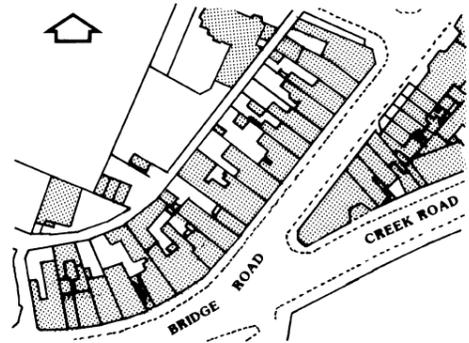


The purpose of exercising control is to achieve an even higher standard of design, and to ensure that shopfronts make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of conservation areas. Good design is often linked to commercial success.

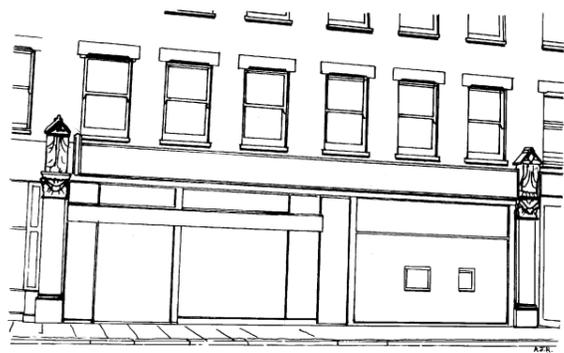
New Buildings within a Shopping Area

The special character of shopfronts within the Borough's conservation areas is derived as much from the continuity of the original plot widths, as from the architectural styles of individual buildings. These plot widths help to make up the historic "grain" of a town or village and often determine building frontages. Many streets in the Borough's conservation areas have narrow fronted buildings and it is this character that sets the elevational rhythm of the street and gives buildings a strong vertical emphasis.



Bridge Road, East Molesey
Narrow fronted plots provide the theme for this shopping street

Present day commercial pressures often work counter to this local character, eroding the uniqueness of buildings and streets. The insertion of aggressively horizontal buildings or large shopfronts combining two or more plots often disrupts this rhythm and introduces an alien element in an otherwise balanced and harmonious traditional frontage.



An over aggressive shopfront which has combined two plots, and removed the central pilaster

Where a building occupies more than one original plot, or where a trader wishes to expand across two or more facades, it is important that both the building and the shopfront should be sub-divided to reflect the original plot width and retain this vertical emphasis. This will help to give the appearance of being several individual units. Vertical sub-divisions in the form of pilasters, columns and fenestration should be used to achieve this.

Any change that proposes to ignore the separate identity of two adjoining buildings, in an attempt to achieve a corporate identity and give the appearance of a single shopfront, will be strongly resisted. This principle applies especially to supermarkets and other large-fronted shops.



Church Street, Weybridge
Pilasters and corbels to differentiate individual shop units

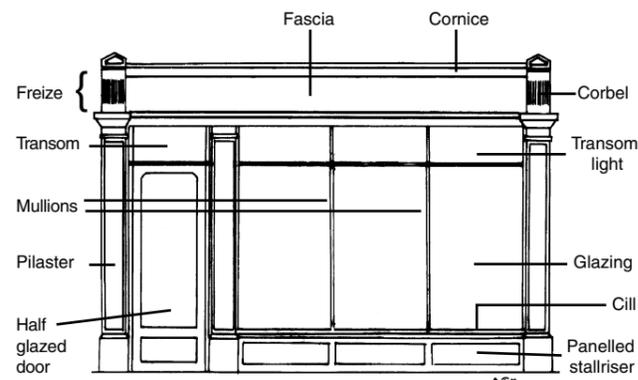
Where the scale of adjoining buildings differs, or where they are at different levels, emphasis should also be placed on trying to create a variety of shop units with different fascia heights, stallriser heights and window designs, within each building. This contributes to the complexity and interest of the street scene.

Where a long stretch of shop frontage is required, a more attractive appearance can be achieved by modelling facades and juxtaposing the various elements that make up the shopfront and including fascias, glazing and doors. Proposals for new buildings containing shops should be sympathetic with the scale, proportions and design of existing buildings in the street. The new shopfront should not be designed in isolation, but should incorporate elements from the upper floors of the building. In this way the traditional appearance is maintained.

Retention of Traditional Shopfronts

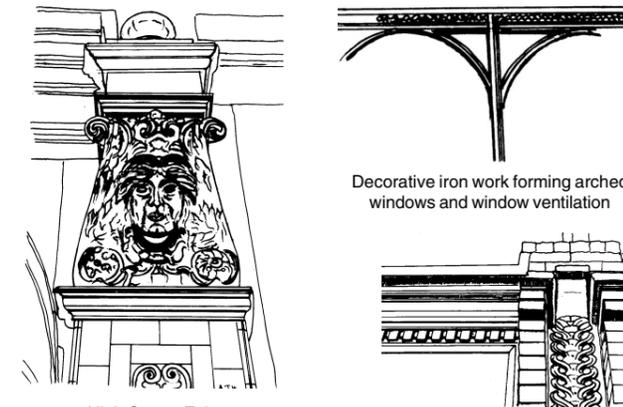
Many of the buildings within the Borough's conservation areas still retain attractive, original shopfronts. Before altering or replacing a shopfront, consideration must be given to the quality of the old shopfront and the possibility of restoring it. Repairs or a new colour scheme on these old shopfronts can often provide an effective "face-lift" at lower cost and with less disruption than a new shopfront, so older shopfronts should be preserved wherever possible.

In traditional style buildings the shopfront generally consists of a well-designed and proportioned framework and display window. The framework consists of classical elements which include pilasters, columns and a frieze. The frieze usually incorporates a cornice and fascia. It separates each shop from its neighbour and from the building above. The display window itself is often made up of moulded mullions (which subdivide the glazing vertically) a transom rail, half glazed doors and a solid panelled stallriser at the base.



Elements of a traditional shopfront

As already mentioned, the Council will encourage the full restoration of all these elements and original features in conservation areas. Special details such as ornate pilasters, decorative ironwork, carved or moulded timber or plasterwork, terracotta tiling, stonework, and decorative glass should also be retained intact and repaired where necessary. These help to reinforce and preserve the special architectural / historic character of older shopfronts. Unsympathetic previous alterations ought to be removed and replaced by architectural features of a more appropriate style.



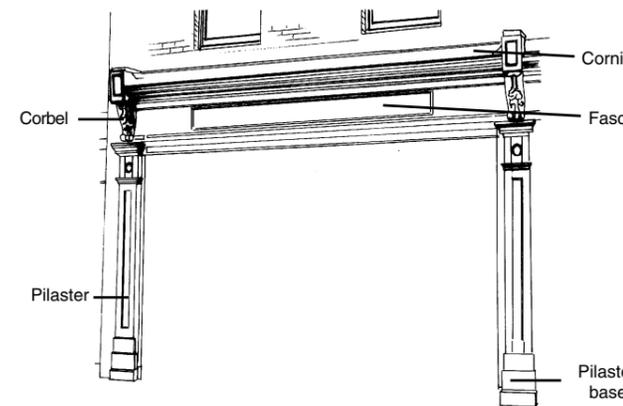
High Street, Esher
Decorative corbel and tiled pilaster

Decorative iron work forming arched windows and window ventilation
Corbel and cornice detail

In situations where the display window is of no special merit, it is acceptable to replace or alter the window provided it is fitted within the original opening, and is sensitively designed. However when replacing or restoring shopfronts, the details should be determined as far as possible by the evidence of the original building itself, and not by later incorrect replacements. Where little of the original shopfront remains, evidence can be taken from adjacent shopfronts of a similar period and style. Where the shopfront is in a building which is on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, all alterations which would adversely affect its character will be resisted.

The Shopfront Surround

On buildings where the original shopfront frame has been removed, it should be reinstated or replaced with traditional elements of shopfront design i.e. pilasters, frieze and fascia. A good strong frame will help the design to relate well to the rest of the building above, and allow a variety of individual shopfront designs. Attention should be paid to how the whole building was originally designed, respecting proportions and architectural details, to ensure that the surround forms an integral part of the new building.



A traditional shopfront surround

Architectural elements such as pilasters should continue through the shopfront to ground level to complete the framework.

The new shopfront surround should be contained within the width of the building. It should be sympathetic with adjacent shopfronts in terms of scale, materials and fascia heights. The top of the frieze should be kept below the base of the first floor windows so that it does not obscure architectural details or over-dominate the building. Similarly cornices and fascias should run through at the same height, as these act as strong unifying features, particularly where there is more than one shopfront within the same building. This will allow for internal variety in the design of individual shopfronts, without upsetting the overall character of a street.



High Street, Esher
Cornices and fascias run through at the same height

Fascias perform a useful function by helping to emphasise the commercial area of a town or village and adding vitality and colour to what should be a lively and attractive area. Variations in the width, length, depth and materials used in the construction of fascias all affect the appearance of a building. Therefore the fascia should be designed as an integral part of the shop.

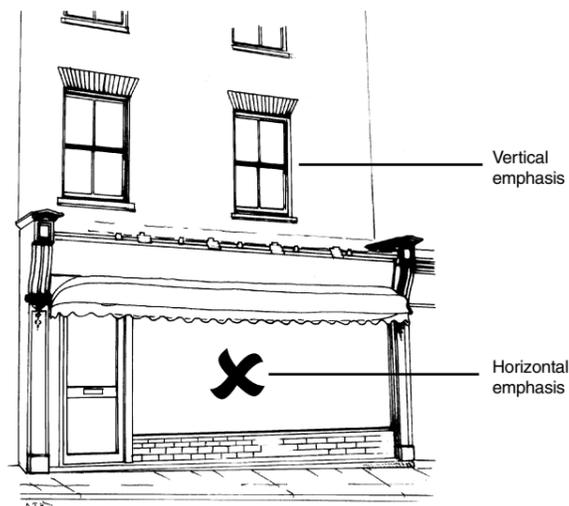
To avoid fascias merging with those of neighbouring premises, the width should be contained within the shopfront surround. The depth of fascias should also relate to others in the street. Oversized or deep fascias out-of-scale with the building are not suitable and should be avoided. They can break the continuity of the visual line, and obscure architectural details such as cornices or corbels, thereby destroying the architectural unity.

The Shopfront

The main elements that make up the traditional shopfront itself are contained within the "surround" and include the glazing, doors and stallrisers.

• The Display Window

The display window is the main visual element of a shopfront. It provides an attractive frame for the display of goods, but can present the most difficult design problem. Modern retailing methods demand large expanses of undivided glass, to allow the maximum display of goods. These are usually out-of-scale and proportion with the character of most buildings, and are historically incorrect. In addition, the horizontal emphasis visually divorces the shopfront from the upper elevations of the premises and the adjoining properties. Even if the windows are sub-divided with glazing bars, an attractive display area can be created. Overall harmony and integration of the whole building can be maintained where the glazing proportions reflect those of the upper floors.



Large expanses of undivided glass are out of character with the upper elevations

• Entrances

The design of doors should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront and be sensitively located. A glazed door, with a solid panel at the bottom should be used where possible. The top of the panel should line up with the top of the stallriser. Recessed entrances add visual interest and variation, and allow a larger display area as well as shelter for pedestrians.

Where there is a separate entrance to the upper floors this should be retained to allow independent access and continued use of these floors. Where separate flats or offices are created above shops, care should be taken to ensure that the new entrance doors are panelled and front onto the street. A glazed panel above the door will help to illuminate the entrance lobby.

All new shopfronts should be designed to allow easy access for disabled people wherever reasonably practical to conform with the various Disabled Persons' Acts and the Building Regulations, Part M, relating to access and facilities for disabled people. The entrance to the shop should be at pavement level, and/or ramped and wide enough for a wheelchair to enter. Entrance doors should give a clear opening width of at least 800mm.

Good design pays attention to detail. The choice of handles, letterboxes and other architectural ironmongery needs careful attention.

• Stallrisers

Stallrisers consist of solid panels below shop windows. They form a base to the shopfront display, and prevent the glazing from being damaged or soiled. They should be retained where possible, and where they have been removed they should be replaced in any new shopfront design.

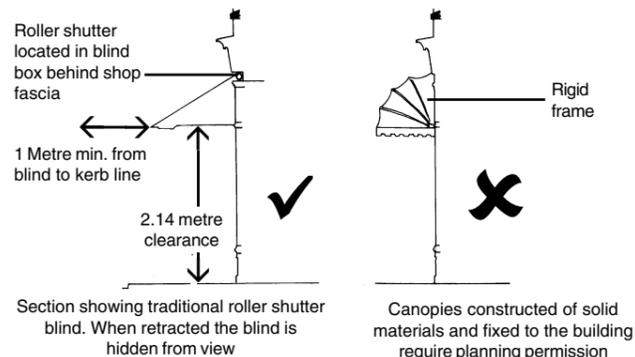
Ideally a stallriser should be of a consistent height, usually at least 600mm. high or to the top of the pilaster base. The design should respect the shopfront frame and proportions. It should be constructed of timber panelling, stock brickwork or plain render. A cill should be provided beneath the glazing. Unfortunately the trend of introducing picture frame windows has often led to the absence of a stallriser. This will be strongly resisted within conservation areas.

Canopies and Blinds

Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene if they are appropriate to the period and character of the conservation area. On listed buildings, correct detailing and traditional craftsmanship are also required.

Where blinds are considered necessary, they should form an integral part of the shopfront design and should be fully retractable. Traditional canvas roller blinds with a matt finish are usually better suited to older buildings. These have the advantage of being concealed from view when fully retracted within the blind box. This must be fitted above the glazing, preferably on the underside of the fascia, to avoid obscuring any architectural detail. "Continental" or rigid framed "Dutch blinds" often made of plastic and with a glossy or metallic finish are inappropriate and will be resisted.

To ensure safe ground clearance, all canopies and blinds should have a clearance of 2.14m. (7'). Planning permission is usually required for blinds that do not carry lettering or symbols, and advertisement consent may be required where lettering or symbols are incorporated.



Shopfront Security

Security shutters normally require planning permission and listed building consent if the building is listed. The Council is concerned to balance the security needs of shop owners with the effect on appearance caused by certain types of shutters. Solid external metal roller shutters on shopfronts are inappropriate, particularly in conservation areas and will be resisted. They form a flat blank screen which detracts from the architectural integrity of a building. In addition they are vulnerable to graffiti. Collectively they create a deadening effect on the street scene at night and are detrimental to the appearance of shopping areas.



Solid metal shutters have a deadening and hostile effect on the street scene

If increased security is necessary, shop owners are recommended to consider more acceptable alternatives. These include security glass, burglar alarms and internal open mesh grilles fitted behind the glass of the shop window. These are more attractive in appearance, allow window displays to be seen outside opening hours and provide additional illumination making the street safer for pedestrians. External open mesh grilles will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Where grilles are used, shutterbox housings need to be concealed to minimise their visual impact, either behind the fascia or recessed flush with the shopfront. All channel guides should be either removable or integrated with the shopfront design.

Materials

Natural surfaces in good condition should be preserved wherever practical and existing brickwork should either be left untreated, or rendered if in poor condition.

Considerable care needs to be exercised in the selection of new materials and colours. They should be chosen to be compatible with the building and surrounding shopfronts and the number kept to a minimum. They should be of a high quality, and be able to withstand weathering and staining and be easily cleaned.

Traditional materials should be used when restoring, altering or installing new shopfronts. These include painted or stained timber, ironwork, stock brickwork, semi-matt tiles and cement render. The use of powder-coated colour finished aluminium will also be considered in certain circumstances. However UPVC self-coated aluminium, galvanised metal, glazed tiles and other highly reflective materials should be avoided, as these detract from the appearance of old buildings, and adversely affect the character of the Borough's conservation areas.

Dark matt colours were often used on traditional shopfronts such as dark blue, black, dark green, maroon and brown. Therefore harsh and gaudy colours unsympathetic to the building should be avoided.

Further Information

In cases where alterations to shopfronts are not covered by this leaflet, applications will be judged on their own merits, and will depend on existing circumstances, such as surrounding buildings and shopfronts. Fully detailed plans should accompany applications to a suitable scale (i.e. 1:50 scale) and should include the elevation of the building concerned and adjoining buildings, together with materials and colours proposed.

If you are unsure if your property is within or adjacent to a Conservation Area please use the Council's website or contact the Town Planning Division.

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this leaflet. Please keep it safe as you may wish to refer to it at a later date.

Director of Strategic Services
D.R. Wiltshire, BSc, DipTP, DMS, MRTPI, MCMI

Head of Town Planning
M. Parker B.A, MRPTI

Elmbridge Borough Council,
Civic Centre, High Street, Esher.
Surrey KT10 9SD

Tel: 01372 474474
Fax: 01372 474910
DX: 36302 ESHER

Website: www.elmbridge.gov.uk
Email: tplan@elmbridge.gov.uk

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Services Directorate

Shopfronts in Conservation Areas

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide advice and guidance to individuals and businesses considering the restoration, alteration or replacement of their shopfronts. It supplements policies in the Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local 2000 Plan and applies particularly to properties within the Borough's conservation areas. The Council expects traditional unaltered shopfronts to be retained and restored if at all possible, especially if they were fitted prior to 1914. It expects any alterations to existing shopfronts to preserve the character of the overall building and the conservation area generally. It also seeks to improve the standard of design and materials, where new shopfronts are necessary, to enhance the overall appearance of shopping streets. This leaflet sets out acceptable principles of good shopfront design which the Council will take into account when considering planning applications affecting shopfronts.



High Street, Claygate Village
A traditional corner shop - the side window retains the symmetry of the ground floor and the overall design of the building

All new shopfronts or significant alterations to shopfronts (including the installation of security grilles and shutters) generally require planning permission, under Section 57 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. However, routine maintenance works, such as redecoration or repair, will not normally involve development requiring planning permission. In the case of listed buildings, even minor alterations, which might not require planning permission, would normally require listed building consent. They must be consistent with the age or style of the building. Advertisements may require a separate application for consent, which is dealt with in another leaflet.