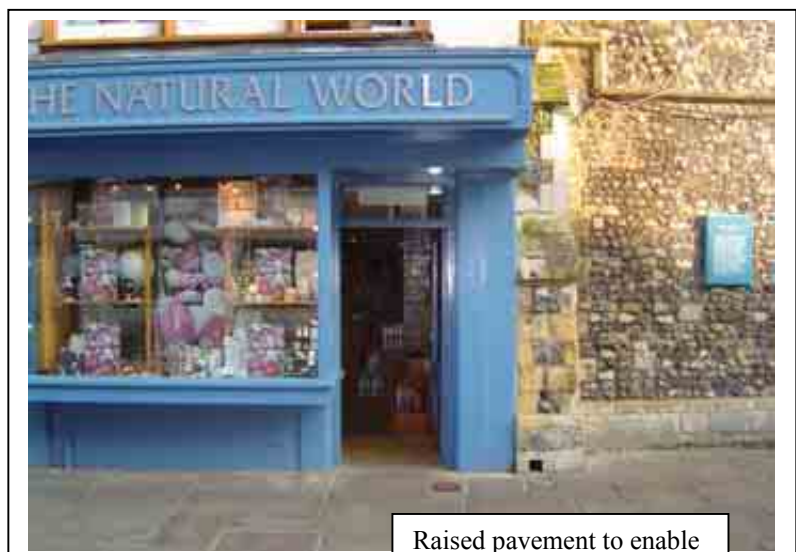
External shutters which completely obscure the shopfront present a hostile, bleak street scene.

Disabled Access

Shop owners have a statutory duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to provide reasonable access for people with disabilities. Where existing shopfronts are of historic interest or are Listed but do not provide reasonable access cases will have to be looked at on an individual basis to see how access can be improved without compromising the original appearance of the shopfront.

Generally access doors should be of adequate width to admit a wheelchair. Where doors have two leaves it should be possible for wheelchair users to obtain access without having to open both doors. Doors should be easy to open by people with limited strength, it is possible to install door opening mechanisms on heavy doors which do not effect the integral character of the shopfront. However automatic doors will not be acceptable in historic shopfronts. Swing doors are often useful as some people find it easier to push a door than pull it towards them.

Frameless glass doors are dangerous as the partially sighted and children may not see them, while wheelchair users may damage or break the glass. Large areas of glass should be restricted with traditional shopfronts being much easier to read by partially sighted people.



Raised pavement to enable disabled and push chair access

Features such as bells and door handles, where possible, should be situated one metre above the ground and for ease of use lever handles are preferable to knob handles.

Self closers, if fitted, should not be so strong as to hinder access to people with limited strength.

Ramps to enable wheelchair and push chair users access to buildings can be suitable in some instances. Internal ramps are preferable to external. It may also be possible to raise the access to the shop to eliminate difficult steps, for further advice please contact the County Council Highways department.

On listed buildings or in sensitive historic areas the needs of disabled people should be taken into account, however the overriding need is to preserve the character of the building or area. Please contact the local planning department for further information.

Advertisements

Fascias

Of all parts of the shop the fascia probably has the most effect on the street scene. The fascia as well as being part of the entablature also provides a place to advertise the name of the shop. Fascia design should suit the building as a whole and should be in proportion to the shopfront and the rest of the property.



Example of bad practice. The fascia is over large for the shopfront and is plastic. The amount of information on the sign is excessive.

Example of good practice. The fascia in proportion with the rest of the shop and is handpainted timber



There should always be a gap between the bottom of the first floor windows and the top of the fascia. The size of the fascia must be in proportion to the shopfront and to the building as a whole. The proportions of the fascia should be long and thin rather than squat. Normally a cornice should be incorporated above the fascia not only to provide a visual break between the ground and first floor but it also protects the fascia and shopfront from the weather.

Fascias in conservation areas should be constructed of timber and painted to a matt finish. In general this treatment is preferred elsewhere. Garish and reflective materials should be avoided. Projecting or box signs are unacceptable in conservation areas and fascia signs must not be applied over existing ones. The boxed out appearance which results is generally undesirable.

Lettering

Traditionally lettering was painted directly onto the fascia. This is still the preferred method of application and will be actively encouraged in conservation areas and on

listed buildings. The lettering should be proportional to fascia depth, lettering must not be too large, as a guide lettering should not be more than 65% of the height or 75% of the width of the fascia and should be centrally placed. It should be noted that some styles of lettering are more appropriate than others. Built up lettering is not usually acceptable. Handpainted lettering in muted colours with a semi-matt or eggshell finish is preferred.



Handpainted timber fascia

Take account of the distance at which the sign will be read. There is no point in overlarge lettering if the street is narrow. Raised or projecting lettering is difficult to read at oblique angles and will not be effective down narrow streets.

In some cases in place of a fascia restrained lettering applied directly to the wall surface or shop window may be appropriate. The application of cut out lettering to a painted timber fascia can be an acceptable alternative provided that the letters stand no more than 10mm away from the fascia. Lettering should still be of a suitable style and in proportion with the rest of the fascia.



An adapted house style to fit in with the original shopfront

The writing on the fascia should be confined to the name of the shop, and in Chichester City the number of the property. The fascia should not be used as an advertising hording. Avoid the use of sponsored fascia signs advertising other products in addition to the name of the trader or retailer. A single clear sign is better than several confusing ones.

Companies with multiple retail outlets will be expected to take a flexible approach to the design of shopfronts and lettering. Standard shopfront and shop sign treatments are not suitable in all areas. The vast majority of house styles can be adapted to suit particular situations. The general principles of design will enable multiple retailers to find viable alternatives which still retain familiar identities.

Hanging and other signs

Any signs or advertisement additional to the fascia are not normally acceptable. In some circumstances additional signage on ground floor wall areas adjacent to the shopfront may be allowed, and only then when the size colouring and layout is appropriate. Signage above the level of the bottom of the first floor windows is not normally acceptable. Within the Chichester Primary and Secondary shopping frontages hanging signs are discouraged as they lead to excessive street clutter.

On main shopping streets where street widths are generous and shop frontage wide fascia signs provide sufficient advertising potential. Hanging signs tend to clutter the

street scene and as such are discouraged in these areas. However along narrower side streets where fascias are not easy to view hanging signs may be considered acceptable. Hanging signs, as fascias, should be constructed from timber and have painted lettering. Traditionally hanging signs were not written but were a symbol showing goods or services on offer in the shop. Innovative designs in this tradition would be welcomed where hanging signs are deemed appropriate.

The use of free standing A boards is actively discouraged as they lead to a cluttered appearance and severely detract from the qualities of the historic shopping environment. Additionally these signs may be placed on footpaths and in a pedestrianised area as such they may well constitute an obstruction to the public highway. The consent of West Sussex County Council, as Highway Authority, is always necessary regarding the erection of these signs.

Window displays and posters

Window displays are a traditional and important feature of the character of historic shopping areas. Therefore the use of window displays is actively encouraged.

In general posters, stickers and window vinyls should be avoided. If they are used they should be as part of an overall window display scheme and should not dominate the glazed area. An easy view into the shop or the window display should always be maintained. As with other signage posters, stickers and window vinyls should not be of garish design and should fit in with the character of the overall property.



A good window display

The window displays themselves can be illuminated by strategically placed spot lights, however the use of internally illuminated signs and light boxes within window displays is not acceptable. In much the same way that internally illuminated fascias are an alien feature to the traditional shop frontage so are the use of light boxes within the window display area.

Necessary Permissions

Planning permission – Commercial units have no permitted development rights therefore much of the work involved in constructing a new shopfront requires Planning Permission. However if the proposals do not materially affect its appearance then planning permission is not required.

Advertisement Consent – The display of advertisements, which include features such as fascia, boards and hanging signs is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. Within the district there are also areas of Special Advertisement Control, these areas operate strict regulations.

Listed Building Consent – Some buildings are deemed to be of sufficient special architectural or historical interest to be listed. Listing does not preclude development but provides a building with protection to ensure that no changes are made which would effect its historic character without first giving full consideration to any proposals. The majority of alterations to a listed building require Listed Building Consent.

Conservation Area Consent – Conservation Area status is given to areas which are deemed to be of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. To protect these areas total or partial demolition of buildings requires a separate Conservation Area Consent.

Building Regulation Consent – Some works may be subject to building regulations. To find out whether works require consent contact the Building Control Department at Chichester District Council or go online at www.chichester.gov.uk

Please note that unauthorised work without the relevant permissions may constitute a criminal offence.

Much of the legislation is complicated and applicants are encouraged to contact the Development Control Section for further advice and to confirm which permissions are required. It should be noted that one proposal may need a number of permissions before any work can commence.

As a Local Planning Authority our first concern is always for the retention of the character of the buildings and historic areas and to this end it is always our preference to work with traders and retailers to find satisfactory outcomes to any issues which may be raised. We would strongly recommend, especially in the case of Listed Buildings or development within conservation areas, that applicants contact the Development Control Section prior to submitting an application. Officers are available to discuss ideas and help achieve an acceptable design solution, in turn this should help to speed up the application process.

Checklist

Good Practice

Repair and restore existing traditional shop fronts

New shop fronts taking design solutions from traditional shop fronts

Handpainted timber fascias below the eill of the first floor window and a well designed cornice

Careful detailing

Vertical emphasis with mullions and pilasters



Traditional materials i.e. painted timber, brick and glass

Internal open grilled shutters where there is a proven need

No illuminated signage except minimal impact lighting in appropriate circumstances

Retractable roller or fan type canvas blinds

Timber part glazed doors

Planning permission, Listed Building consent and Building Regulation Consent where appropriate

Bad Practice

Replacing existing traditional shop fronts

New shop fronts of an inappropriate modern design

An overlarge plastic box fascia projecting out from the shop front

Detailing absent or bland

Horizontal emphasis with undivided glass



Modern materials i.e. aluminium and UPVC

External shutters which obscure shopfront

Internally illuminated or halo lit signage

Dutch blinds and balloon type plastic canopies

Glass doors with no frame

Starting works without the relevant permissions with the result of possible enforcement action