

THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING GUIDANCE

Leaflet No 1



SHOPFRONT DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is one of a series providing information and advice on various planning issues. It aims to provide a source of initial guidance to shopkeepers, advertising companies and their agents on appropriate shopfront design, good security and the location and design of advertisements.

The replacement or alteration of existing shop fronts, the installation of security shutters or grilles and most advertisements, in particular illuminated advertisements, require either planning or advertisement consent. If your property is a Listed Building and/or is located in a Conservation Area, additional consents are likely to be required.

The Council has adopted this guidance for Development Control purposes and the advice contained will constitute a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

SHOPFRONT DESIGN

The prosperity of individual shops, whether established or modern, depends largely upon the overall attractiveness of their street/town as a place to shop. Shop fronts are a visually dominant feature in all shopping locations and can considerably influence people's perceptions of such locations.

Well designed modern shop fronts add considerably to the appeal of shopping locations for shoppers and visitors alike, creating the conditions and environment most likely to stimulate trade and a flourishing local economy and will be encouraged.

In the Isle of Thanet, many town centre shopping environments lie partly within Conservation Areas and several contain a number of Listed Buildings which are of historical or architectural interest. Unfortunately, in the past, many traditional and interesting shop fronts have been lost through increasing demands and the changing needs of the retailers.

The District Council recognises the importance of the need for retailers to adapt both their businesses and their shops, both internally and externally, to meet changing demands. However, various design principles can be simply observed and incorporated in the design of modern shop fronts, rendering them responsive to retailers demands whilst at the same time enhancing the streetscene by respecting the scales, proportion and other key characteristics of the existing streetscape. Additional controls may be exercised where the development relates to a Listed Building.



This guidance leaflet addresses the issues and suggests ways in which shop front design should be approached. These design principles have successfully been included in several modern shop fronts which exist in our town centres today, for example, River Island (above), creating a modern yet visually pleasing shopping environment.

APPLICATION OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Within Thanet, there are a large range of shops and shopping parades in a variety of different environments, from the local village centre of Minster to the more extensive town centre environments of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate. However, in all shopping locations, certain design principles are important in maintaining a shopping environment which is both convenient and attractive. Policies CB3 and CB17 of the Deposit Draft Isle of Thanet Local Plan, in particular, are relevant.

There are many design features in a traditional shop front which give both the shop front and the building into which it is incorporated, special character.

- A. *Blind box*
- B. *Console*
- C. *Fascia*
- D. *Cornice*
- E. *Fanlight*
- F. *Panelled glazed door*
- G. *Tiled entrance*
- H. *Stallriser*
- I. *Mullion*
- J. *Pilaster*
- K. *Transom*



Generally, traditional shop fronts were of timber construction and possessed the features indicated above. These features help to frame the shop window and to link the shop front with the design of the rest of the building, giving visual coherence to the street scene. In most respects, this traditional framework remains relevant today.

RETENTION OR REINSTATEMENT?

Where original or well designed shop front features remain, it is often cheaper to retain existing or reinstate features than to install a completely new modern shop front.

Where retention of existing or the reinstatement of features are considered, it is very important that any works are sympathetic to the character and proportion of the building in which it is incorporated and that it can harmonise with those shop fronts/buildings adjoining it. In circumstances where the building is a Listed Building, applicants should expect to submit additional large scale detailed drawings of particular shop front features to ensure the details respect the special character of the buildings or harmonise with existing well designed adjoining shop fronts.

New shop front designs, particularly on Listed Buildings, should always incorporate the main features of a traditional shop front; fascia, stallriser and pilasters. The notes overleaf identify some problems which occur with badly designed shop fronts and indicate how these problems can be overcome.

SHOP FRONT DESIGN

General Do's & Don't's

Poor Design

1. Creates an uninteresting and cluttered appearance to the shop front; and,
1. Destroys the character and coherence of the design of the original buildings

Examples of poor design are where;

- * The fascia extends above shop front fascia level and covers first floor windows
- * The fascia spans two properties which results in the loss of identity of buildings above
- * The fascia too deep
- * There is no stallriser along the bottom of the shop front
- * The shop front consists of very large areas of plate glass
- * The lettering on fascia is too large and overpowering
- * Advertisement labels create clutter in the shop window area.



Good Design

1. Creates an interesting and visually pleasing shopfront
1. Maintains the character of the streetscene

Examples of good design are where;

- * The fascias are in the correct position and do not cover the first floor windows
- * The fascias are the correct depth and are in proportion with the size of the shop front
- * The fascias respect the frontage width of the individual buildings
- * A stallriser is included along the base of the shop fronts
- * Use of narrow panes of glass between vertical mullions helps to break up large expanse of glass and create interest in the shop front
- * Whilst both buildings are in the same ownership, fascias and shop fronts reflect the individual character of the buildings and create coherence in their design
- * No advertisements clutter the window display area

SHOP FRONT DETAILS

Fascias

- Should not exceed the height of any upper floor window cill nor obscure an existing cornice.
- Should not extend across more than one shop front.
- Size of fascia (top to bottom) should be kept to a minimum and should not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total shop front height.

Windows

- Large glazed areas are usually inappropriate.
- Mullions and transoms should be provided to give a proportionate appearance in relation to the building.

Entrances

- Recessed entrance doors can add interest and create a sense of invitation and allow the amount of display area visible from outside to be extended.
- Tiling to entrance floors provides an attractive feature.
- Reinstatement or retention of recesses/tiled areas should be seriously considered.
- Shop doors should match the shop front in materials and design.
- Retention/Refurbishment of existing doors is desirable.
- Brass door fittings are normally appropriate with traditional and timber shop fronts, particularly in sensitive/historic locations.

Stallrisers

- The height of stallrisers on Listed Buildings or buildings in Conservation Areas should not be less than two feet above floor level unless a lower height would be appropriate to harmonise with existing adjoining well designed examples.

Large Retail Premises

- Where two or more adjacent shop units are to be occupied, the character, identity and separation of each should be respected.
- Retention of piers, pilasters and separate shop fascias is encouraged.

Materials/Colour

- Should be appropriate to the character of the building.
- Timber is a versatile material that can be worked into almost any profile and freshened up simply by painting.
- Number of colours used in any one shop front should be kept to a minimum.

House Styles

- Important means of identifying large multiple shops and businesses.
- House styles may not be appropriate in sensitive locations and may need to be adapted.

Window Displays

- Where a non-retail use is located within a retail location, particularly within a Prime Shopping Frontage, consideration should be given to adequate and interesting window displays which support the concept of a retail location.

Blinds/Canopies

- Can add interest and vitality to a shopping street, but an overabundance or proliferation of styles can give rise to a jumbled appearance.
- Dutch blinds are not normally acceptable in sensitive locations due to their dominant appearance.

Security Shutters

- Security shutters which obscure the shop front display when in use are inappropriate as they remove the vibrant feeling of a shopping area outside normal shopping hours.
- Where additional security is required, roller shutters which enable the shop window display to be viewed when in position may be appropriate.

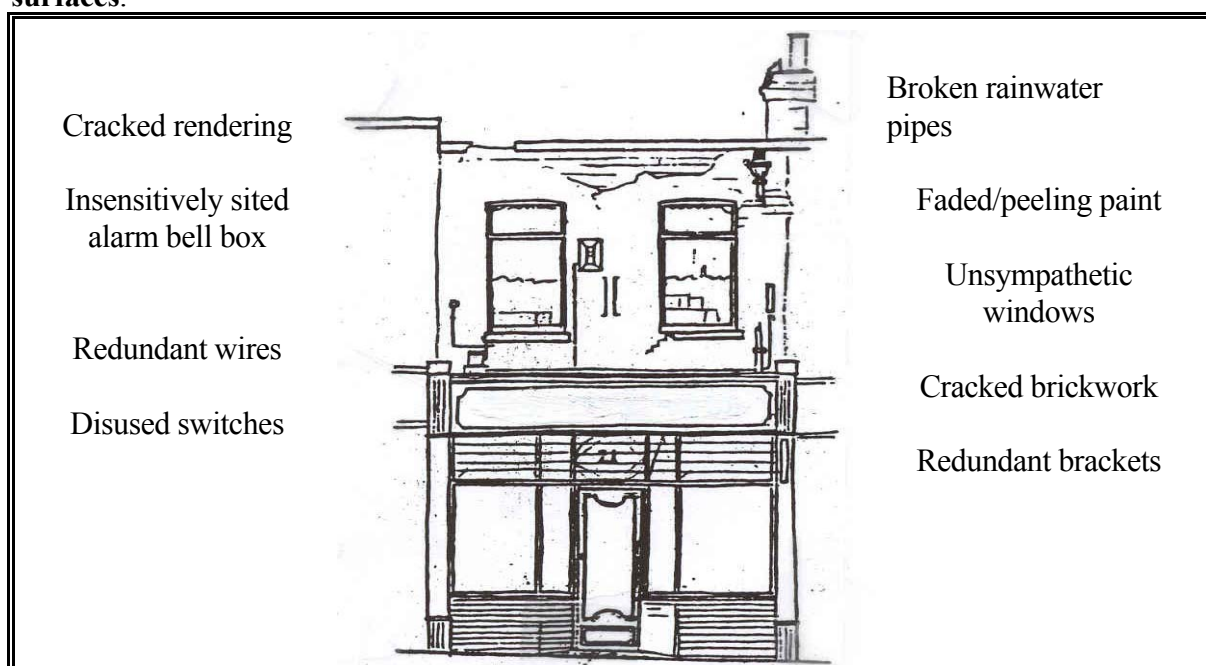
Detailed guidance is available in a separate Planning Guidance Leaflet, ‘Security Shutters for shop fronts’.

Access for Person with Impaired Mobility

- Policy CB3 of the Deposit Isle of Thanet Local Plan is relevant.
- Ease of access into shops is very important both for the retailer and the shopper.
- Where the shopper has impaired mobility, access can be more difficult. New shop fronts should avoid steps up to entrance/exits from the pavement or shop interior.
- Suitable handrails and easily used door handles should be provided and consideration of sloping ramps may be appropriate.
- Frameless doors are dangerous to the partially sighted and should be avoided.

UPPER STOREYS

The attractiveness of a shop front can be undermined by a poorly maintained building 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. 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.**



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR LISTED BUILDINGS

The District Council is unlikely to approve the removal of shop fronts or related features on Listed Buildings, unless exceptions apply where past works to the shop front have created an unsatisfactory appearance to the building. In such circumstances, the District Council would need to be satisfied that replacements are sensitively designed and will improve the visual and architectural quality of the Listed Building

The District Council will seek the preservation and enhancement of existing shop fronts and related architectural features. New shop fronts will be expected to incorporate the general form and features of a traditional shop front. However, well designed modern shop fronts, compatible with the special character of a building and/or conservation area, including architectural style and materials, will normally be acceptable.

Unauthorised works

The District Council is empowered to take enforcement action in respect of unauthorised works. Such works 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.

Grant Aid

In certain circumstances, the District Council may be able to assist in the repair and restoration of shop fronts and related features through grants. Grant aid is discretionary and usually only available to 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.

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 Local Plans 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
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