

Shopfront Design Guide



Introduction

This Guide provides information and advice for shop owners who want to alter or renew their shopfronts or advertisements.

A well designed shopfront will give a good impression of the business. Consequently, if all the shopfronts and signs in a street are attractive, this is a benefit to all the traders. Epsom Town Centres, Ewell Village Centre and the numerous local centres and shopping parades can all serve as a traders' shop window, a place in which it is pleasant to wander around, and an attractive shopping centre.

Before you decide on a design for your shopfront, please contact the planning office for advice. You can also establish what drawings & other information you need to provide, & what fees are payable. A checklist illustrating the consents you will need is on the back page.

Most of the design principles that follow will be known to architects and other qualified designers, who can use the document as a checklist. Accurate drawings, showing the adjoining buildings, are essential.

Please remember that this is guidance only and your application will always be considered on its merits. For Historic Buildings and Conservation areas particularly, a standard design approach will usually not be appropriate, and shopfront work there will need special design skills.

If you have any general questions about the advice set out in this Guide then please come and talk with one of our Planning Officers during the Planning Hour to get some advice.

If you are thinking about submitting an application to change your shopfront then we would encourage you to take advantage of our pre-application advice process, details of which can be found at the [following link](#).



The General Approach

As a shop owner your shopfront is important to your business and you will want to make it attractive. Many existing shopfronts are attractive period pieces and should be kept as they are. But some are not; some modern signage can be brash and crude. If everyone installed shopfronts made up of bright signs, crude lettering and flashy displays they would damage the character and appearance of the place as a whole. The installation of new shopfronts should provide an opportunity to create something that is attractive and more suited to the character of the Borough. The Borough does not accept the premise that a shop which is part of a chain or group must incorporate a house style.

A shop frontage design usually has four elements;

- **The Shopfront Frame:** an outer frame, consisting of the pilasters or columns, & a fascia or cornice, all of which was probably designed as a part of the original building;
- Within this is **the Shopfront itself**; this is a lighter infilling structure, with display windows and entrance;
- Then there is **signage & advertising**, this is usually located on the fascia, forming part of the shopfront frame. There are specific issues relating to illumination and the placement of signs which need careful consideration;
- Then there are **other elements** such as security grilles, blinds, and alarms.

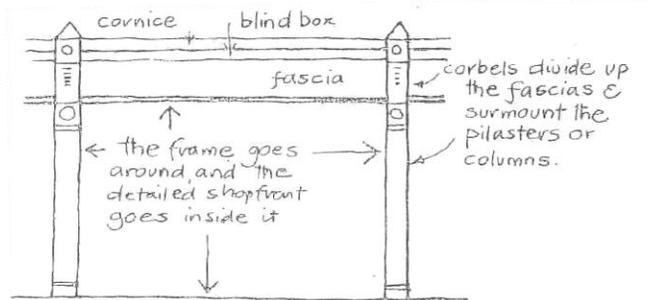
Conservation Areas

Both Epsom Town Centre and Ewell Village are within Conservation Areas including many historic buildings. This means that nearly all the shopping frontages in the Town Centre and Ewell Village are within a Conservation Area. This presents an opportunity to create a much more attractive shopping character, and raise the standard of shopfront design. There are also many historic buildings, particularly at the western end of Epsom Town Centre. Where appropriate this Guide provides specific information and advice on those shopfronts located within Conservation Areas.

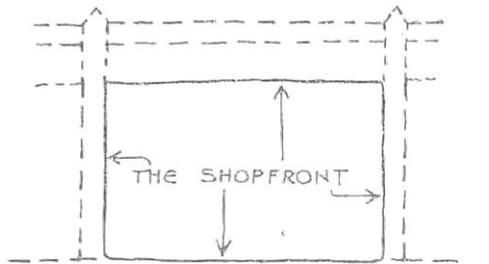
Whilst the Borough's other shopping area, such as Stoneleigh Broadway, Kingston Road and Castle Parade are not designated as Conservation Areas, good shopfront design still has a big part to play in making those shopping areas attractive places for shoppers to visit and spend money.

The Shopfront Frame

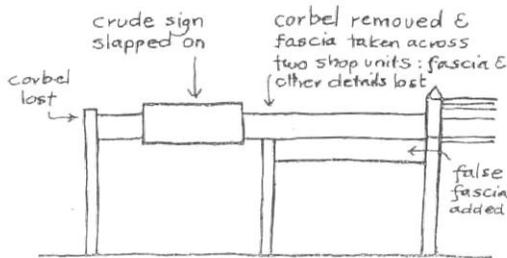
The frame is usually designed as a part of the whole building, and the architectural mouldings and details should be preserved; where these features have been lost, particularly on historic buildings, they should be replaced.



THE SHOPFRONT FRAME



THE SHOPFRONT WITHIN THE FRAME



WHAT TO AVOID

A good frame is a help in any design as it will relate to the rest of the building, & it then allows for a variety of design in the actual shopfront. The fascia and cornice provide continuity. Pilasters or columns separate one shopfront from one another. If these features have been damaged or removed, we will ask you to put them back as they were.

Sometimes, these original features are still present beneath later alterations. You should consider their repair or replacement – especially important features, such as the cornice, inclined fascia, corbels and pilasters.

You should consider working with adjoining shopkeepers and agree to paint pilasters/corbels in a single colour. This helps to create a more attractive, unified appearance.

The Shopfront Itself

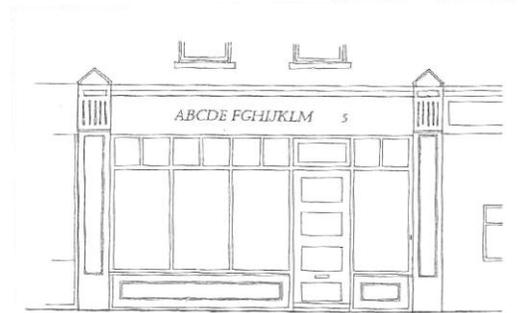
If your shop is part of a terrace or parade, and if an original shopfront still exists nearby, we believe that re-creating the original design should be the aim. Otherwise, you may be required to use smaller glass panes and vertical proportions. Plastic or aluminium framing should be avoided as these materials are unattractive and uncharacteristic of the Borough. Stall risers are usually desirable and perform a very useful security role.

Thresholds should be “level” to aid access for all.

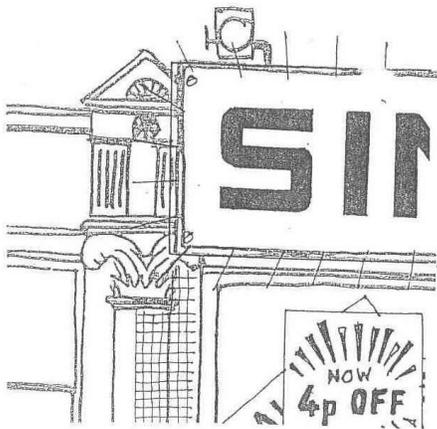
Signage

Lettering and signs should reflect the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

If your shop is part of a national group with standard lettering or colours, you should consider modifying these so that the signage fits in with the existing character and appearance of the area.



You should avoid using harsh colours. Although we recognise that some businesses will have a ‘house-style’, in certain sensitive locations, this should be adapted to reflect the existing character and appearance of the neighbourhood.



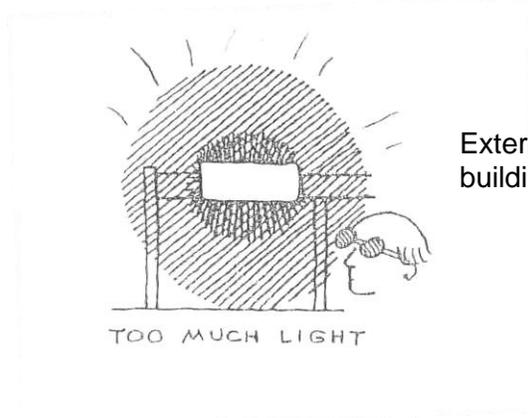
Signs should not be box type as these often protrude; should not intrude onto cornices, corbels, pilasters, or extend across two bays, or downwards below the original fascia.

Signs should only be placed above glazed shopfronts, or entrances, not blank walls; and only at street level.

Projecting signs are not appropriate on listed buildings as they will have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the building.

When used in other situations, they should be slim in profile, not of a box type and not be internally illuminated. They should be located below first floor sill level, not fixed to corbels or cornices, maintain a clearance of 2.6m above pavement and be at least 1m from the kerbline. Individually and well-designed hanging 3D sculptural signs can lend interest. A well designed hanging sign in keeping with the location can lend interest to a shop. There should be no signs at first floor or above, a possible exception being discreet frosted type lettering on windows occupied by any office firms on the first floor. On listed

and locally listed buildings, lettering should be small in scale, with painted letters, or block cut out letters mounted onto fasciae with muted colours. The general rule is that the stronger the colour, then smaller the sign should be.



External illumination should not be used on listed buildings.

On 1930's neo-Georgian terraces, building fixtures such as signage, light fittings and security alarms should be kept off the stone fascia bands and pilasters/columns. This applies in particular to Epsom High Street [East]

All fasciae should contain a name sign, a telephone number and a street number, to aid identification.

Applications for new shopfronts should take the opportunity to allow for the removal of surplus wiring, brackets, satellite dishes and other extraneous fixtures, and for the repairing/reinstatement of materials. Drawings should show the context for the proposal, i.e. the building above, and the adjoining shopfronts.

Conservation Areas

New or replacement signage should reflect the setting of the surrounding Conservation Area and its buildings and must relate to the use of the premises. It is particularly important that new signage avoids harsh colours and is adapted to reflect the existing character and appearance of the building on which it sits and the wider area.

Projecting signs should be slim in profile, not box signs, and not be internally illuminated.

Lettering should be small in scale, with painted letters, or block cut out letters mounted onto fasciae with muted colours. We recommend that you apply the general rule that the stronger the colour, then smaller the sign should be.

Internal illumination should not be used on signs, fasciae or lettering, apart from the 'green cross' chemist's sign.

Plastic & shiny materials should be avoided in Conservation Areas; matt surfaces and painted timber/plaster/metal are the natural materials of choice in these locations.

Other Elements

Other fixtures such as burglar alarms and switches should be integrated into the design, taking note of carvings, fittings, stained glass etc.

Security shutters should be mounted internally. This is to avoid creating a “dead” character to the shopping area outside of trading hours. New security shutters should be of a ‘pierced’ design to allow views through into the shop. Their box housing can be mounted internally and should therefore not protrude externally.

Blinds are welcomed, providing cover and shade from the elements. They should be integrated into the overall design and not intrude onto the shopfront frame.

Policy Background

[The Epsom & Ewell Core Strategy](#) states that the settings of Conservation Areas and other historic areas will be protected and enhanced (**Policy CS5**), and that development should build on the distinctive character of Epsom Town Centre and develop its sense of place (**Policy CS14**).

[Plan E Epsom Town Centre Area Action Plan](#) aims to improve the visual appearance of buildings in the Conservation area (**Policy E9**).

[The Borough-wide Local Plan 2000](#) refers to the suitability and importance of:

- the shopfront in relation to the overall appearance of the building (**Policy BE21/3**)
- the materials (**Policy BE21/4**)
- the suitability of any advertisements in regard to their lettering, colour, materials & illumination (**Policy BE21**).

The Plan’s Technical Appendix says that in Conservation Areas and on listed buildings:

- internally illuminated signs will normally be discouraged (**4.10/1/Ai**);
 - signs should be in keeping with the architectural detailing or the Conservation area character ((iii);
 - and that displays above fascia level will not normally be permitted (vii).
- [The Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan](#) identifies the need for a new “Design Code” for shopfronts and fasciae in the Conservation Area (Paragraph 9.2). [The Ewell village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan](#) suggests that Planning Officers should seek to offer useful advice to the owners of shops in the village to improve the design of their shopfronts (Paragraph 8.2).

Shopfront Design Checklist

Basic Design Elements	Suggested Approach
1. Shopfronts across the Borough usually form part of a complete building, including parades of shops, and should be a part of its overall design.	Ensure that the application drawings have a plan, section and elevation. They must also show adjoin buildings and the rest of the building above the proposed shopfront.
2. The main surrounding 'frame' to the shop; comprised of pilasters, corbels and fascia should be respected and not covered over. They should be replaced if they have previously been removed – this is the most important part of the shopfront design.	Identify a local example that retains original details. Keep the fascia narrow, repair the corbels which separate the fasciae, repair the pilaster and its mouldings, avoid cladding it and seek to paint it in a single unifying colour (subject to the agreement of adjoining owners).
3. The detailed design of the shopfront can usually vary if the main elements listed in this table are adhered. In Conservation Areas and on listed buildings use vertical proportions or consider using smaller glass panes for windows.	Use timber or painted metal – avoid using bare metal, aluminium or plastic. Provide a stall riser in timber/ tile, not in brick or mosaic. Avoid a second fascia and take windows up to the underside of the original fascia. If internal ceiling levels are lower than the bottom of the fascia then set back the glass line.
4. Doors and entrances must be level or only slightly sloped to provide access to all customers.	Avoid the need for steps by setting the door back. Never allow a door to open outwards over the footway.
5. Fascia signwriting must be painted or have applied letters. It must not be internally lit. Outside of Conservation Areas external lights may be acceptable.	Always put a sign on the fascia. Always put a property and telephone number either over the door or somewhere within the shopfront.
6. Avoid projecting signs in Conservation Areas or on listed buildings.	Outside Conservation Areas and on unlisted buildings slim-profile signs, but not box-signs must not be internally lit. Never fix projecting signs to corbels.
7. Don't apply advertising to upper floors.	Possible exception is discreet frosted type lettering applied to first floor windows to advertise upper floor commercial uses.
8. Where they are necessary, security shutters should be mounted internally.	Use a pierced or perforated shutter design that allows views into the shop and avoids a forbidding appearance when the shop is closed. The shutter box must be placed internally, rather than projecting from the shopfront.
9. Integrate burglar alarms and electrical switches into the design of the shopfront.	These should not be placed above the cornice. Take the opportunity to remove redundant wires, brackets and other external fixtures.
10. Consider the provision of a blind to	These should be integrated into the overall

provide cover from the elements.	design of the shopfront and not intrude onto the shopfront frame. Provide 2.5m for minimum headroom.
11. Upper floors need to have access, particularly if they are being used for a separate use (such as residential or office uses). This will ensure that they are fully used and contribute to the vitality and viability of the street.	Ensure that a separate entrance to the upper floors from the street is retained and not used to widen the shop frontage.
12. Information about your planning application to change your shopfront will help your customers understand what you are planning to do.	When you are making a planning application relating to your shopfront take the opportunity to promote your improvements and display your consent and drawings on site.