

Shopfronts &
Advertisements In
Conservation
Areas



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

At its meeting on 16th November 2005, the Borough Council's Executive adopted the Shopfronts and Advertisements in Conservation Areas Design Guide as a supplementary planning document. This followed a period of public consultation between 30th September and 28th October 2005.

In addition to the guide, the Borough Council has produced the following supporting documents:-

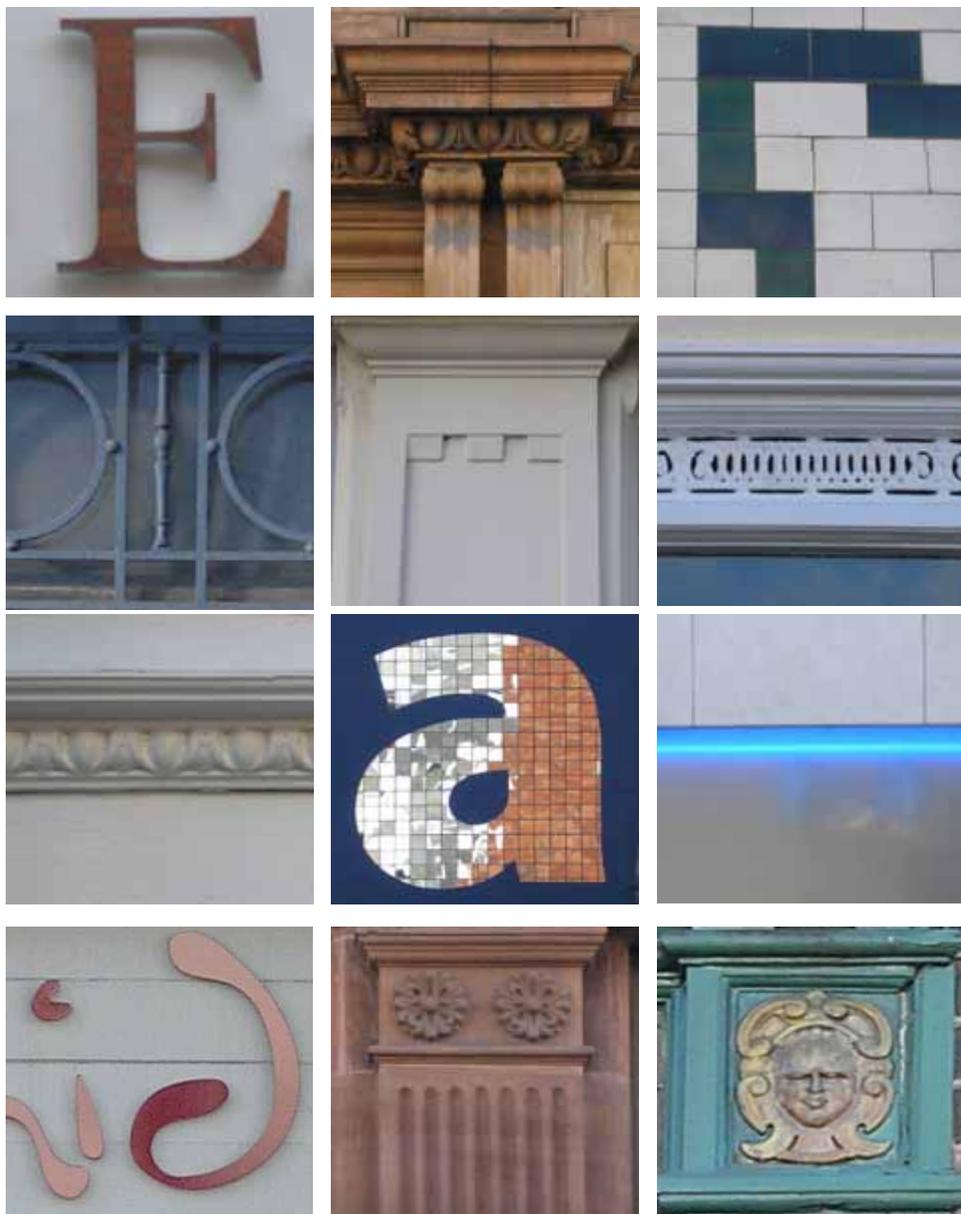
- An Adoption Statement in accordance with Regulation 19(b)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004.
- A Statement of Consultation
- A Statement under Regulation 18(4)(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004. This summarises the main issues raised during the consultation and how these have been addressed in the final version of the guide.
- Sustainability appraisal report.
- A Statement under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI.1633) This summarises how sustainability issues have been integrated into the document, how the sustainability appraisal and consultation have been taken into account, and the reasons for choosing the document as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives.

All of these documents, including the guide can be viewed on the web site www.bedford.gov.uk/planning and additional copies can be obtained at a price of £1.50 (£3.00 including postage and packaging) from the Planning Services reception at the address given below.

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Comments in this document, and use of the accompanying photographs, are made specifically in respect of the quality of a shopfront or advertisement from a planning perspective, and are not intended in any way to reflect on the owner or occupier of the property in question or any business run from there.



CONTENTS

- Introduction 1
- Permissions and Consents 2
 - Planning Permission
 - Advertisement Consent
 - Listed Building Consent
 - Information to be submitted with applications
 - Timescale
 - Enforcement
- Policy 2
- Access For Disabled People 3
- Architectural Maintenance Grant Scheme 3
- Shopfront Design 4
 - Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings
 - Retention of Historic Features
 - High Street
 - Corporate Design
 - The Building as a Whole
 - Building Character and Architecture
 - Building Proportion
 - Materials
 - Surrounding Buildings and Area – Consistent Shopfront Design
- Traditional Shopfront Design 8
 - Fascia or Frieze and Cornice
 - Pilasters
 - Traditional Shopfront Design Examples
 - Corbels, Console Boxes and Capitals
 - Stallriser
 - Windows and Doors
 - Mouldings
- Shopfronts to Modern Buildings 11
- Shopfront Clutter 12
- Canopies and Blinds 12
- Security Shutters 12
- Advertisements 14
- Design 14
 - Materials
- Lettering 15
- Hanging and Projecting Signs 16
- Illumination 17
- Glossary and Further Information 18, 19

Introduction

The purpose of this design guide is to assist owners of shops and other commercial premises in the design of shopfronts and advertisements. Although it is aimed at buildings within conservation areas and the town centre, it does establish a set of design principles and good practice, that could be applied elsewhere (e.g. village and district centres). The Bedford Borough Local Plan (adopted 2002) contains policies relating to both topics, these are supported and expanded within this document. Whilst, for ease of use, shopfront and advertisement design is dealt with separately in this guide, it is essential to understand that the two should be completely **integrated**.

Shopfronts and advertisements have a vital role to play in contributing to the character and interest of the Borough's historic areas, particularly the town centre. A high standard of shopfronts and advertisements creates an enjoyable environment for visitors and shoppers, which is good for the vitality and commercial success of the Borough.

The need for this guide stems largely from changing methods of retailing over periods of time. There is pressure for modern shopfronts and advertisements to provide aggressive visual competition. Too often this results in poorly proportioned shopfronts, overly large fascias and garish signs. Such installations fail to respect their environment and the building on which they are located. All too familiar examples of this are the corporate styles, which are designed regardless of the characteristics of the individual building or locality. This type of design is harmful to the character of conservation areas and can impact upon visitors' enjoyment of such areas, and ultimately its vitality.

Bedford is a town characterised by its historic buildings and environment. This is reflected in the designation of much of the town as a conservation area. The growth of unsympathetic shopfronts has resulted in a loss of quality and interest in many of Bedford's shopping streets. This problem is most acute in conservation areas where the environment is, by definition, of a very high standard, and on buildings listed as being of special architectural or historical importance.

The guide does not seek to impose wholly traditional shopfronts or advertisements, this would be entirely inappropriate on modern buildings. However, the principles embodied in traditional designs will remain relevant in designs of a more contemporary nature. This guide therefore seeks to ensure a high standard of design for new shopfronts and advertisements. These standards are essential to any business in order to promote its service, and essential to the Borough to preserve and enhance its built environment.

Owners and agents are encouraged to approach the Local Planning Authority at an early stage for informal discussion. This can often avoid problems later on, such as a refusal or enforcement action.



Above. Recently restored shopfronts contribute to the conservation area.

Permissions and Consents

Planning Permission

Significant alteration and replacement of shopfronts will generally require planning permission.

Installation of a blind or canopy, shutters or grilles will require planning permission.

Advertisement Consent

The display of advertisements and signs is controlled by The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. The law relating to advertisements is complex. It is advisable to check with the Planning Services Department at the Council whether advertisement consent is required before proceeding, however, the two principal considerations are visual amenity and highway safety.

Listed Building Consent

Any works or alterations which affect the character or appearance of a statutory listed building will require listed building consent. This will normally include any new shopfront or advertisement, alteration to, or removal of, an existing shopfront or advertisement.

Information to be submitted with applications

All applications should include, completed and signed forms, the appropriate fee and accurately scaled drawings. Recent dated photographs of the existing shop (including upper floors) and adjacent units will be helpful in enabling a speedier decision.

Drawings should be at a scale of 1:50 (or larger scale for more detailed schemes or elements) and include:

- Existing and proposed elevations of the proposed shopfront and/or signs showing part of the adjoining shop units and upper floor.

- At least one cross section from the first floor window sill / fascia to pavement, and one cross section to show the plan of the shopfront.
- Detailed design and dimensions of signs.
- All materials and colours should be annotated. Where black and white plans are used, colours should include samples e.g. a clearly marked colour chart rather than a reference number.

Timescale

The Local Planning Authority has a target of eight weeks to determine any of the above applications and consents. Therefore, care should be taken to allow for this time period when programming works. Erection of a shopfront or advertisement prior to the determination will be unauthorised and will be subject to enforcement. Submission of an application does not necessarily mean that a consent or permission will follow.

Enforcement

Where works or alterations are carried out without the relevant consent(s), the Council, where expedient, will seek to proceed with enforcement action. **Unauthorised works to a listed building is a criminal offence and may result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Unauthorised shopfronts or advertisements may result in enforcement action to reverse the works. This can be both costly and time consuming for the both the owner and tenant.**

Policy

This design guide replaces two existing guides, '*Shopfront and Adverts – Design Guide*' (1984) and '*BEDFORD HIGH STREET - Street Facades, Shopfronts and Advertisements – DESIGN GUIDE*' (1991). It is part of the Local Development Scheme which took effect on 1st April 2005, the exact purpose being to provide detailed guidance on the design of shopfronts and adverts in conservation areas, conforming with saved policies TC4 and BE16. It also builds on a number of policies in the Local Plan, against which planning applications are determined. In particular BE16 states that the Borough Council will have regard to its published

design guidance with respect to applications for new shopfronts and advertisements in conservation areas. Policy BE41 gives general criteria for the control of advertisements, and policy BE46 for security grilles. Policies BE9 and BE11 state general principles regarding development within conservation areas and BE19 & BE21 give considerations for listed buildings and their settings. Policy TC4 outlines the high standards expected by the Borough Council for shopfronts and advertisements in the town centre.

Planning Policy Statement 1 *Delivering Sustainable Development* discusses the importance of good design everywhere (not just within conservation areas) and states: *'Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted'*. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* discusses in detail conservation areas and listed buildings. For references see the further information at the end of the design guide.

Access For Disabled People

Bedford Borough Council is committed to improving access to shops and other facilities for everyone - particularly disabled people. Alterations to, and replacement of shopfronts often provide an opportunity to improve physical access to premises. For example, it may be feasible to replace a stepped entrance with a level threshold, or a wider door may be possible.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) places certain duties on shopkeepers to make reasonable physical alterations to improve access to their goods and services. The DDA does not override existing legislation, so works that currently require planning permission, listed building consent, or other statutory permission, will continue to do so. Early pre-application discussions with the Council's Conservation and Historic Buildings Officer and Access Officer will ensure the best chance of securing adequate access measures that also meet conservation requirements.

The Council is able to offer Access Improvement Grants for certain works

that improve the accessibility of small independent shops.

Architectural Maintenance Grant Scheme

This scheme has been in operation for some time, with a number of grants successfully awarded. The aim of the scheme is to improve the visual appearance of and condition of selected buildings in the Town Centre.



Eligible work could include repair and maintenance of traditional features (including shopfronts, advertisements, windows and stonework); the replacement of unsympathetic features (including shopfronts and advertisements); and facelift schemes. The level of grant varies between 40% - 75% of the cost of eligible works, up to a maximum of £5000.

The current scheme is to be reviewed and will then be subject to a promotional campaign. For further information contact planning reception for a free leaflet on the scheme.

Shopfront Design

The aim of this section of the design guide is to improve the appearance of new shopfronts within conservation areas, where they are introduced into historic areas or old buildings, and to encourage a higher standard of shopfronts on newer buildings.

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

Conservation areas are designated in order to protect those areas that are of special character from inappropriate and harmful new development. Within conservation areas there is a requirement to preserve or enhance the character for any proposal. This does not mean that the replacement of existing inappropriate shopfronts with an equally poor design will be acceptable, this type of development will be resisted as supported by Planning Policy Statement 1. Special attention should be paid to the design of new shopfronts so that they have a successful relationship with the building and the character of the area. The design and appearance of any proposal with respect to the character of the conservation area, will be the overriding consideration. Applications for planning permission that harm the character of a conservation area will be refused.

Listed buildings are of special historic or architectural interest. Listed building consent applications for new shopfronts will need to fully embrace the content of this guidance, thus preserving the special character of the building. Applications for listed building consent that harm the character or special interest of a listed building will be refused. Applications that fail to preserve the setting of any listed building will be refused.

Retention of Historic Features

Original or historic shopfronts, or features of interest should always be repaired and retained unless their condition prohibits it. If repair is not

possible then the presumption will be for its faithful reproduction. The removal of original or important shopfronts and features is of detriment to the historic environment and will not normally be permitted.



Above. Original shopfronts retained, as is the symmetry of the original

Bedford High Street

Bedford High Street has a wealth of historic buildings, offering a varied range of ages and styles of architecture. Unfortunately these traditional buildings have suffered in recent years from a turnover of property owners and tenants in addition to a poor shopping environment. This has resulted in the growth of shopfront designs that pay little or no regard to the architecture of the buildings, and use poor quality materials. Special regard will be given to ensuring that the traditional character of Bedford High Street is preserved through a high standard of new shopfronts.

Policy TC9 of the Bedford Town Centre Area Action Plan – Preferred Option, states that the Borough Council will prepare a strategy with the

Bedford Town Centre Company and other partners for the renaissance of the High Street. It outlines particular elements of any such strategy, one of which is *Advising on the design of shopfronts and facades*.

Corporate Design

The Council recognises the needs of commercial property owners. Many companies may wish to use a house style that identifies their marque to the consumer, based on set design, materials, colours and logos. This type of shopfront is not always compatible with the individual character of buildings or their wider context. In these circumstances, such a style must be reconciled with the unique quality of a building or street. However, with co-operation and flexibility, house styles can often be adapted to meet the principles of good shopfront design set out in this document, and fit within the context of a particular site.

The Building as a Whole

Many modern shopfronts are inappropriate or unsympathetic for a common reason, to which all other smaller details are linked - they are designed in isolation with no regard for the character of the building, the overall character of the group of buildings, or an area as a whole. Where a new shopfront is to be installed, it is often useful to obtain older photographs of the original shopfront, this can help to inspire or influence a new design (see 'Further Information' for possible sources).

The most important principle for the design of a shopfront is that it respects the character of the building and the environment that it sits within. This character is made up of a number of factors, for example: age, appearance, materials used, colours, fenestration, proportion and rhythm. Shopfronts should complement the character of the building, they should not effect a contrast between itself and the rest of the building, nor should they slavishly copy traditional designs where this is not appropriate. General principles are addressed below:

Building Character and Architecture

New shopfronts and alterations should have a strong relationship with the architectural composition of the whole building. Each building is

individual in character, and thus a shopfront should be designed to respect this individual character. The result should be a ground floor shopfront that complements the character of the upper floors.



Above. New shopfronts designed in traditional style to suit the building.

Shopfront design should respect and be influenced by:

- *The period of the property, using forms and details that are consistent.* Modern details such as internally illuminated box signs will not be acceptable on older buildings or within conservation areas.
- *The architecture of the building.* A particularly garish or decorative shopfront will jar with a restrained eighteenth or early nineteenth century elevation. Similarly a poor quality, crude shopfront may appear unsympathetic on a building that has any amount of decoration.
- *The style, proportion and layout of windows on a building.* Shopfronts with large areas of plate glass and a horizontal emphasis are likely to sit uncomfortably with windows that have a more vertical emphasis

e.g. sash windows. Similarly a regular window layout at upper floors should be reflected in the design of the shopfront.

Building Proportion

Many older properties in the Borough have a vertical emphasis to their character, having narrow frontages mostly of two or three storeys. Vertical window forms enhance this vertical emphasis. In stark contrast, new shopfronts often introduce an uncompromisingly horizontal element. This is often done in two ways.

Firstly, the design or style of the shopfront itself can give horizontal emphasis through the lack of vertical elements. This can be addressed in a number of ways, for example subdivision of the glass with mullions, the subdivision of the shopfront with pilasters or vertical columns. The positioning of the entrance can also affect the proportions of a shopfront.



Left. A change in height of shopfronts reflects the change in buildings. Despite the change in shopfront height, both retain suitable proportions.
Right. The shopfront has no relation to the width of the building above, causing considerable harm to its character and appearance.

Secondly, when a single shopfront spans more than one building. This alienates itself from the upper floors. This practice can have a severe effect on the apparent individuality of a group of buildings, and should be avoided. Where a shop unit occupies more than one building, the design should articulate the building's proportions and subdivisions, drawing upon the individual character of the buildings, creating more than one shopfront.

Materials



Above. A business spanning two buildings, but with two individual shopfronts.

In deciding what materials are most appropriate for a new shopfront, it is best to examine the original materials used on the upper floors of the building. Where unsympathetic modern materials have subsequently been introduced to the building, those materials should not be adopted. As a general presumption, traditional materials such as timber are acceptable for conservation areas and listed buildings. Historically, timber has been the predominant material used for traditional shopfronts, due to it being versatile, durable, easily maintained and

altered. Modern materials such as aluminium, acrylic and other plastics are unlikely to be acceptable in such historic areas. This is because their simplistic and crude character and appearance, jars with that of the traditional buildings. In modern shopfronts there will be an emphasis on quality, appearance and robustness of materials.

Surrounding Buildings & Area - Consistent Shopfront Design



Above. A parade of shopfronts designed as part of the building, and, for the most part, surviving as built, making an essential contribution to the appearance of the building and the streetscene.



Above. A parade of shops that were also designed as a group. The fascia stretches from the left of the picture all the way to the right, and common shopfront elements remain. Unfortunately this is undermined by varying depths of fascia signs attached over the originals, untidy blinds and poorly designed glazing divisions.

The design of a shopfront should take into account its wider relationship with the surrounding environment. Issues such as height and proportion are important in creating a satisfactory relationship between one shopfront and the next. Overall design proportions such as fascia height, depth and width should complement adjacent shopfronts rather than seek to be overly dominant within the street scene. Continuity will be of prime importance where a group of buildings have been specifically designed as a shopping parade or where a terrace of buildings provides close relationship between the units.

Traditional Shopfront Design

Shops first evolved, in the sense that we know them today, in the eighteenth century. Shopfront design during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was based upon a series of principles that were particularly successful in achieving a suitable relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole. Vertical emphasis was gained through the use of features such as glazing divisions and pilasters, this coincided with the tall, narrow sliding sash windows common in eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings.

Traditional shopfronts were made predominantly of timber, however other materials were used in smaller quantities for specific uses, examples being: stone for detailed features and occasionally, stall risers, metal for grates and blinds, and coloured, glazed, decorative tiles.

Shopfronts did not span past the boundaries of a property and respected the divisions between buildings. They were also respectful of their neighbours, both fascias and cornices were broadly in line with one another.

Surviving original shopfronts can serve as a reference point for other proposed shopfront schemes.

Fascia or Frieze and Cornice

The fascia on traditional shopfronts provides the principal space for advertising. Earlier shopfronts had vertical fascias whereas later designs often included downward canted or sloping fascias, to make them more easily visible from the street. Above the fascia is a cornice, a projecting decorative moulding to throw water from the shopfront and to give a visual 'cap'. Cornices mostly had lead flashing or coping to protect them.

Fascias should not be excessively deep or high, and should generally be in proportion to the rest of the building. As a general rule, they should not be greater than 1/5th of the height of the shopfront (cornice to floor). They should not cover interesting features on the building and must be kept clear of the first floor window sills. Fascias can sit on top of pilasters

or columns, or be surrounded by corbels, console boxes or capitals. In the case of the latter the fascia should not project as far from the building face as the elements that frame it (i.e. consoles or corbels). The fascia should contain only the name or trade of the business, and the street number. Large areas of acrylic, Perspex or other shiny or reflective materials are unacceptable, as are internally illuminated boxes or built up signs.



Left. An example of a traditional sloped fascia. **Right.** A poorly designed shopfront. This is for a number of reasons but primarily because it has abandoned the original high level, sloped fascia. The knock on effect is that the shopfront now appears overly squat and horizontal.

Pilasters

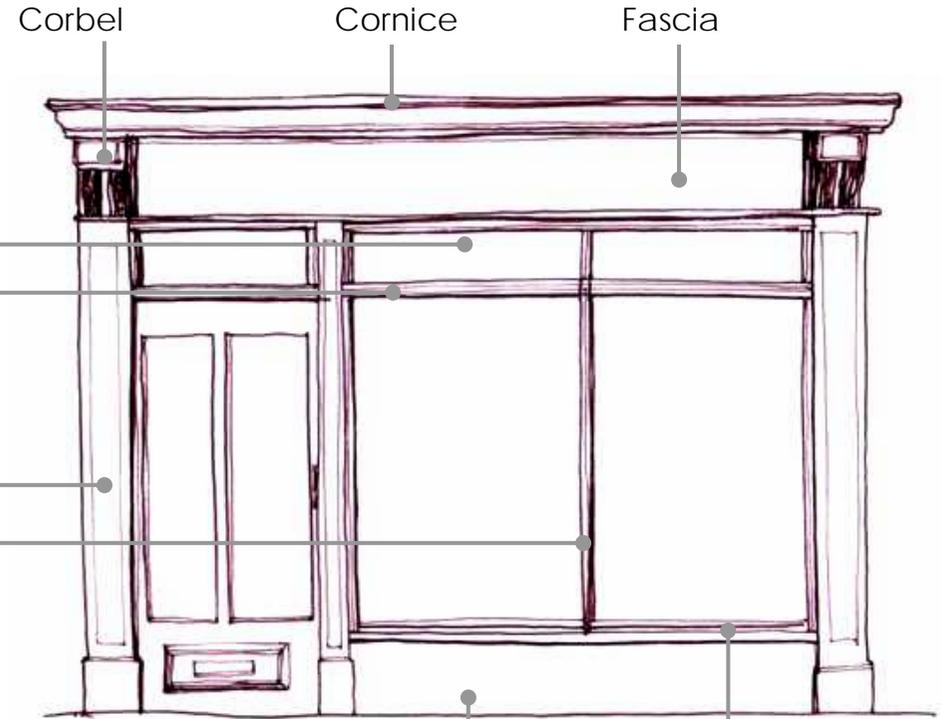
Pilasters are the squared columns built in to traditional shopfronts, used to define the width of a shop, helping to articulate one building from the next. The pilasters visually support the fascia and give vertical rhythm. Where a shopfront contains a separate entrance for upper floors, pilasters are often used either side to define its presence. Their design and appearance can range from simple to highly decorated.

Traditional Shopfront Design

Examples

Two very different examples of shopfronts in Bedford town centre. Both demonstrate the basic principles of traditional shopfront design.

Cornice with lead flashing Fanlight Decorative corbel



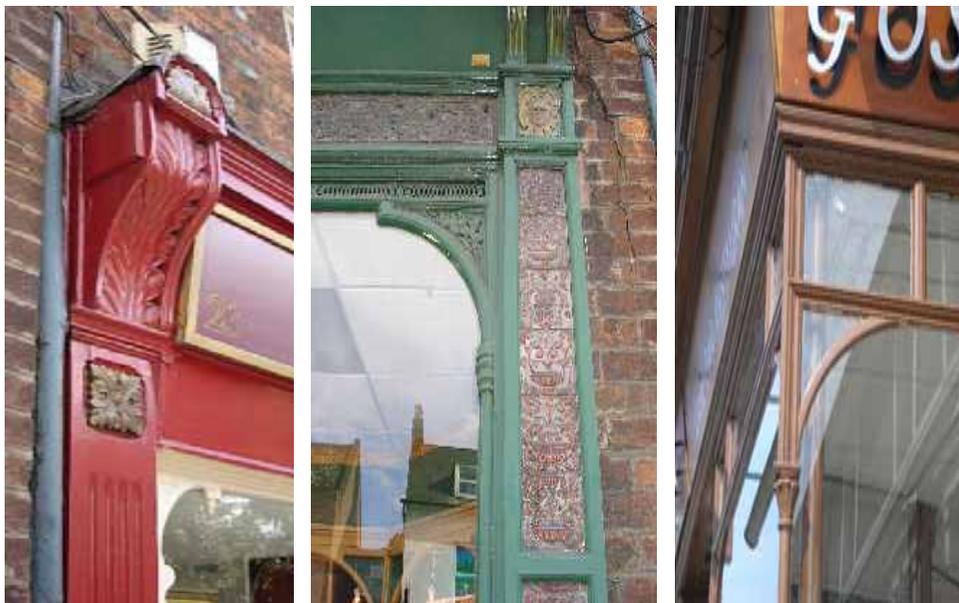
Clerestorey
Transom
Pilaster
Mullion

Sloping fascia
Frieze
Decorative timber bracket mouldings
Pilaster with recessed panels
Colonette with decorative mouldings
Recessed doorway with mosaic tiled floor
Stallriser

Stallriser Sill

Corbels, Console Boxes and Capitals

These contain the fascia by being placed at either end, sitting above the pilaster. They are a key feature of traditional shopfronts, often modern equivalents are over simplistic or crude. Traditional designs can be highly decorative and the range of designs is enormously varied.



Above. Examples of corbels, pilasters, the use of decorative tiles and slender window ironwork.

Stallriser

The stallriser occupies the gap between the glazing and the pavement level and is essential to provide a visual base. Excessively low or small stall risers should be avoided as they fail to add weight to 'anchor' the shopfront, sometimes making it appear top heavy. The presence of a stallriser reduces the likelihood of low level vandalism and damage to the glazing. Stallrisers often include relief panels, and vary in material, though normally timber, render or stone.

Windows and Doors

In general, excessively large unbroken areas of glass should be avoided, in favour of vertically subdivided areas, based on the character of the existing building. Recessed entrances can help to overcome the scale of window panes. The plane of the glazing should be slightly recessed from that of the pilasters. Mullions, transoms and glazing bars should be profiled to respect the original windows of the building. Transoms should pick up the height of the door where possible.



Above. Shopfront showing recessed central doorway. Also note doorway serving upper floors designed as part of the shopfront.

The appearance of the window arrangement should not be affected by low or internal suspended ceilings. Full height glazing is easily achieved through the use of opaque glass in the clerestory windows, or a raked front to the ceiling. (Also, see second photograph accompanying facias). Interest can be added to the clerestory by the use of stained glass and/or leaded glass.

Doors should be designed to suit the character of the building, which will not be necessarily of modern proportions, particularly in respect of their height. Doors are best located in the centre of the shopfront or adjacent to one of the pilasters. The lower solid panel of the door, or kick plate, should relate directly to the height of the stallriser.

Mouldings

When designing and specifying the shopfront, it is crucial that attention is paid to the smaller details, such as mouldings. It is important that the shopfront is good quality and robust. Often mouldings on flat timber panels are created using beading or 'picture rail'. This does not give adequate relief, due to its modest dimensions, and because it is applied to the surface, it suffers badly from weathering and wear, and is often found missing or removed after a relatively short period. A more cost effective solution over the longer term is to rebate mouldings into a panel (e.g. fluted columns). This is permanent, robust and not as prone to weathering.

Shopfronts to Modern Buildings

Where the proposed shopfront is to a more modern building, many of the principles of traditional shopfront design will still apply, however this will leave some flexibility in terms of design and style. The design and materials must be of a high quality, and be compatible with the character of the building and the area.

When applying for a shopfront of a more modern or contemporary nature, the need for a design statement or methodology is even more so than a traditional shopfront. This is because the range of options available in a contemporary solution is greater and it is important that a particular approach is both explained and justified.



Above. Modern shopfront on a modern building. Although the building has vertical elements, it is characterised by horizontal row of first floor windows. Shopfront echoes this with horizontal proportion. Quality of materials, clean design and elegant fascia sign make it successful.

Left. Again a simple, elegant shopfront whose colour and design suits the simple character of the modern building.

Shopfront Clutter

New shopfronts should not introduce additional clutter to the front of the building. Indeed, new shopfront schemes should attempt to tidy, hide or remove where unneeded, clutter such as; cables, wires, alarm boxes, intercoms, blinds and security shutters, lamps, unused brackets. Projecting signs can also add to visual clutter (see the advertisements section).

Canopies and Blinds

Canopies and blinds were popular in the Victorian period and the first half of the twentieth century, though their use now is not always considered appropriate. In some circumstances they can obscure architectural features, and where in numbers, they can have a damaging and disruptive effect on the street scene.

Canopies and blinds should only be used where the particular use of the shop requires shading from direct sunlight. They should be capable of being closed away into a recessed area built into the shopfront on a daily basis, so as not to obscure the shopfront when not in use. Blinds should be made of canvas and be the width of the fascia. Dutch type canopies will not normally be acceptable.

If there is an original blind built into the shopfront, the presumption will be for this to be used rather than the installation of an additional unit.

Security Shutters

After opening hours many commercial premises require security for protection of their goods. However, many people use the town centre outside of normal trading hours, for example evenings, Sundays and bank holidays. The appearance of shops after normal hours has an important impact on shoppers and visitors perception and impression of an area.



Top, left. Solid external shutters are harmful to the character of conservation areas and the vitality of their retail environments. **Top, right.** Solid shutters can attract graffiti and vandalism. When closed, the smaller shutter completely obscures the shared, splayed doorway. **Above,** three different shutter types, with varying impact, external lattice, internal lattice, and external with holes.

External solid shutters can have a deadening effect on the appearance of both the shopfront and the shopping area itself, creating a bleak and hostile streetscene. They are also susceptible to graffiti. For these reasons, solid external shutters are not acceptable. Where possible shutters should be of the link or lattice type, and contained inside the shop, so that the shopfront and its contents are still visible after opening hours. The colour of the shutters should not cause them to detract from the character of the building or the area.



Left. External retractable lattice ties in with metal fretwork that is a feature of the shopfront. **Right.** Solid shutter has an adverse effect on a traditional shopfront.

There are alternative methods of giving protection against theft and vandalism. Toughened or laminated glass (whichever is most suitable) can provide a lower key solution to direct attack. Internal lighting of shopfronts and lighting of entrance recesses can deter vandalism and antisocial behavior to these areas.



Above, left. As previous page, internal lattice. **Above, right.** Internal shutters behind glass on a modern building, the dark colour makes them barely visible from distance. **Below.** Solid shutters having deadening effect during the day.



Advertisements

Advertisements by their very nature are designed to attract attention in order to generate business. Unfortunately shop owners are often no longer happy to use a single fascia.

of design, benefits the shopping environment and in turn business owners. Again, corporate style and materials may have to be adapted in order to be sympathetic to their location. Also see the 'Fascias' section above.

Design

Form

New advertisements should respect the character and style of the building and the area in question, in terms of design, materials and location. Conservation areas, listed buildings and other environmentally sensitive situations will require advertisements of a high standard.



Left. Untidy and overly busy signage is confusing and does not get message across. Large banner sign is harmful to the appearance of a traditional building. **Right.** Simple, clear, and well proportioned fascia signs appear tidy and elegant and give a clear message.



Left. Poor advertising, glossy, reflective box fascia sign, two projecting signs, various posters fixed to the shop window, and a number of boards on the footpath. Also, the original fascia is unused and the shopfront structure is weak and undefined. **Right.** Poorly considered advertising hides the large windows that are part of the character and charm of this building.

A simplistic approach to competition has dictated that each sign should be bigger and more conspicuous than the previous one. This has led to advertisements whose size and design detract from the character of traditional buildings and undermine the inherent quality of an area, in particular Bedford High Street. It has also led to the same thing being said over and over again which has the same damaging effect but this of course also devalues the message that is being tried to put across. A consistent approach towards advertisements to ensure a high standard

The design of an advertisement must respect its environment, and should be an integral part of the shopfront. New advertisements should not obscure architectural features such as windows, shopfront details, string courses, cornices and corbels. They should sit comfortably with the architecture of the building and be appropriate within the street scene. Signs that give a 'tacked on' appearance are not acceptable, for example protruding boxes. This type of signage detracts from the special character of historic settings. The number of advertisements should be kept to a minimum, and advertisements on side walls of buildings should be avoided. Excessive amounts of signage serve only to clutter and detract.

Materials

The materials for advertisements should relate directly to the character of the building and the immediate area. Large areas of acrylic, perspex or other shiny, glossy or reflective materials are not acceptable. Traditional materials such as timber can be used for fascias and hanging signs. Other materials can be used for lettering though this will depend upon the type of advertisement and the quantities involved. The colour



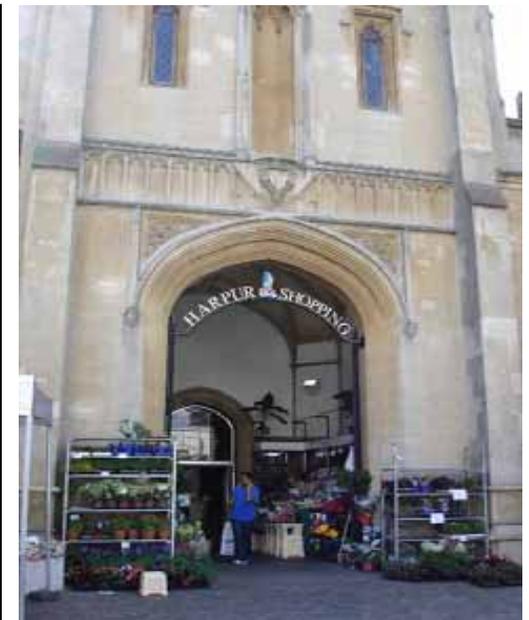
should be in harmony with the rest of the building and street scene.

Lettering

Lettering should be painted directly to the surface of, or letters individually applied to the fascia. Consideration should be given to colour and type of lettering. The size of lettering should reflect the amount of room available, appearing neither too cramped nor too small. The style of lettering should suit the appearance of the building, and be clear and easy to read. Generally, lettering should not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the depth of the fascia, though this does not mean that all lettering should be of this proportion.



Left. Non glossy, metal, low key signage. Location, type and colour of lettering respect the design and detail of the building. **Above.** Individual letters reduce impact on the appearance of the building. **Right.** Detailed facades provide more of a problem in locating and will require a specific solution. Here signage is provided in the opening rather than on the building.



Hanging and Projecting Signs

Hanging and projecting signs can add interest to a shopping environment. However too many signs of this type can cause clutter in the building and street scene, especially where buildings are in multiple use.



Above. Repeated poor quality hanging/projecting signs at various levels, serves only to harm the appearance of this group of buildings. What exactly is being achieved here is questionable.

Their use should be restrained and should be limited to one per unit where there is adequate space to be located, and where their cumulative effect will not detract from the character of an area. Normally projecting or hanging signs should be located at fascia level, their height should be not more than that of the fascia, and generally should not harm the appearance of the rest of the shopfront. There may be cases where a different location will be accepted but only in cases where the Local Planning Authority feels that the visual amenity of the area is not harmed.



Left. A traditional hanging sign on wrought iron bracket, no illumination.
Right. Illumination is integrated under the projecting cornice, hidden from most angles.

Brackets and arms can be simple or decorative but should suit the character of the building. Fixing of trough lights to brackets or any other part of the hanging sign should be avoided as they clutter and detract otherwise neat installations.

Illumination

The use of illumination should be kept to a minimum. Non-illuminated signs are preferable to those that are illuminated, though weight may be given to those uses that operate outside normal opening hours. Illumination of shopfronts should not interfere with the design of a shopfront. Internally illuminated signs will not normally be appropriate in conservation areas or on listed buildings due to their unsympathetic appearance. External lighting should be as discreet as possible and be the minimum needed to perform the task. Large trough lights and rows of lamps should be avoided due to their visual impact. Halo lighting can be acceptable as long as it does not have a detrimental effect on the size of the lettering and the design of the shopfront. All wires and services should be completely hidden. Large floodlights should be avoided.

As above, projecting or hanging signs should generally remain unilluminated, as methods of illumination normally produce either a bulky or boxy sign, or clumsy external lighting arrangements.

Glossary

Area Action Plan - used to provide a planning framework for areas of change and areas of conservation. Area Action Plans have the status of Development Plan Documents.

Bay – a principal vertical division of a building, often marked by pilasters.

Bedford Development Framework - the local name of the Local Development Framework for Bedford Borough Council.

Capital – the head of a pilaster or column, which is larger than the column itself. Often carved, moulded and decorated.

Casement – a type of window, hinged on the vertical part of the outside frame.

Chamfer – a flat surface usually cut at 45 degrees to adjacent surface.

Clerestorey – a row of windows, in shopfront terms, a smaller row above the transom line that separates them from the main windows.

Colonnade – a small column, or a thin circular shaft giving a vertical emphasis.

Columns – an upright, freestanding, vertical support, with circular cross section. Made up of base, shaft and capital.

Conservation Areas - under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities are able to designate as conservation areas any “ areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Console – similar to the capital. Sit on top of the pilasters and frame the fascia. Often very decorative, carved from timber or stone.

Corbel – a block usually made from stone or wood which projects out from a surface to support an arch, beam or moulding.

Cornice – the projecting structure at the top of the fascia (or entablature).

Development Plan (Structure Plan, Local Plan) - under the Planning Acts, this is the prime consideration in the determination of planning applications. Under the new system it consists of all Development Plan Documents and the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Entablature – the part of the structure that lies upon the columns or pilasters.

Façade – the front face of the building which may be in particular architectural style not necessarily reflected in the rest.

False Ceiling – a second ceiling constructed below the level of the original one.

Fanlight – window over a doorway.

Fascia – more common phrase for the entablature or frieze. It is the flat panel that sits on top of the pilasters or between consoles and capitals. Serves as a backboard for the main advertisement.

Fenestration - the arrangement or plan of windows in a building.

Fluting – shallow channels or grooved running vertically down a pilaster or column.

Frieze – the middle piece of an entablature. In respect to shopfronts, this is essentially the fascia, though the term can refer to a decorated band either just above or below.

Glazing Bar – traditionally narrow piece of timber that divides windows into panes. Can often be decorative, especially mullions.

Leaded Lights – windows where panes are divided (normally into diamonds or squares) by strips of lead. Not to be confused with modern day equivalent of look-a-like material to the exterior face of windows.

Lights – the openings between the upright posts or millions of a window.

Listed Buildings - under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Secretary of State for National Heritage has a statutory duty to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. To reflect the importance of Graded I, II* or II buildings, permission is required for works which may affect their character or appearance.

Moulding – moulded or worked surfaces given to projecting parts or edges of a building, or in this case, shopfront. Mainly ornamental but can be functional.

Mullion – upright, vertical dividing bar in a window.

Ovolo Moulding – a rounded convex moulding, usually a quarter of a circle in profile, often used in window joinery.

Pier or Pillar – freestanding support, square in section.

Pilaster – pillar engaged in a wall.

Preferred Option Document - produced as part of the preparation of Development Plan Documents, and is issued for formal public participation as required by Regulation 26.

Return – the point at which a wall (or other feature) continues at an angle to the original orientation.

Reveal – the part of a window or door return (or jamb) that is not covered by the frame, and can therefore be seen.

Sash Window – a window consisting of two vertically sliding sashes. Sashes are the (traditionally) wooden frame holding the glazing.

Stallriser – the base of the shopfront between the pavement and the sill of the window, contained between the pilasters.

Sill – the timber or stone horizontal feature at the bottom of a doorway or window opening.

Splay – the sloping edge around a doorway or window which expands the opening along the depth of the wall.

Storey – a vertical division of a building and the space between two floors.

Supplementary Planning Documents – (including this document) provides supplementary information in respect of the policies in Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the Development Plan and are not subject to independent examination.

Transom – horizontal dividing bar across a window.

Further Information

For matters regarding whether planning permission or advertisement consent is required please contact the Duty Planner, Planning Services Department.

To discuss an informal proposal within the conservation area or on a listed building, please contact either the Conservation and Historic Buildings Officer or the Assistant Conservation Officer.

Planning:

- Planning and Housing Services Department, Bedford Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002
- Planning Policy Statement 1 '*Delivering Sustainable Development*' 2005
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 '*Planning and the Historic Environment*' 1994

Shopfronts and Advertisements:

- English Historic Towns Forum - *Book of Details & Good Practice in Shopfront Design* 1993
- English Historic Towns Forum - *Shopfronts and Advertisements in Historic towns* 1991
- Morrison, Kathryn A. – *English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History* 2003

Research Sources:

- Bedfordshire County Council Records Office & Archives – Located at County Hall.
- Local Publications such as books that contain old photographs.

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