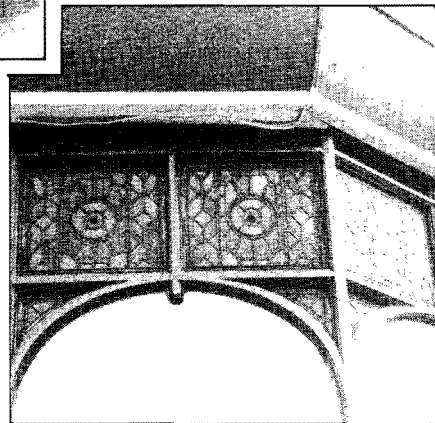
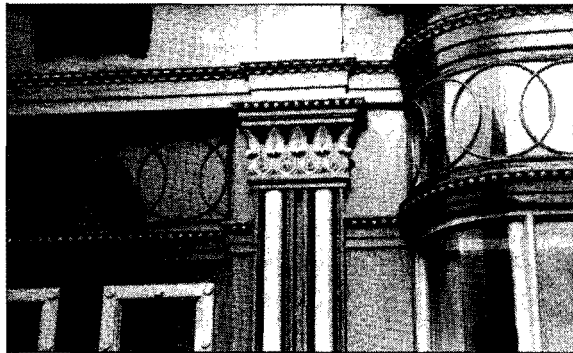
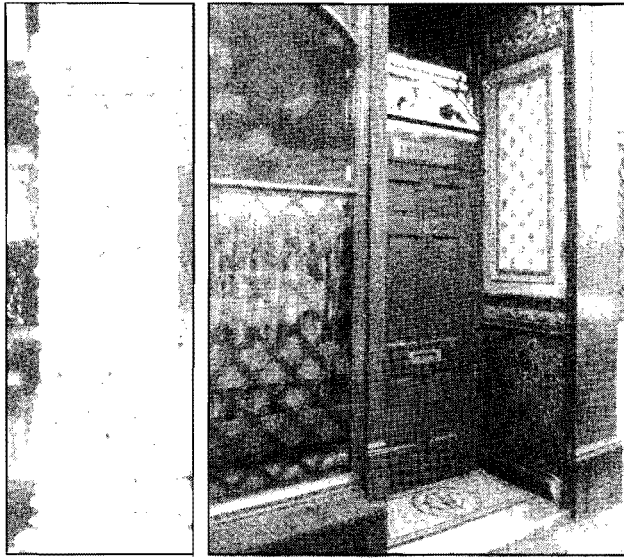
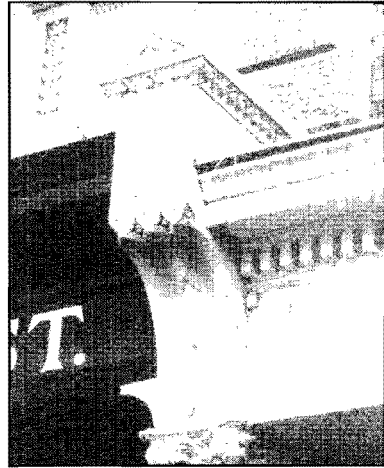


◆ SHOPFRONTS ◆



A guide to good design

PLANNING FOR A BRIGHTER WANDSWORTH

Wandsworth

Wandsworth Borough Council

November 1988

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INTRODUCTION

The Council's permission is required to install and in some cases alter a shopfront. Therefore these guidelines have been prepared by the Council to give advice on their design. A well designed shopfront, which is sensitive to the building and the area can provide an attractive and practical frame for the display of goods. People who sell modern standard shopfronts may tell you that they are best for your shop. However, this kind of shopfront will in many cases spoil the appearance of the building and the attractiveness of the shop.

These guidelines aim to show how each of the elements of a shopfront and its surround contribute to the character of a building. They set out basic principles of good shopfront design, without promoting any particular style. They apply throughout the Borough. In conservation areas the Council expects design to be particularly sensitive to the character of the area. The guidelines also explain the policies which the Council will apply when considering planning applications affecting shopfronts.



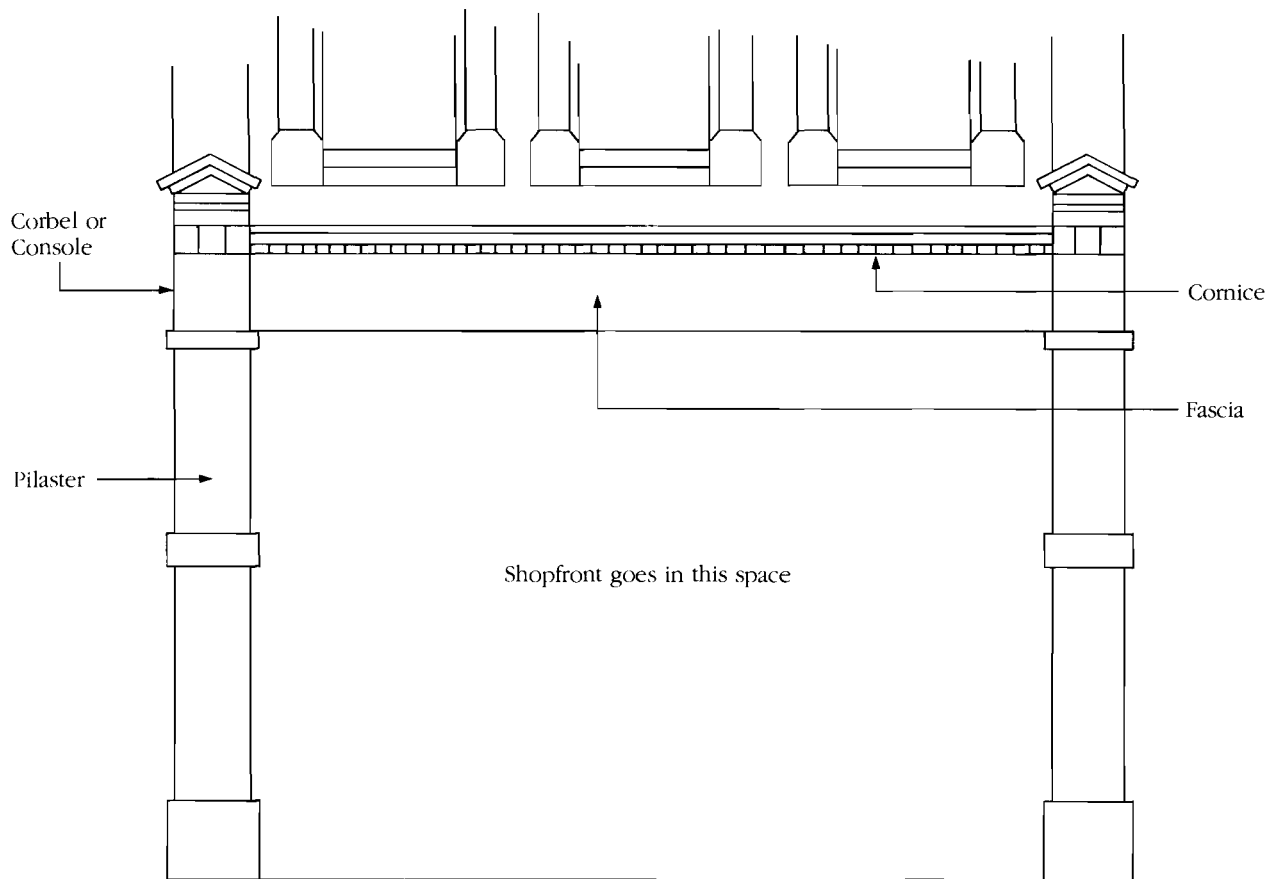
A typical Victorian parade where the left and right-hand shopfronts have been replaced with unsympathetic designs

BUILDING CHARACTER

A good shopfront which harmonises with the character of a building should not be replaced with a new one which looks out of place and detracts from its neighbours. New shopfronts should reflect the architectural features of the building. Original features should not be destroyed or concealed. Attention should also be paid to the character, scale, proportion and materials of the upper part of the building.

Most streets in the Borough have narrow fronted buildings, which give them a strong vertical emphasis. Modern shopfronts with large fascias and areas of plate glass tend to be horizontal in character and therefore conflict with this. A "standard" modern design is not automatically suitable even for a modern building. Attention should still be paid to the characteristics of the building in question.

Corporate styles may clash with the style or character of individual premises and their surroundings. The Council recognises the importance of a 'house style' to some traders, but in sensitive locations corporate styles may need to be modified.



Typical shop surround or frame

THE SHOPFRONT SURROUND OR FRAME

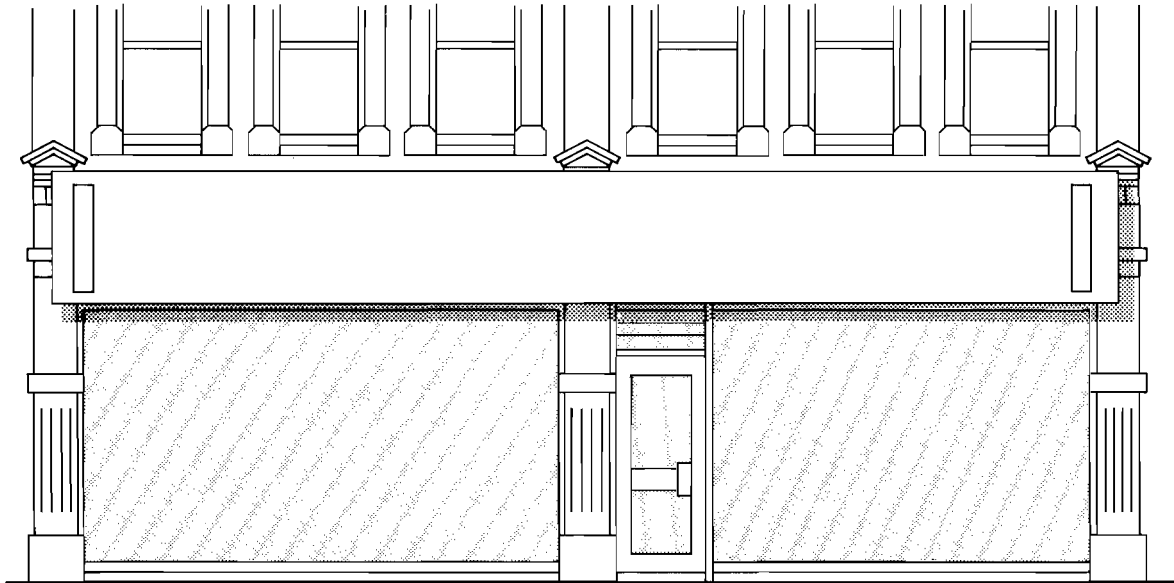
A shopfront is surrounded by a frame made up of a number of elements, essentially the pilasters, consoles or corbels, cornice and fascia (see diagram). Each of these elements has a practical purpose as well as contributing to the character of the building:-

- the **pilasters** distinguish each shop from its neighbours, and are particularly important within a parade as they define the width of each building by coinciding with party walls. Their base and decorated top (corbel) frequently reflect the level of stallrisers and fascias in the shopfront itself, and the **corbel** allows the fascia to be installed at an angle more easily visible from street level.
- the **fascia** provides space to display the name of the shop.
- the projecting **cornice** defines the top of the shopfront, distinguishes the shop from the rest of the building and directs rainwater away from the shopfront.

On many retail buildings in the Borough these original features still exist. On some buildings they may be concealed by more recent additions and on others they may have been removed. Their retention is particularly important where they form part of the original building and are sympathetic to its scale, proportions, rhythm and materials. On buildings where the original surround has been removed it is desirable that it is reinstated or replaced with similar features.

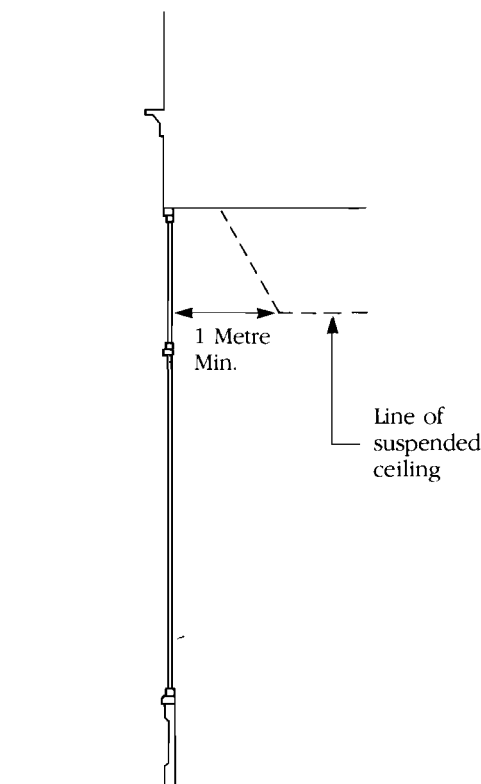
FASCIAS

Variations in the width, length, depth and materials used in the construction of fascias can all affect the appearance of a building. The fascia should be designed as an integral part of the shop and contained within the shopfront surround. It should not extend uninterrupted across a number of buildings. Oversize or deep fascias out of scale with the building are not suitable. Reflective materials and lurid colours or lettering should be avoided.



An oversize fascia which is out of scale and unsympathetic to its building

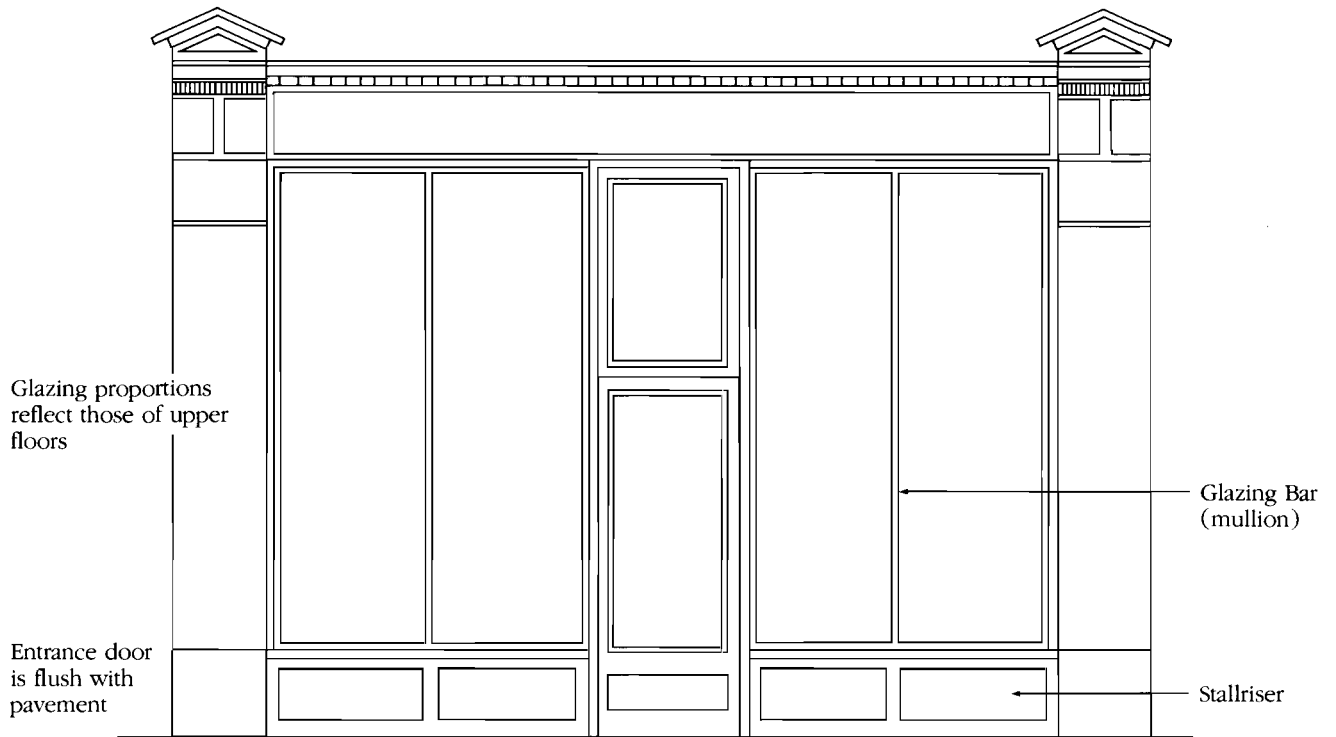
A frequent problem is where a deep fascia is used to cover a suspended ceiling. Generally, it is preferable to keep the original ceiling height but if this is not possible false ceilings should be set back at least one metre from the shop front. If this is not possible, obscure glass may be used to fill the gap between the ceiling and the base of the fascia.



Installation of a suspended ceiling

THE SHOPFRONT

The main elements that make up the shopfront itself are the windows/glazing, doors and stallrisers (see diagram). Many shopfronts have changed with the times and the occupants of the shop. However, within the Borough many buildings still retain attractive original shopfronts. Often repairs or a new colour scheme on these old shopfronts can provide an effective 'facelift' at lower cost and with less disruption than a new shopfront.



Typical traditional shopfront

Different designs can be accommodated within a traditional surround, allowing for the needs of different businesses, and guidance is given below on the points to follow. Copies of past styles may be acceptable, if they are appropriate to the building, though reproduction Victorian shopfronts should not for example be installed in Georgian buildings or vice versa.



A typical Victorian parade with a variety of sympathetic shopfront designs

Windows Large expanses of glass are usually out of scale and expensive to replace. Glazing bars can be used to subdivide large windows, so that they relate to the upper parts of the premises and also give the shopfront a more intimate scale.

Doors and Access. The design of doors should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront. If there is a separate door to the upper floors it should be retained to allow independent and continued use of these floors. On many traditional shopfronts the entrance is recessed and the floor of the recess may be decorated with mosaics or tiles. These recesses add variety as well as shelter for pedestrians. However they should be adequately lit, and in some locations may need gates or grilles for safety and security reasons.

New shopfronts should allow access for people with disabilities and comply with the following guidelines (see the Council's Access Design Guidelines):-

- a) Thresholds should be flush with the pavement. If there is a difference in level between the shop and the street a ramp (no steeper than 1 in 12 and preferably 1 in 20) should be provided to enable wheelchair access. Floor surfaces should be even, firm and non-slip. If a doormat is required it should be recessed in a matwell and flush with the floor surface.
- b) Entrance doors should give a clear opening width of not less than 830mm, preferably 900mm which will allow access for a double buggy. Where double doors are used one of the leaves should provide a clear opening of not less than 800mm. Self-closers on doors should be adjusted so that they are not too strong for people with disabilities to cope with. Wherever possible doors should have a kicking plate.
- c) All accessories such as door handles, bell pushes and letter boxes, should be set no higher than 1000mm above floor level. Lever door handles are preferred to knob handles and should be clearly distinguishable from the door itself.

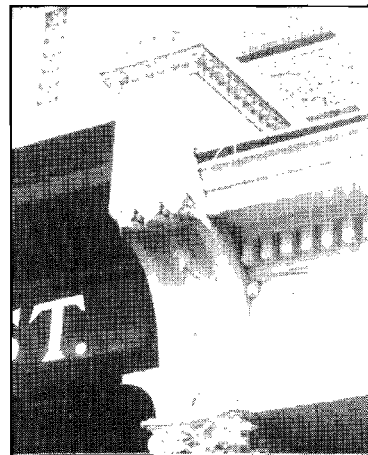
Stallrisers. The stallriser originally was part of the display table when shopfronts were completely open. This layout still persists in some shops (e.g. fishmongers and butchers). Stallrisers concentrate the shop display at waist level rather than floor level and prevent the glazing from being splashed by rain or fouled by dogs. They should be retained where possible, especially where they have glazed tiles or other decorative features. Where they have been removed their replacement is encouraged. They should be at least 500mm high or to the top of the pilaster base, of solid construction (e.g. of timber panelling or rendered brickwork), and provide a cill beneath the glazing. Some modern shopfront designs dispense with the traditional stallriser; care needs to be taken to ensure that these designs respect the shop frame and the proportions of the building.

DECORATION AND SPECIAL FEATURES

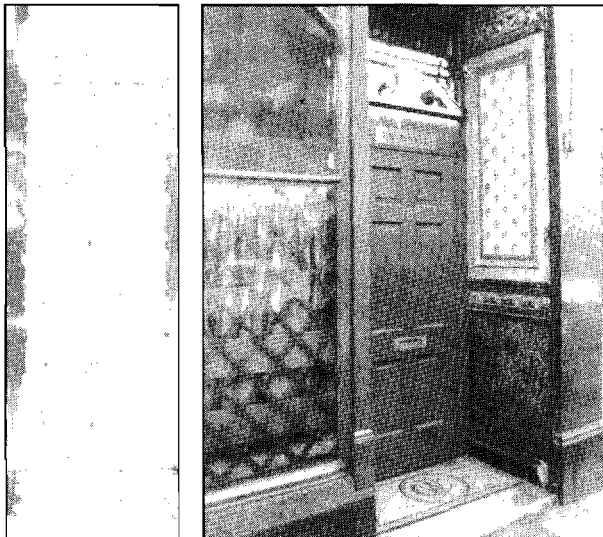
The small scale details of a shopfront are very important to a building's individual character and its contribution to the street scene. Details which lend themselves to decorative treatment are glazing bars and their arrangement, doors, entrances, stallrisers and forecourts.



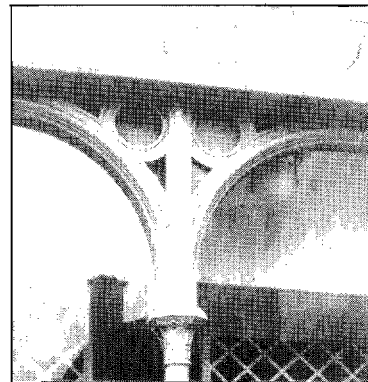
Decorative ironwork applied to cornice



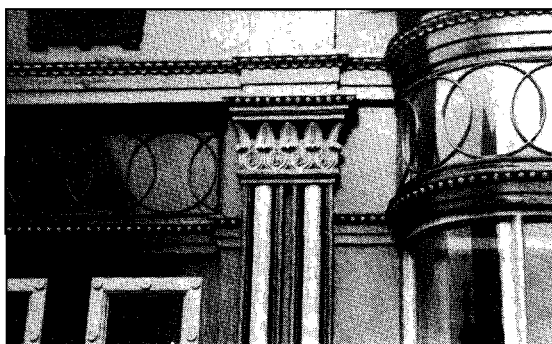
Well detailed corbel



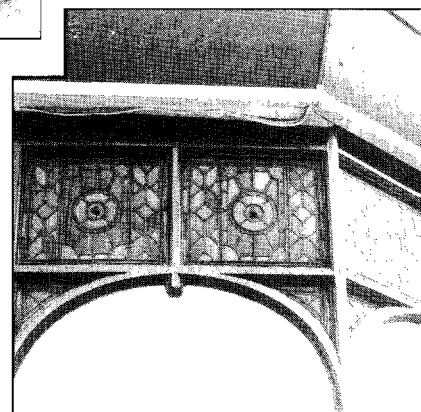
Decorative pilaster and tiled entrance



Attractive spandrel feature



Moulded timber shopfront



Decorative glass

Special features on existing shop fronts, such as decorative ironwork, carved or moulded timber or plasterwork, terracotta tiling, stonework and decorative glass should be retained and repaired where necessary.

FORECOURTS

Forecourts should be well maintained and paved in materials that complement paving materials in the street. The enclosure of private forecourts by means of canopies, awnings and railings, can be acceptable so long as they complement the style of the building and surroundings. The enclosure of a forecourt may require planning permission. The use of forecourts, particularly with an attractive display, can significantly add to the appearance of the shopfront and the visual interest and vitality of the street. Care should be taken to ensure that the public footpath is not obstructed or encroached upon and that there is easy access to the shop.



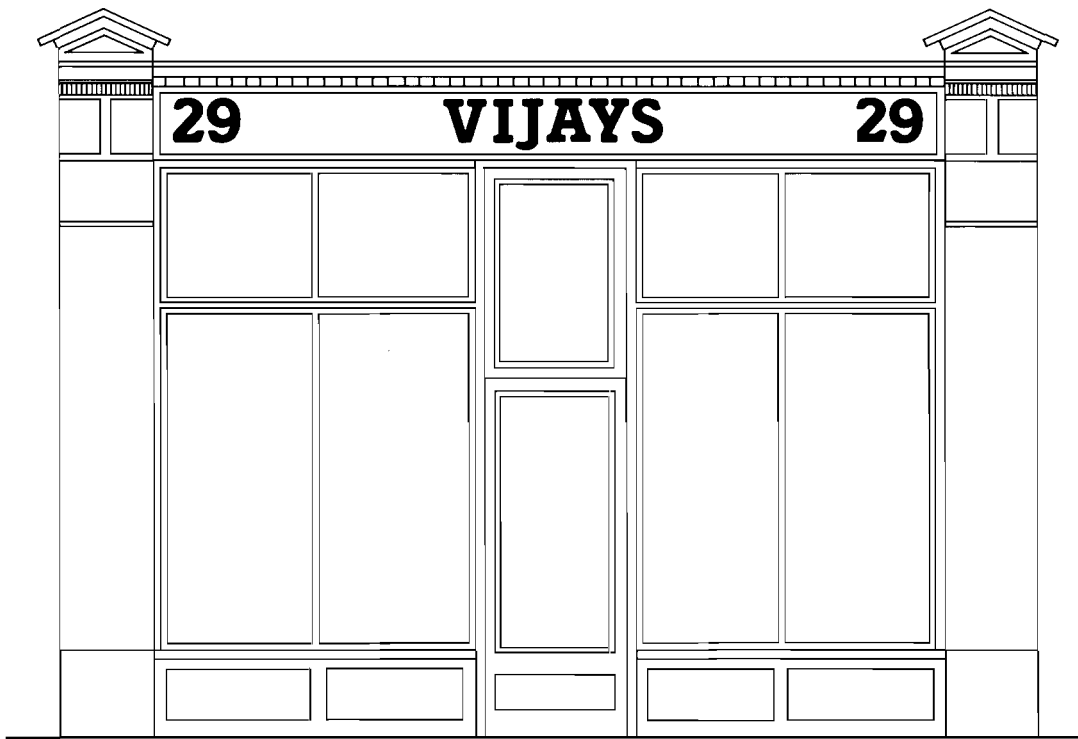
An attractive forecourt display can significantly add to the street scene

SIGNS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

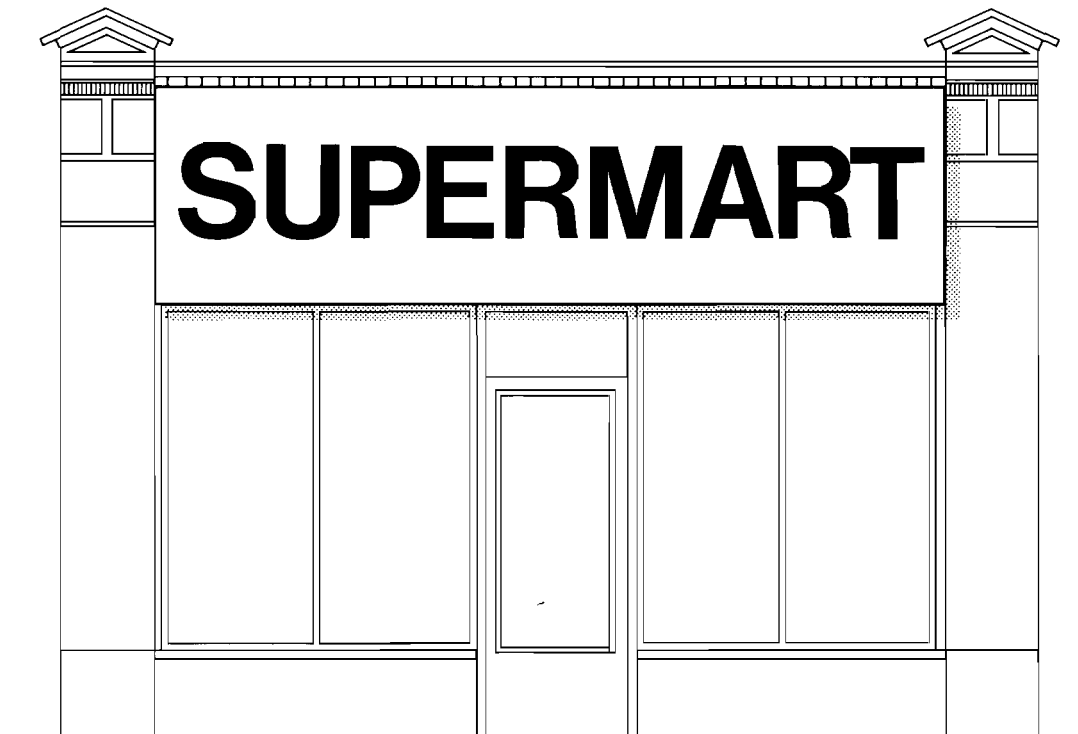
The design and location of signs and advertisements can affect the character of a building and the appearance of a shop. Well designed and suitably located signs can be attractive but cluttered, unrelated, oversize or brightly lit signs detract from the building, shopfront and street.

There are two main kinds of shop sign or advertisement: the fascia sign and the projecting or hanging sign:-

- a) **Fascia Signs.** Traditionally fascia signs were either hand painted or had individually applied lettering, or other decorative techniques, sometimes under glass. This type of sign complements most buildings. Modern factory-made box fascias, usually of metal and plastic, often built out from the existing fascia panel and designed to be internally illuminated, are often too large, bulky, and out of keeping with the style of most buildings. Fascia signs should not extend above or below the original fascia panel and not conceal or damage architectural features, and should clearly indicate the street number of the property.



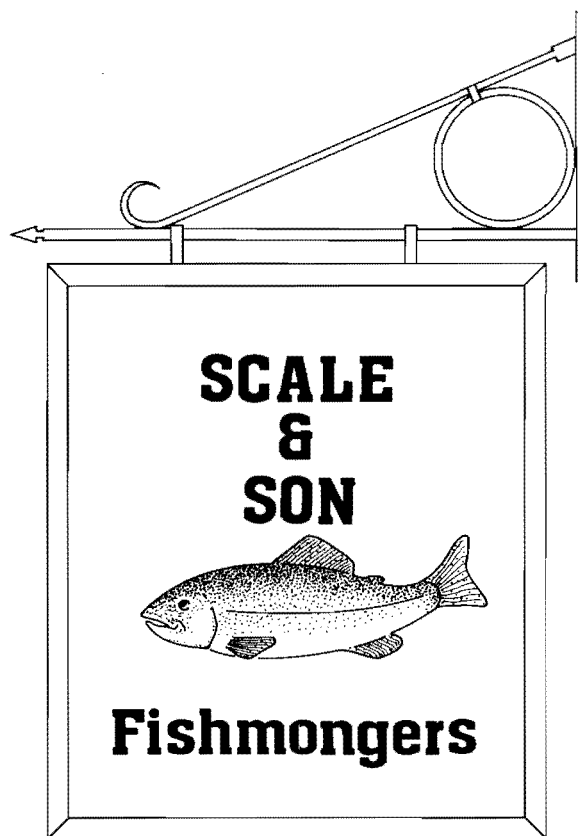
Typical traditional fascia sign



Unsightly box fascia sign

- b) **Projecting and Hanging Signs.** Often painted wood or ironwork, they can add originality and interest to the shopfront and the street. Signs and supporting brackets should be carefully designed and positioned so that they do not damage or conceal architectural features. They should not normally be below fascia level or above first floor cill heights. Projecting signs should generally be in line with the fascia. Hanging signs should not be above first floor level or beneath the fascia.

There should not normally be more than one fascia sign and one projecting or hanging sign on any building.



Typical hanging sign

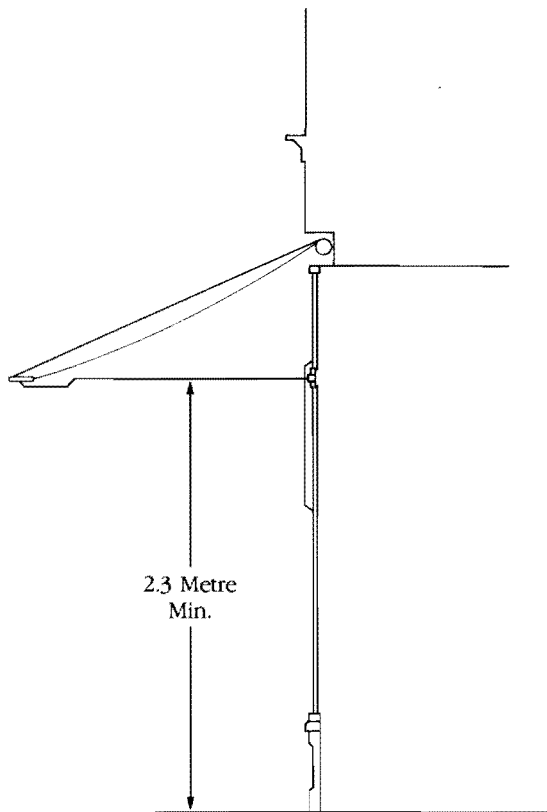
ILLUMINATION

In certain circumstances the illumination of fascia signs by means of concealed top light tubes or carefully positioned spot or back lights may be acceptable. These lights should not be obtrusive or conceal architectural features.

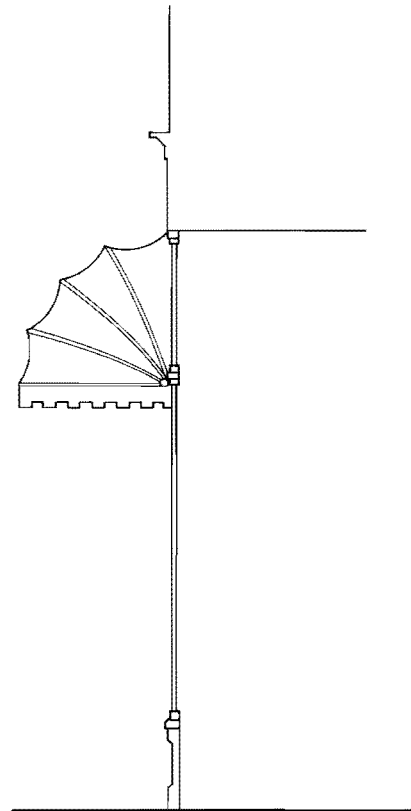
Internally illuminated box fascias and projecting box signs can be particularly obtrusive, and can harm the appearance of the shop, the character of the street or residential amenity. This type of sign is not generally suitable in conservation areas and on traditional shopfronts.

CANOPIES AND BLINDS

Canopies and blinds, if sensitively designed and located can add to the attractiveness of shops. They should fit in with the style of the shopfront and the character of the building in both their open and closed states. There are a variety of retractable blinds which can be attractive and provide weather protection. However, fixed 'Dutch blinds' or canopies tend to obscure the shopfront, and the materials used such as plastic, are often inappropriate, particularly on older style buildings and in conservation areas. All canopies and blinds should clear the footpath by a minimum of 2.3 metres.



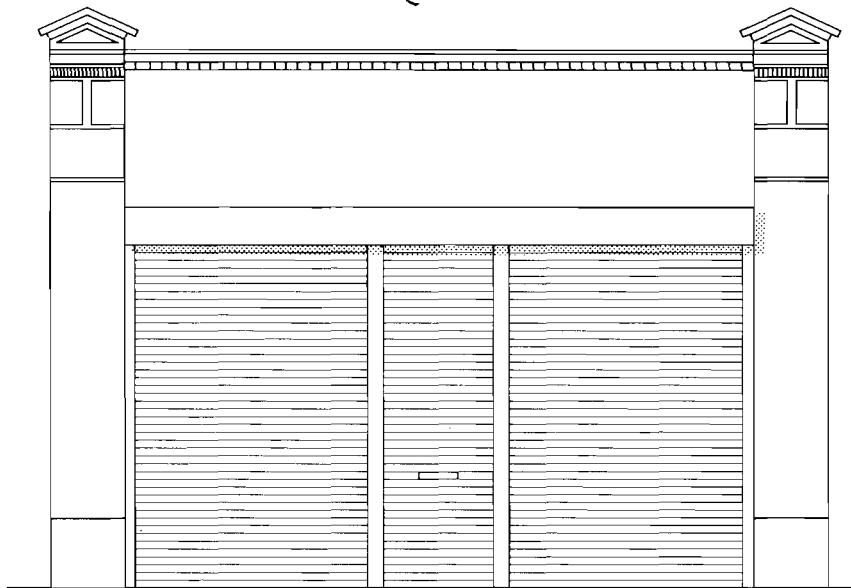
Retractable blinds can add interest to the street and offer shade and shelter



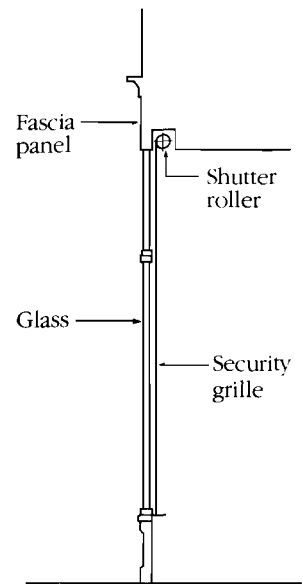
Large fixed plastic 'Dutch blinds' are usually inappropriate

SHOPFRONT SECURITY

The Council is concerned to balance the security needs of shop owners, with the effect on appearance caused by certain types of shutters. Traditional timber shutters are a familiar feature associated with certain trades. However, solid external metal shutters on shopfronts are unattractive, reduce visual interest and should only be considered where there is a continuing problem of vandalism and criminal damage. In these circumstances, shutter-box housings should either be integrated within the shopfront (i.e. behind the fascia) or recessed and flush with the shopfront. Guides should either be removable, or integrated with the shopfront design, and colour-coated (enamelled) to match the shopfront. Shop owners should be aware that solid external shutters have the drawback of being vulnerable to graffiti.



Solid metal shutters harm the appearance of the building and the street scene



Installation of an internal security grille

Shop owners are also recommended to consider the following alternatives in terms of security:-

- a) Security glass — laminated glass has a plastic layer incorporated into its construction and has the capacity to remain intact even when broken; alternatives are toughened glass or architectural Perspex.
- b) Internal security grilles — which can be fitted discreetly behind the glass of the shop window.
- c) External open mesh grilles — which still offer a display to be seen when in operation. Again, shutter-box housings should be integrated with the shopfront and guides should be either removable or integrated with the shopfront design.

The use of these alternatives, either independently or combined, and particularly in conjunction with an alarm, can offer the same security as solid metal shutters without harming the appearance of the building or character of the street, and allows for goods to be displayed even when the shop is closed.

POLICIES

You will normally need planning permission to alter a shopfront and consent may also be required for signs, for example where they are to be illuminated. In conservation areas consent is needed to demolish existing shopfronts. You are advised to consult the Borough Planner's Service at an early stage when considering alterations to a shopfront. In dealing with applications the Council will apply the following policies, having regard to these guidelines:-

- a) original features which contribute to a building's character should not be destroyed or concealed by the installation of a new shopfront;
- b) the Council will seek the retention and restoration if appropriate of sound examples of original period shopfronts, especially in conservation areas;
- c) in conservation areas the Council will resist the demolition of original shop fronts and surrounds and encourage their reinstatement where they have been removed;

- d) the Council will resist the installation of fascias which are inappropriate to a building in terms of length, width, depth or materials, or which extend uninterrupted across more than one building;
- e) the Council will normally resist the loss of independent access to upper floors;
- f) new shopfronts should be designed to allow access for people with disabilities;
- g) the number of signs on a building should normally be limited to one fascia sign and one projecting sign;
- h) fascia signs should not extend above ground floor level, and projecting or hanging signs should not normally be below fascia level or above first floor cill level — signs should not conceal or damage important architectural features;
- i) the Council will resist the installation of internally illuminated box fascias or projecting box signs which adversely affect the character of conservation areas, or whose materials, colours or proportions are out-of-keeping with the building; and any illumination which might affect the amenity of residential property — conditions will be applied where appropriate to control the level and timing of illumination; and
- j) the Council will resist the installation of fixed blinds which adversely affect the character of older style buildings or conservation areas.

Wandsworth
