



## Shopfront Design and Security

This local planning guidance note offers a framework within which creative designs for the repair or improvement of existing shopfronts, introduction of new shopfronts and associated signage and security measures can be delivered. This is one of a series of local planning guidance notes amplifying development plan policies, principally Wrexham UDP policies GDP1, PS1, PS2, EC7 and EC9.

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*Available in alternative formats*

### 1. Introduction

The term "shopfront" refers to the whole of the building's street elevation from pavement to roof and across its full width and not just the display window and its surround; "advertisements" refers solely to advertising matter on shopfronts. Specific guidance on advertisements in other situations is contained in Local Planning Guidance Note 1: Advertisements.

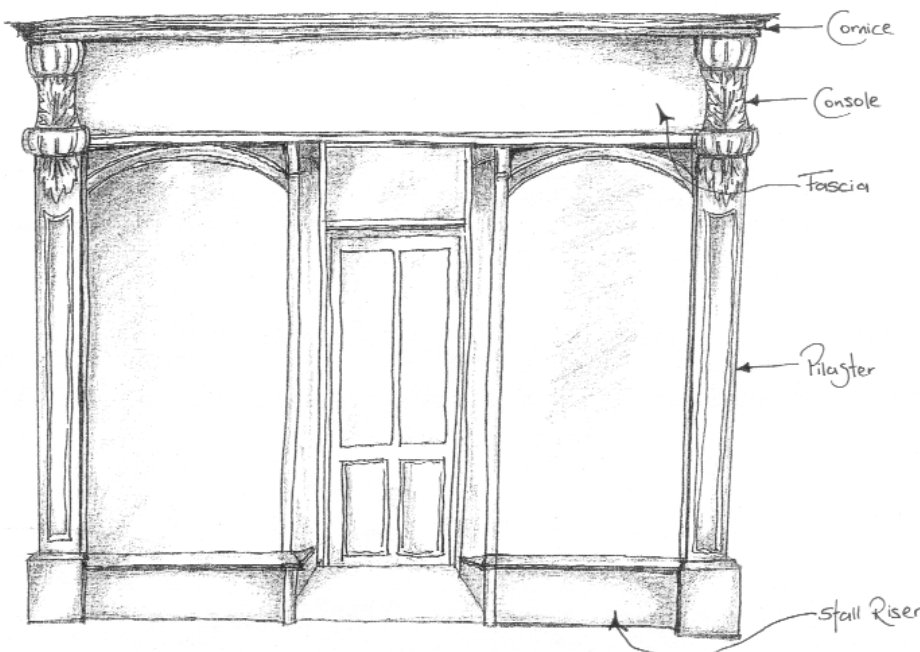
This guidance note will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the alteration and replacement of existing shopfronts and new retail and commercial developments.

It was adopted by the Council in July 2011 following consultation in April and May 2011.

### 2. Shopfront Development in Wrexham County Borough

Examples of early shopfronts evident within Wrexham County Borough largely date from the Victorian (1831-1901) and Edwardian periods (1901-1910). The Victorian shopfront was robust in design and appearance and generally followed classical principles with pilasters terminating with a capital or console bracket often elaborately carved, enclosing and emphasising the fascias and giving more prominence to the shop name. Sometimes roller blinds were incorporated into the design, the fascia being slightly tilted forward to accommodate them behind and also emphasising the shop name. Doors tended to be 4 panelled, the upper panels being glazed. A variety of materials (e.g. timber, terracotta, stone and cast iron) were used in shopfront construction. Whilst few complete examples remain within the County Borough many original elements are still in evidence.

The Edwardian shopfront was a reaction to the heaviness and exuberance of the Victorian shopfront and was, in some instances, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. These new designs placed more emphasis on 'lightness'. The amount of glazing increased, the depth of the stall riser was reduced, pilasters and consoles were simplified and decorative transom lights were often introduced. Doorways became more deeply recessed and glazing within the reveals often curved round to the frontage, achieving an overall more elegant effect. The amount of



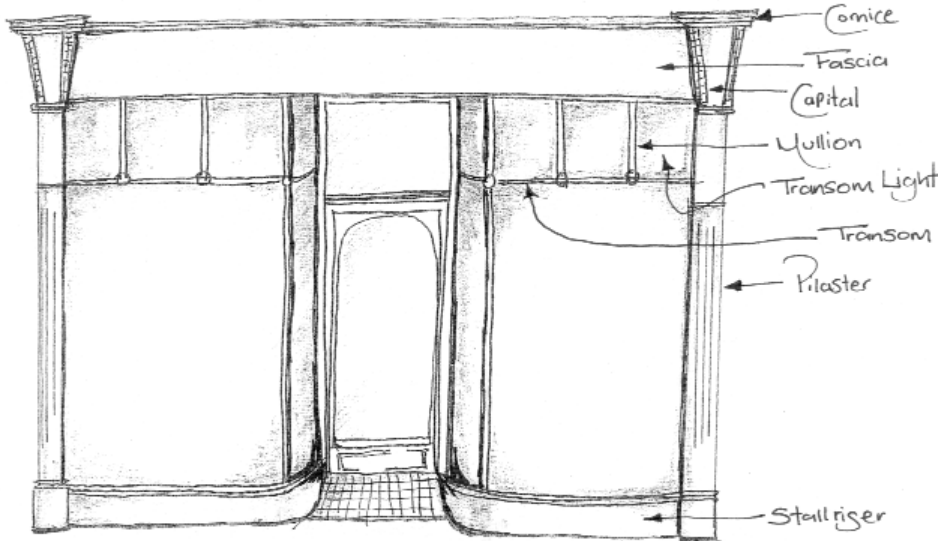
1. Elements of a Victorian Shopfront

glazing to doorways tended to increase and mosaic floor tiling to the recessed entrances advertising the business name was a common feature.

During the late 20th Century shopfront design became much simplified incorporating larger areas

of unbroken glazing and little embellishment. This approach can be effective in new retail and commercial developments but in more historic settings such designs can erode the appearance of traditional shopfronts often bearing little relationship to upper floors, failing to integrate visually into the

overall appearance and proportion of buildings and the surrounding street-scene. The use of cheaper materials, poor detailing and signage and the addition of alien features (e.g. external roller box shutters) has also had a negative effect upon the character and appearance of more historically sensitive areas in recent years.



2. Elements of an Edwardian Shopfront

The major appeal of the local townscape is the character and appearance of its buildings and streets. The objective of this local planning guidance note is to improve design standards, raising the quality of an area, enhancing its commercial attractiveness and encouraging investment. In achieving this, the following design principles need to be considered:

### 3. Existing Shopfronts

#### Repair and Maintenance

Every effort must be made to retain original fabric and features through their incorporation into new designs and if hidden, revealed and restored. Features of interest may include elements of construction (e.g. pilasters, consoles etc.) and ornamentation (e.g. door furniture, mosaic tiling, sign brackets, etc). Decayed sections should be repaired using traditional joinery techniques such as the 'splicing in' of new pieces to match the existing rather than wholesale replacement. Elements that have been lost should be replaced to replicate surviving details or based on sound historical evidence. Regular maintenance can prevent extensive repair and replacement.



#### Decoration

Paint is the traditional finish for shopfronts locally. Modern varnishes and stains are not normally considered appropriate particularly within conservation areas and on listed buildings. The colour scheme is critical to the appearance of the building and should relate well to that of the upper floors. The careful removal of the later layers of paintwork can often reveal the original colour



scheme. Recessive colours were traditionally used in order to highlight the display.

3. Removal of layers of paint can often reveal the original colour scheme.

4. A traditional colour scheme re-created on a reconstructed shopfront.

5. A stained finish is inappropriate on a traditional shopfront.





## 4. New and Replacement Shopfronts

### General Principles

New or replacement shopfronts should respect the overall proportions, symmetry, scale, details and rhythm of the building and enhance the character and appearance of the street-scene as a whole. Shopfronts should not be designed in isolation but as part of the overall architectural composition of the building. The existence of an inappropriate design will not be allowed to influence the replacement design.



To ensure shopfronts relate well to their upper floors it is essential that they preserve the symmetry of the building and that sub-division of glazing is aligned with windows above. Replacement shopfronts need to respect the scale and design of period buildings and should take into account the rhythm of the street as determined by plot widths and the emphasis of vertical or horizontal elements. New or replacement shopfronts do not have to replicate traditional styles, particularly where there is no accurate historical evidence of the original design, where located in less historically sensitive areas or where such a design would be inappropriate for the period and style of the building.

Traditionally designed replacement shop fronts should incorporate 4 key elements; pilasters (vertical division between adjoining shop fronts), cornice (a horizontal, visual distinction between the floors and also provides weather protection), stall riser (provides low-level protection) and fascia (space for advertising). Replicated elements such as consoles (ornamental brackets) or panelling must be traditionally carved and not planted or nailed on.

Variations in shopfront design are important in contributing to the interest and character of an area and as such individuality is encouraged. However, where buildings have been designed to form a single composition such as within arcades or markets or as part of larger retail developments then a unified design should be employed.

*6. The sub-division of glazing, the symmetry and colour scheme ensure that this recreated shopfront is integrated well within the building facade.*

*7. The architectural detail of a building can often go unappreciated when isolated by an inappropriate ground floor shopfront design.*



Shopfronts "A" and "B" respect the symmetry and proportions of the existing building and the sub-division of glazing is aligned with the fenestration above. Large expanses of glazing and an oversized fascia in shopfront "C" fail to respect the proportions or symmetry of the existing building and detracts from the streetscene as a whole.

### Access

Buildings should be accessible for all users (whether staff or customers), and opportunities to improve access should be considered if alterations are made to existing entrances or doors. Normally doors must open inwards and have a minimum clear opening width of 830mm for wheelchair users although there may be circumstances where a narrower width not less than 800mm would be acceptable. New steps should be avoided unless another suitable entrance is available, and level thresholds must be provided. A full range of mobility and sensory issues should be considered in the design. Access to upper floors should also be considered in the design of replacement shopfronts to ensure that adequate access is maintained or introduced if not already provided.



**Windows and Doors**

Large expanses of glazing should normally be avoided. Instead windows should be divided by mullions into vertically proportioned sections which align with windows to the upper floors ensuring greater visual cohesion of the total elevation. Smaller sections of glazing are also easier and cheaper to replace if damaged. The extent of sub-division will depend upon the period of the building. Smaller shopfronts relating to buildings of the Georgian or early Victorian period may be able to accommodate greater sub-division whilst frameless or structural glazing may be more suitable for use in new retail and commercial developments.



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8. Original features such as traditional doors and tiled thresholds should be retained.

9. Structural glazing can be used effectively in new shopfronts.



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**5. Shop Signs**

**Fascias**

Fascia design should respect the proportion and details of the building. A bulky, over-sized, or brash fascia that is incongruous with the building will detract from the appearance of the street as a whole and will not be permitted. The fascia should be designed in proportion with the rest of the shopfront and the building and not encroach into or obscure upper floors, extend into neighbouring facades or obliterate any worthy architectural features (e.g. cornices, pilasters, upper floor window sills, etc). Signs above fascia level will not normally be permitted.

**Advertisement Style**

Imaginative yet sensitive signage to enhance the building and the surrounding street scene is encouraged. The use of shiny, reflective materials, garish lettering or background colours and badly proportioned lettering styles will not normally be permitted. Sign-writing should be applied directly onto the existing fascia; if sign boards are to be used, they should be flush fitting with the fascia, of minimum depth and not cover any existing original features.

12. Fascia signs should be designed to complement the surrounding shopfront, respecting the proportions, profile and colour scheme.



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10. An oversized fascia obscures the upper floor of this building.

11. Fascias should not extend into neighbouring facades. Each individual shopfront should be clearly defined.



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**Projecting or Hanging Signs**

Hanging signs should be located at fascia height, and should be limited to one per building unless two street frontages are involved.

Where separate businesses occupy upper floors, applied lettering to windows may be acceptable with a small plaque providing details of the business located at the ground floor level.



**Illumination**

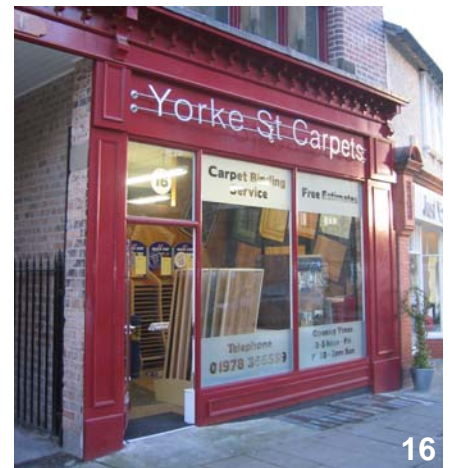
Lighting schemes should be designed to complement the building as a whole and should provide the minimum illumination necessary to highlight both the advertisement and display. Light sources should be discreetly positioned and housed and will not be permitted if they are directly visible to drivers of motor vehicles using the adjacent highway.

**Corporate Image**

National corporations may be required to adapt or modify their standard designs if they do not accord with this guidance note and where they fail to enhance the special character and appearance of more historically sensitive areas such as in Conservation Areas or where a listed building or its setting may be affected by the proposals.

**6. Signs in Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings**

Within Conservation Areas and for Listed Buildings, a greater standard of design and attention to detail and materials is required in order to protect the special architectural and historical character of the area or building. Modifications or alterations to Listed Buildings must be fully justified. In addition to the guidance as set out above, the following will apply:



**Advertisement Style**

Lettering must be hand-painted or comprise individual letters directly fixed to the fascia. Information should be kept to a minimum, preferably limited to the name of the business, the product sold and the street number.

**Projecting or Hanging Signs**

Hanging signs must not be internally illuminated. Traditional painted signs are most appropriate in these locations. Where original sign brackets exist then they must be re-used.



13. A well considered lighting scheme can complement the building as a whole.

14-16. Applied lettering or hand painted signs are most appropriate within Conservation Areas.

17. Traditional sign brackets should be reused where possible.



**Illumination**

Internally illuminated box signs either at fascia level or above will not normally be permitted. External methods of illumination are acceptable if they are not excessive and if they are discretely positioned and include low density concealed strip or spot lighting.

**7. Security**

Security measures to protect retail premises against crime, thereby enhancing community safety and protecting and enhancing the viability and vitality of shopping areas, should also protect and enhance the special appearance of the building. Security measures are a fundamental and integral part of the design of any new or replacement shopfront and should include:

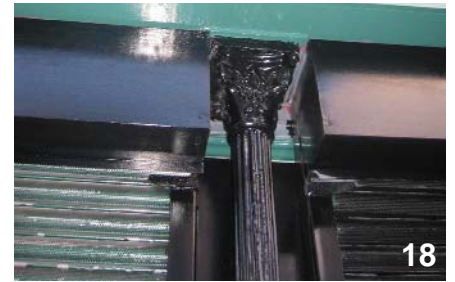
**Toughened or Laminated Glass**

The installation of toughened or laminated glass prevents burglary and vandalism without compromising the appearance of the property and is the preferred design solution. If attacked

laminated glass may crack but will remain in place thus hindering the efforts of the criminal. The outer pane of glass on double glazed units should be toughened and the inner pane laminated. Shatter proof adhesive films on existing glazed areas can also help. Where historic glass remains in conservation areas or on listed buildings, it should be retained and laminated glass may be used as a secondary glazing option.

**Grilles**

Where internally fitted grilles are the only solution, grilles must be of an open lattice or perforated design to allow views of the display behind maintaining a sense of vitality. A more solid internal grille may be acceptable if positioned behind the display area. In limited extraordinary cases an external grille may be the only solution; it must be of an open design and painted in a recessive colour to reduce the impact upon the appearance of the building. The grille should be designed to cover glazed areas only and the fixings



and spindle boxes should be concealed to avoid obscuring or damaging any existing shop front features and mouldings. Externally fitted grilles will not normally be permitted within Conservation Areas.

**CCTV and Security Lighting**

Both may be used to improve the security of a property. Brackets and housing for both cameras and lighting should be selected to minimise the overall effect of the installation on the appearance of the property. The number installed should be the minimum required for the purpose so as not to cause unnecessary 'clutter' and should be limited to one camera and lighting unit per building unless two street frontages are involved.

**Shutters**

Where original timber shop security shutters remain they should be retained, particularly within Conservation Areas where any other form of external shutter is unacceptable. Solid metal external roller box shutters will not be permitted as they have a deadening effect upon the street-scene creating a lifeless and hostile environment and detract from the vitality and appearance of the area by discouraging pedestrians from using the street. Box housing for roller shutters tends to be bulky, intrusive and incongruous and detracts from the appearance of the shopfront. External demountable and roller grilles are preferred to shutters: these should be limited to the size necessary to protect glazed areas only, not stand proud of the fascia or hide any architectural feature and, if possible, utilise any original fascia housing. Anodised or powder coated finishes are preferred.

18 & 19. External box shutters have a “deadening” effect on the street scene and can obscure traditional features.

20 & 21. Internally fitted shutters and grilles are less visually intrusive.



## 8. Other Features (Paraphernalia)

### Canopies, Blinds and Awnings

Canopies, blinds or awnings, except where they are essential to protect goods on display and are integrated into the overall shopfront design, will not normally be permitted as they tend to obscure the shopfront. Retractable straight blinds with concealed blind boxes are most appropriate. Materials should be canvas rather than plastic or other shiny materials and the colour should complement the overall colour scheme of the building. The bottom edge of the blind must be no less than 2.4m above ground level and 1m from the kerb to prevent causing an obstruction of the highway.



22. Inappropriately designed canopies can obscure upper floors.

23. Canopies should form part of the overall design of the frontage.



### Cash Dispensers

These should be integrated into the shopfront and ideally located within a lobby or door recess to limit their visual impact. The size of the display area must be kept to a minimum and must not be used as a means of advertisement.

### Fixtures

Fixtures (e.g. alarm boxes and cabling) should be located away from the principal frontage of the building so as not to create 'clutter'



thereby detracting from the appearance of the property. Where this is not possible these elements should be located and fixed to minimise the visual impact and limit the damage to the fabric of the building.

## 9. Permissions and Consents

### Planning Permission

Any proposal to carry out works to retail or commercial properties that materially affects their external appearance including alterations to

glazing, changing facing materials, installing blinds or the erection of permanent security, external shutters or grilles requires planning permission. Internal grilles and shutters, films and toughened glass do not generally need permission but may require Listed Building Consent if the building has listed status.

### Advertisement Consent

The display of signs and advertisements may require separate consent. It is advisable to discuss proposals with a planning officer who can advise if consent is required or refer to the Council's guidance on advertisements - Local Planning Guidance Note 1: Advertisements.

### Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent is required for any alteration (both internally and externally), which would affect the building's character, integrity or special interest. This includes any alterations to shopfronts including the alteration of glazing, fitting of security grilles, alarm boxes, CCTV cameras and signage and the repainting of the exterior. Like for like repairs may not need consent but it is always advisable to check prior to undertaking any works. The principle objective must always be to repair and retain all original features and fabric wherever possible.

24. Alarm boxes should be discretely located and must not obscure any architectural features.



For further information contact:

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