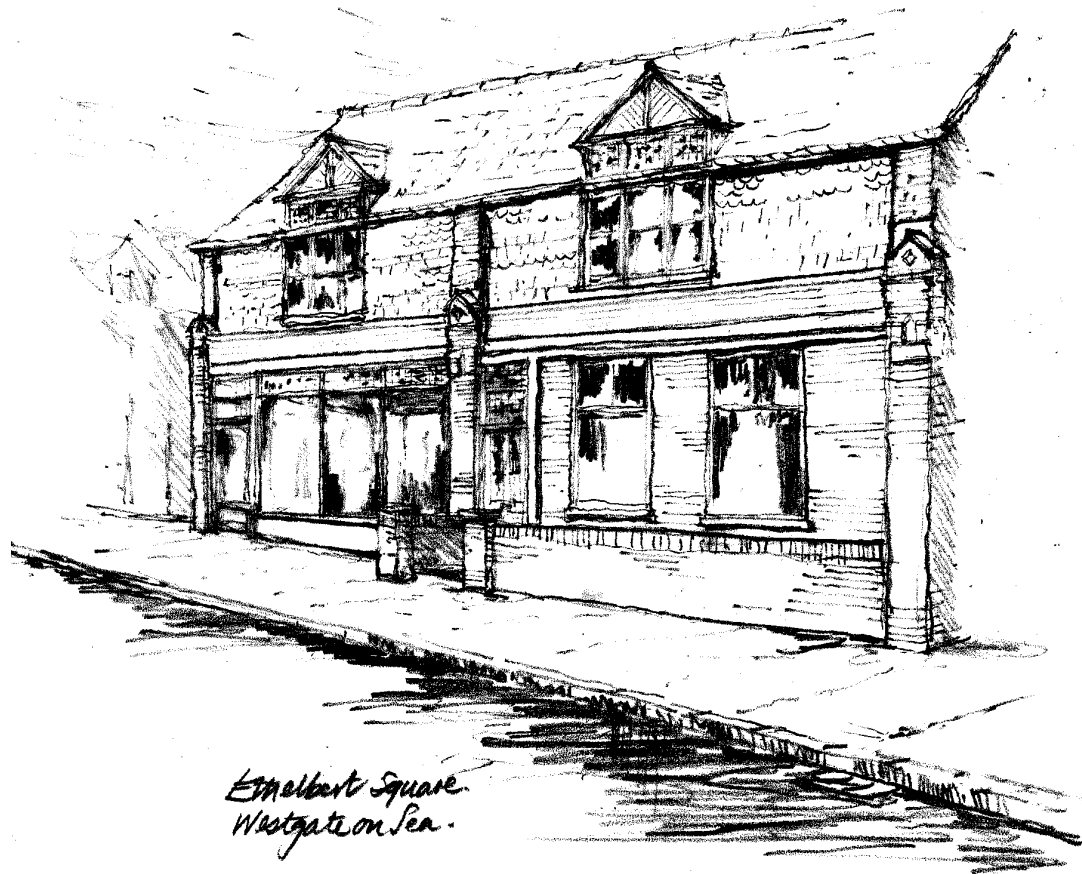


THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING GUIDANCE

Leaflet No 4



**CONVERSION
OF SHOPS TO
RESIDENTIAL
ACCOMMODATION
EXTERNAL DESIGN ALTERATIONS**

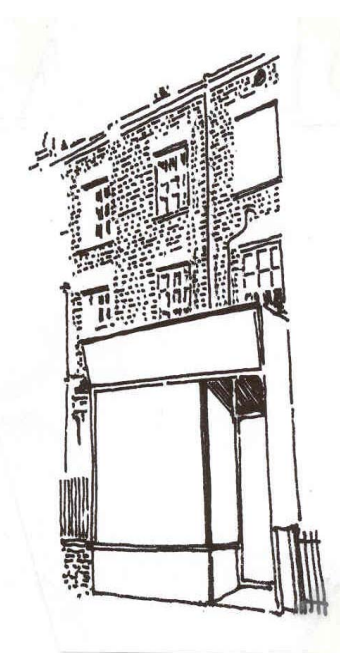
INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is one of a series providing information and advice on various planning issues. It aims to provide initial guidance to applicants wishing to convert shop premises into residential accommodation and relates specifically to the external appearance of the building following conversion. Specific advice on internal conversion works should be sought from the Council's Development Control and Building Control departments.

In addition to the need for planning permission to change from shop to residential use, building control permission will usually be needed for alterations to a building, including replacement or alteration of a shopfront. If the property is a Listed Building or/and located in a Conservation Area, additional consents are likely to be required. You are advised to discuss your proposals with the Council to see what types of consent you may need before committing yourself to any work. The Council's Conservation Architects will be pleased to offer free preliminary advice.

COUNCIL PLANNING CONTROLS

Before the District Council can agree to the change of use of a shop to residential accommodation, it will need to be satisfied that measures are taken to meet residential privacy requirements while presenting a satisfactory appearance in relation to both the building and character of the area. The Council will usually expect this to be achieved by physical alteration to the building to provide an appropriate "housefront". See the two sketches below.



Before conversion with
shopfront in place.



After conversion with
shopfront removed.

In exceptional circumstances, the need to safeguard the architectural/historic shop features of a particular building may mean that the Council would not permit residential use at all. In some cases the Council may permit change of use to residential without removal of the existing shopfront if, for example, removal would harm the character of a Listed Building/Conservation Area or local townscape or where it accepts that removal is not financially viable. In such cases, sensitively considered measures will be needed to achieve privacy while retaining the shopfront and other features important to the character of the shop building.

The District Council recognises that circumstances will arise where the design of an existing shopfront would not provide adequate privacy to a residential occupier, yet it remains important to retain the character of the shopfront. This leaflet aims to provide advice in such cases on ways in which adequate privacy can be achieved, whilst maintaining the character of the building and the street scene.

The amount of alteration appropriate to achieve an arrangement likely to be acceptable to the District Council will depend upon the character and individual qualities of the building, its location and the nature of the shopfront.

REVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL USE

The older shops in most towns were originally built as houses. Therefore where reversion to residential use is proposed, the Council will normally take the view that the shopfront should be removed and a domestic front inserted. The commercial areas of Thanet are quite well documented, and old photographic records, where they exist, can often provide an indication of the original appearance. If this is known, reinstatement in that form will usually be appropriate, particularly in Conservation Areas.

Where the appearance of the original "housefront" is not known, it is usually possible to design a new front having regard to the appearance of any unconverted dwellings of the same period of construction nearby. Where this is not possible or where the building was originally built as a shop, it is still essential that any housefront should respect the age, style and character of the building itself, harmonising with the upper floors of the building and buildings adjoining it.

PROPOSALS AFFECTING A LISTED BUILDING AND/OR A CONSERVATION AREA

Wherever proposals affect a Listed Building or Conservation Area they should be discussed with the Council's Conservation Architects at the outset. In some cases, residential conversion may only be acceptable to the District Council provided that all or certain features of the shop building are retained. In such cases, very sensitive and imaginative treatment may be needed to provide a reasonable degree of privacy and present a satisfactory appearance.

Where retention of existing features or their reinstatement is considered, it is very important that any works are sympathetic to the character and proportion of the building as a whole in which they are incorporated and that it can harmonise with those existing shop fronts/buildings adjoining it. Where the building is Listed, applicants should expect to submit additional large scale detailed drawings to ensure the details respect the special character of the buildings and street scene.

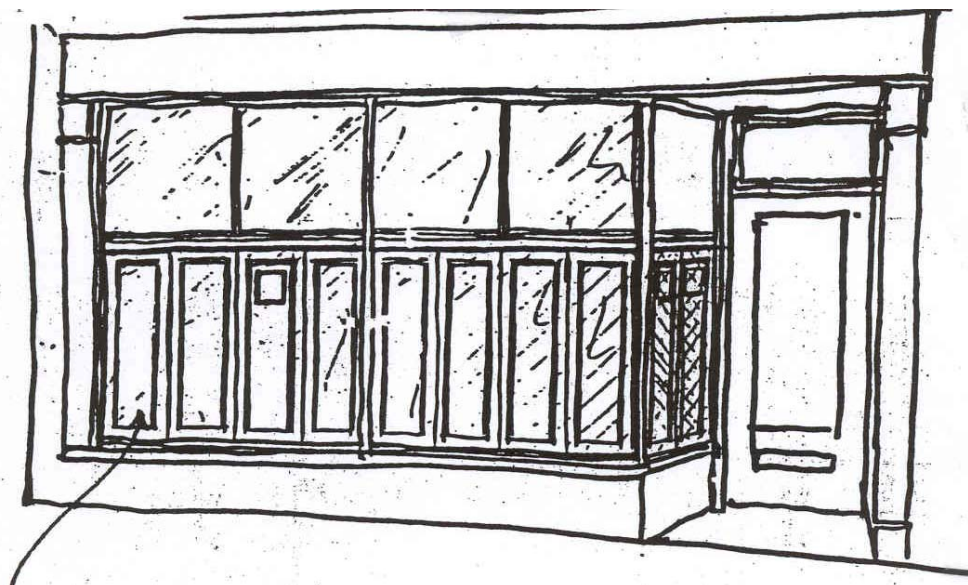
It is an offence to carry out unauthorised works to a Listed Building. If you are in any doubt as to whether your building is Listed or is in a Conservation Area, the Council's Conservation Architects can advise.

IDEAS FOR ACHIEVING RESIDENTIAL PRIVACY WHILST RETAINING SHOPFRONT FEATURES

Note : The following sketches show hypothetical examples to illustrate general solutions. Where used, these ideas will need to reflect the individual characteristics and qualities of the building to which they are to be applied.

(A) Shutter panels

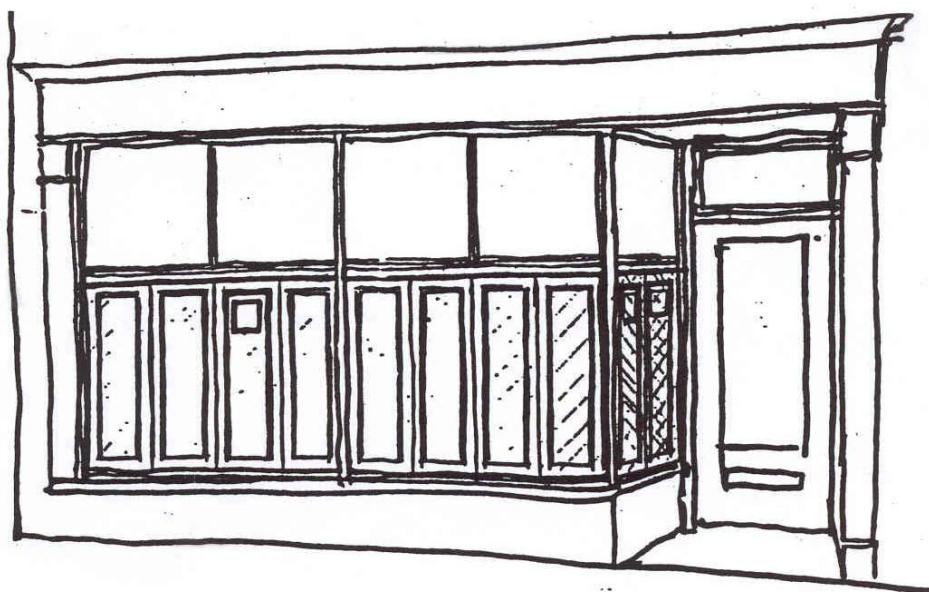
Hanging shutters placed immediately behind window and fixed to back of window frame. Openable shutter arrangements would allow access for cleaning interior of window and more light if required.



Framework attached to back of window framing to accept shutter system, allows access for cleaning, more light etc.

(B) Window modified and dummy shutter panels provided

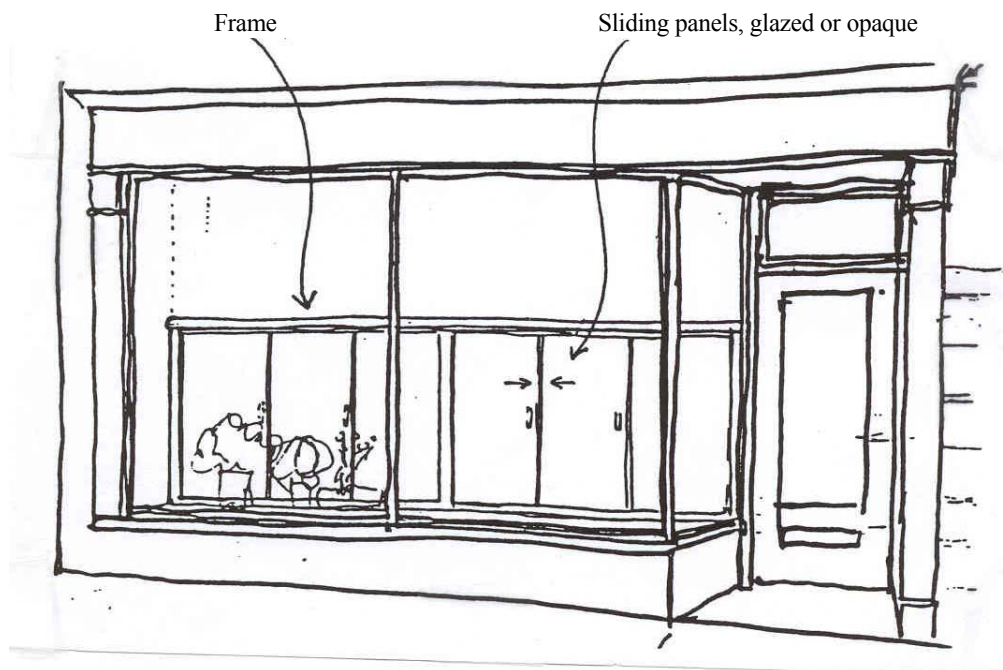
Glass removed and new transom (not normally over 1.67m (5' 6") above pavement level) installed and new glazing bars provided to divide glazed area above new non-opening shutters or panels.



Possible arrangement based on dummy shutters to 1.67m (5'6") or maximum average eye level, with new transom and glass over, with extra glazing bars. Glass removed, windows divided, glass etc replaced.

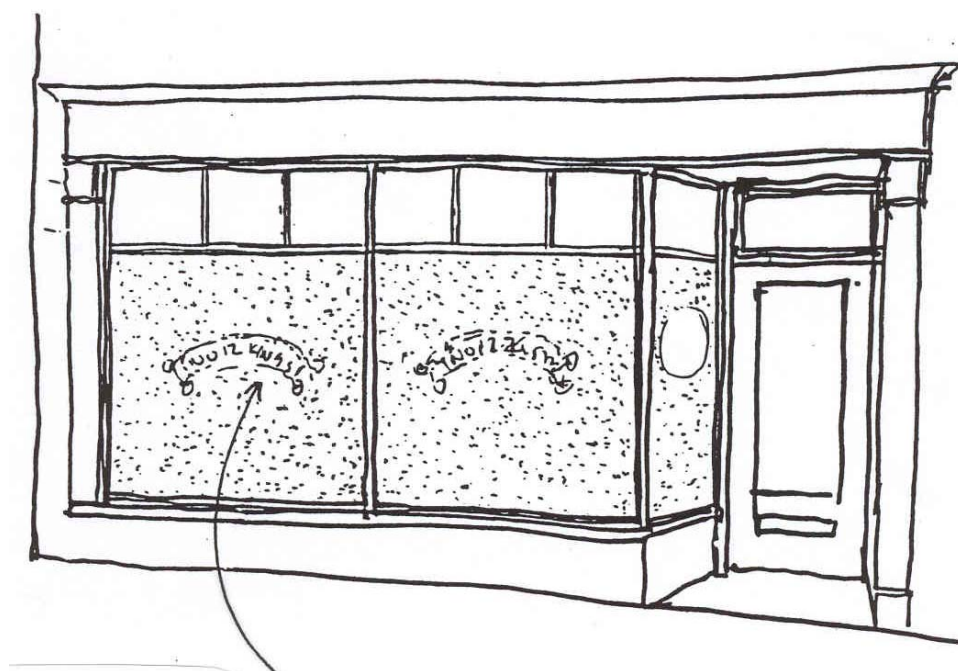
(C) Provision of screen behind existing windows

Screen panels in opaque glass will allow light into the accommodation and are easy to keep clean. Retention or provision of a raised display shelf between the shop window and new screen would give scope for a display to soften the overall appearance, add colour and individuality, for example by using pot plants. Sliding screen panels will facilitate access to maintain or change display when required.



(D) Provision of etched glass

Existing glazing would have to be replaced, and the window frame may need to be modified, for example if upper lights are proposed. *It should be noted that the lowest part of any opening lights should not be less than 2.1 metres above pavement level in order to comply with highways legislation.* Individuality and interest could be achieved by incorporating motifs into the etched glass.



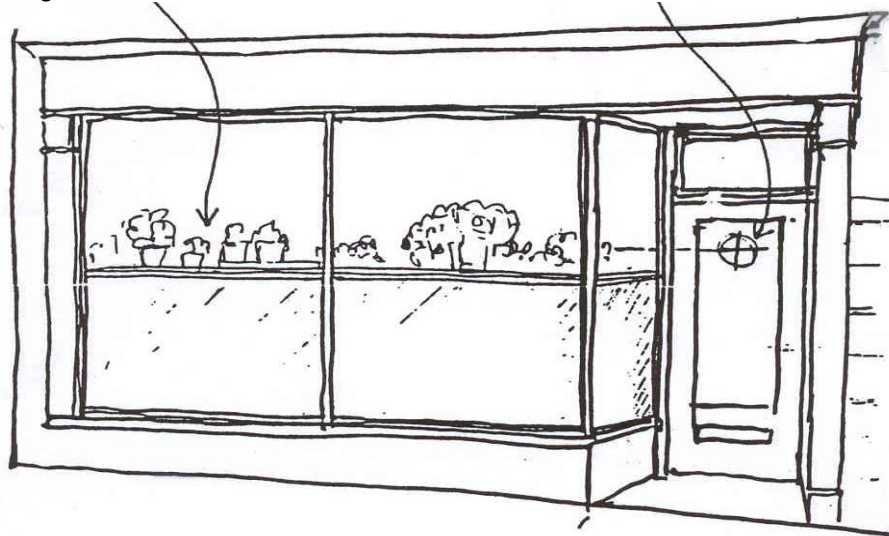
Blandness offset by etched design

(E) Painting or "blocking out" lower half of window

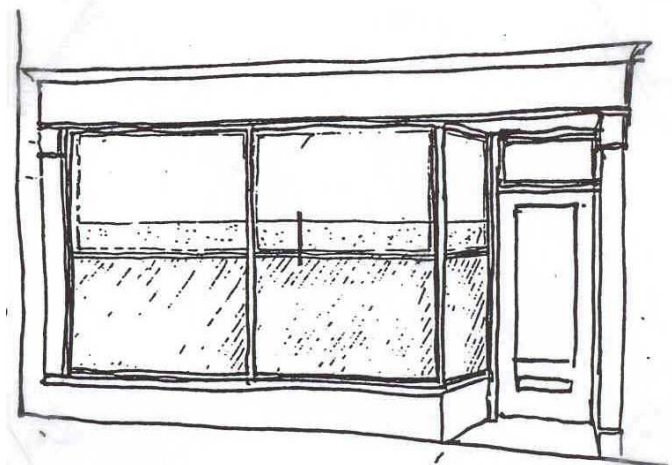
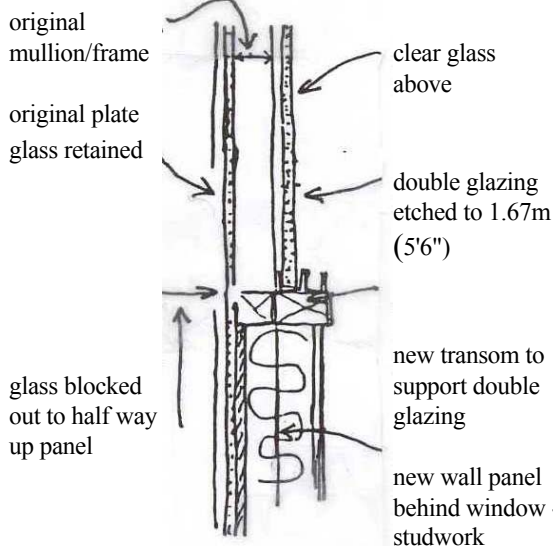
This can be achieved either by painting the glass itself or by attaching a painted back board fixed tight behind the glass. The painted area should not extend more than half way above the total window height, otherwise an oppressive effect will result.

Possible shelf and plants for screening

At 1.67m (5'6"), people can see in



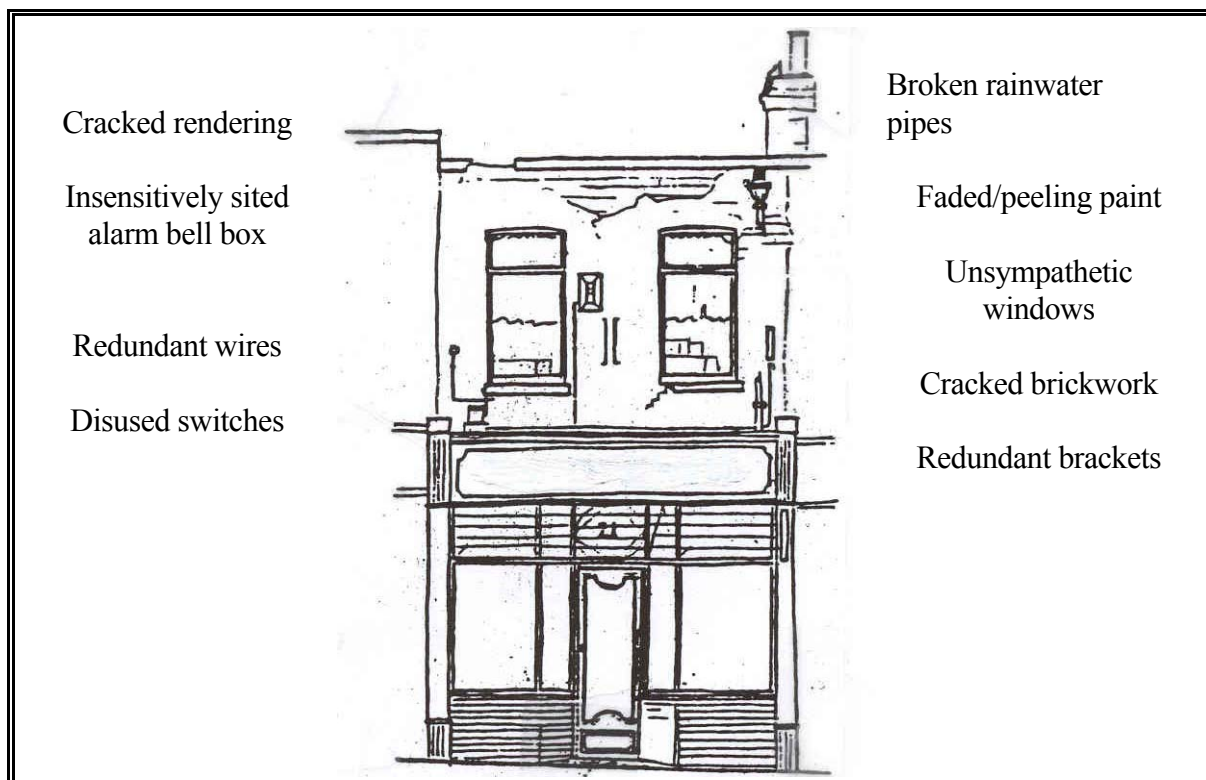
Where this height limit means that the obscure area will be of insufficient height to provide adequate privacy, additional screening can be achieved by placing pot plants on a shelf situated in line with the top of the area of obscure glazing. Alternatively, where it is proposed to provide double glazing to the upper window area, the lower portion of the double glazed section could be etched in glass to just above eye level.



The above examples are for illustrative purposes only. It is important to note that under the **1985 Housing Act**, all rooms in properties converted into residential use should have adequate natural lighting and ventilation. A glazed area, with light entering from outside, equivalent to at least 10% of a room's floor area, and an openable window equivalent to at least 5% of a room's floor area are required. "Borrowed" light from another room as well as windows which open into other rooms, do not count towards this requirement. The Council's Housing Department (Private Sector) can provide further advice in each case.

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

The attractiveness of any alterations can be undermined by a poor repair and maintenance of a building, particularly at upper levels. Retention of original windows and architectural features, removal of redundant wires, brackets and other clutter, together with regular maintenance, cleaning and repainting are therefore desirable. Brickwork should be left unpainted, otherwise an onerous maintenance obligation will result, since the original colour and texture of brickwork is very difficult to restore later. **Listed Building consent may be necessary to paint brickwork or other unpainted surfaces which are part of a listed building.**



Grant Aid : In certain circumstances, the District Council may be able to assist in the repair and restoration of buildings and their related features through grants. Grant aid is discretionary and only available to certain Listed Buildings or buildings which fall within the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme Action Area Plan in Margate, Ramsgate or Broadstairs. Further advice can be obtained from the Council's Conservation Section.

UNAUTHORISED WORKS

The District Council is empowered to take enforcement action in respect of unauthorised works. This may involve the alteration or removal of offending works and reinstatement of features which have been removed. The Council may also pursue prosecution which can result in the imposition of penalties.

The Council has adopted this guidance for Development Control purposes and the advice will be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

FURTHER INFORMATION

To determine whether the works you propose will require consent, it is advisable to contact a Planning Officer at the address below to discuss the suitability of your proposals prior to the submission of any applications. Appointments can be made with a Planning Officer to discuss your proposals, either at the Council Offices or, if necessary, on site.



For further information, please contact the Conservation Architects/Local Plans or Development Control Sections at the following address:

**The Planning Department
Thanet District Council, Thanet Council Offices, P O Box 9, Cecil Street
Margate, Kent CT9 1XZ. Tel: (01843) 577591
E-mail: local.plans@thanet.gov.uk
Web: www.thanet.gov.uk**

