

Security for Shops: Design Guidelines

This leaflet provides information about planning guidance regarding shop shutters. It gives advice on what you need to know when you are thinking about improving the security of your shop or business, what permission you may need and where you can get more detailed and independent advice.

The council published a booklet called "*Shopfronts: A guide to good design*" in 1988, which is available on the council's website at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/3710/shopfronts. Most of the advice in this document is still current. Since then, it has become clear that security measures for individual buildings are only part of the story. Maintaining and improving the quality of the environment, making the streets safe and attractive, encouraging greater use, both during and after shopping hours, is the best way to counter crime.

The council has a programme of initiatives to improve the environment, particularly in town centres, which includes streetscape improvements, closed circuit television cameras, loans and grants under the Town Centre Improvement Scheme for enhancements to individual premises in eligible areas, and town centre managers.

If you are proposing security measures which require planning permission, the council will take account of these other, area-based initiatives when deciding what is appropriate for your particular property. This is in line with Government guidance (in Department of the Environment Circular 5/94 - "Planning Out Crime")

Some proposals can actually make matters worse. As the Circular says: "a lively, attractive and welcoming environment... coupled with the use of CCTV and security systems that provide a rapid response to criminal activity, can provide more safety and security for the public and prove a greater deterrent to crime in general than deserted areas with "dead" shop fronts and fortress-like security measures."

When will I need planning permission?

- Installing fixed external security shutters will almost always materially affect the appearance of your building, so this will need planning permission.
- Installing an internal shutter behind a shop window, fitting security glass in the existing frame or a normal-sized alarm box on the front wall of a shop are not likely to need permission.
- Demountable shutters may not need permission.
- A complete new shopfront will usually need planning permission
- Alterations (other than like for like repair or reglazing) to a shopfront and new shutters in a listed building will normally need listed building consent
- A lot depends on the details of your case, so always check with the Planning Service duty planning before ordering any work.

What sort of external shutter is acceptable?

The council is concerned to balance the security needs of shop owners with the effect on appearance caused by certain types of shutters. Solid metal shutters are unattractive, reduce visual interest by obscuring window displays, provide an ideal surface for graffiti and fly posting, prevent views into the shop thereby reducing the chances of spotting intruders, and generally send an unwelcome message to the outside world, deterring the public from using an area leading to a further erosion of passive surveillance.

There is no British Standard for shutters. Police Crime Prevention Officers can give independent advice.



Solid metal shutters can have a detrimental effect on amenity and do not necessarily lead to better security

Picture: Andrew Lainton



Unobtrusive grilles can provide security while allowing views into shops

Picture: Apex Security

There are various sorts of shutters now available including open mesh grilles in various designs and materials, all of which offer good security and at the same time allow views into the shop. These are far more likely to be acceptable to the council.

Whichever sort of shutter you choose, it is essential that the shutter box is carefully fitted into the shop front, so that it is unobtrusive. Ideally it should be behind the fascia or else recessed and flush with the shopfront. This is easier to do if you are replacing the whole shopfront, but in any case, the shutter box must not be simply "tacked on". Any projection should clear the highway by at least 2.3 metres. The box, the shutter itself and the guiderails should not be left as plain metal, but given a suitable decorative finish, such as powder coating or anodising.

It is very rare for an insurance company to insist on having a solid roller shutter fitted to a shop frontage. The Association of British Insurers says "It is important to reach a mutually acceptable solution which provides the policy holder with the level of security commensurate with their risk, which does not have a detrimental effect on the local environment." and also "Companies usually propose a package of measures that need to be implemented which may well include electronic security and improved locks in addition to enhanced protection of shop frontages. -Consult your insurer before starting."

What other security measures can I use?

Standard glass can be replaced by laminated glass. This incorporates a plastic layer, making it harder to break, and still secure when it is broken. This comes in several thicknesses (7.5 to 11.5 mm). The thicker it is, the better for security, but this may require other changes to the shopfront design, such as deepening the rebate. Toughened glass is less suitable for large shop windows, but can be used for doors and may be suitable for traditional style shopfronts with smaller areas of glazing. When used together with a grille, and with an alarm, special glass can offer the same security as solid metal shutters without harming the appearance of the building or the character of the street, and allows for goods to be displayed even when the shop is closed.

Lighting the shop at night helps to give an impression of occupation and surveillance and can be an additional deterrent to theft and vandalism.

Safety glazing is covered by British Standard BS 6206,(see also the Building Regulations 1991, Part N.); security glazing by BS 5544.

Further help and advice

The Door and Shutter Manufacturers Association has produced a video to explain the various types of shopfront shutters available. The council has a copy which can be borrowed from the Borough Planner.

Always use an experienced specialist shop fitter; contact the National Association of Shop fitters for a list.