

# SHOPFRONTS AND SIGNS

Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 1



LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

# Shopfronts and Signs

## Supplementary Planning Guidance

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*This guidance is non-statutory planning guidance which supplements the policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted on 30th January 1997, and sets out the Council's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the Borough.*

*Only the policies in the Development Plan can have the special status afforded by section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (as amended) in deciding planning applications. However, the Government advises that supplementary planning guidance may be taken into account as a material consideration, the weight accorded to it being increased if it has been prepared in consultation with the public and has been the subject of a Council Resolution. This document has undergone public consultation and was adopted by the Council at its Planning and Environment Committee on 27th March 1996*

*This guidance supplements Policies BE19 and BE20 and the policies on Urban Conservation. The Council has also produced Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Alterations, Residential Conversions and Residential Extensions*

## Shopping in Croydon

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- 1.1 The Borough contains many shopping areas, each with its own particular character. The aim of this guidance is to encourage creative solutions to shopfront design within existing and proposed buildings in Croydon.
- 1.2 Shopping streets should offer a pleasurable and accessible environment where customers can browse and linger and where the goods are displayed in an attractive and exciting way, within the framework of a well designed shopfront. A shopfront that has been designed with skill and care gives the impression of quality and permanence.
- 1.3 An emphasis on good quality design of shopfronts and advertisements will in turn encourage investment and spending and will ultimately benefit all traders and shoppers in Croydon.
- 1.4 This leaflet aims to establish the broad principles of shopfront design, but each case needs to be treated individually as there is no standard shopfront that can be used in every street.

## Shopfronts & The Street Scene

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- 2.1 Shopfronts play a key part in our perception of shopping streets because they are at eye level and are accessible to everyone. When considering installing a new shopfront it should not be seen in isolation, but in the wider context of the building and the street in which it is located. The character and proportion of upper floors and surrounding buildings must be taken into account in the design of new shopfronts.



**fig. 1. A well detailed and proportioned shopfront that positively contributes to the street scene**

## The Shopfront

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- 3.1 The shopfront should sit within the original building framework set by structural columns and beams and should carry significant features through to ground floor level, rather than visually separating the ground and first floors.
- 3.2 The vertical and horizontal emphasis of the surrounding buildings is important when designing a new shopfront. If a unit occupies more than one building, the vertical division between the buildings must be retained. In addition the scale and proportion of the shopfront and the elements within it need to correspond to the scale of the building above. Designs need to be imaginative within the constraints of the existing building, enhancing its character rather than conflicting with it.



**fig. 2. The vertical division between these buildings has been visually destroyed by this shopfront**

## Style

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- 4.1 Where the existing shopfront is of such quality that it contributes significantly to the character of the building or area it should normally be refurbished rather than replaced. Where a shopfront is to be replaced, a modern design within the constraints of the existing shop

surround and style of the building would be appropriate. Emphasis should be on a design that respects the period and style of the building. If a “traditional style” shopfront is required it should be appropriate to the style and age of the building and the locality.

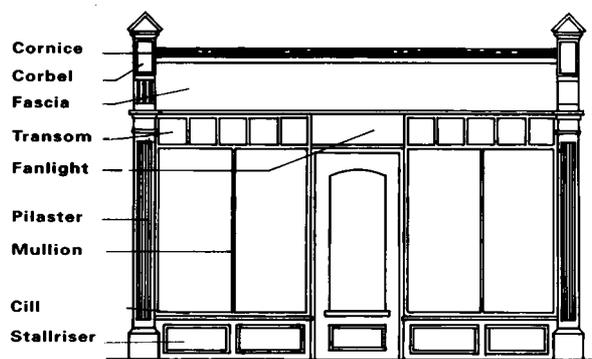


**fig. 3. From left to right : A high quality innovative design; A well detailed “traditional style” shopfront; A contemporary shopfront that complements the style of the building**

## Details

5.1 Careful attention to detailed design should give the shop a unique quality which will help promote its image and consequently the goods inside.

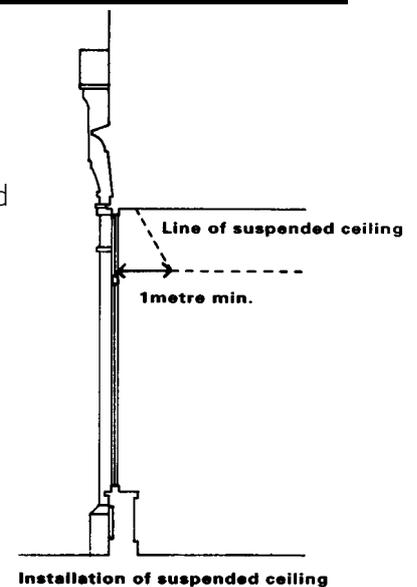
5.2 The pilasters, cornice, stallriser and fascia each has its own function in both practical and visual terms: The pilasters are the vertical divisions between adjacent shopfronts and are important elements in relating the shopfront to the rest of the building above. The cornice defines the top of the shopfront. The stallriser protects the glass at ground level from dirt and can provide a visual and structural base for the shopfront. The fascia provides the space for advertising. (See diagram above for details of the elements of a traditional shopfront).



- 5.3 All these elements frame the shopfront and integrate it with the building above. The functions and visual effects of these traditional features are all still relevant for modern designs.
- 5.4 Stallrisers are a common feature of the “traditional style” shopfront, however some contemporary buildings and shopfronts do not require a significant stallriser. Where the location and style of the building allows, a large expanse of plate glass with the emphasis on the interior of the shop providing the display can be an attractive solution which suits some contemporary marketing techniques.

## Fascias

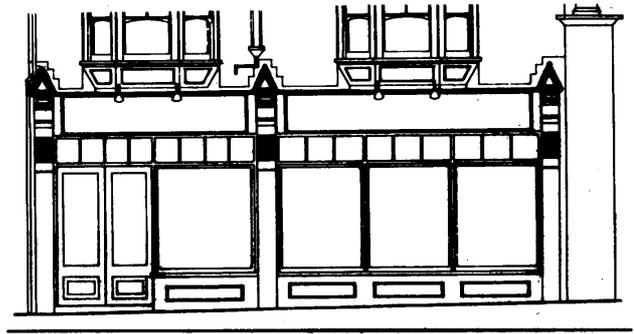
- 6.1 Over large fascias should be avoided. The scale and design of the fascia whether on a “traditional style” shopfront or a modern interpretation should relate to the style and scale of the building without obscuring any features of the elevation. An existing or adjoining unsuitable fascia should not be allowed to influence the design of the replacement shopfront. Box fascias that project from the face of the building are clumsy and destroy the lines of the shopfront. Where a false ceiling is proposed inside a shop it will not be acceptable to increase the fascia depth in line with it. Careful detailing of the transom with opaque glass, or setting the false ceiling back within the shop can be ways of dealing with the change of level (see diagram right).



**fig. 4. Obscure glass has been used here to fill the gap between the ceiling and the bottom of the fascia**



**fig. 5. An excess of advertising can detract from the quality of the building**

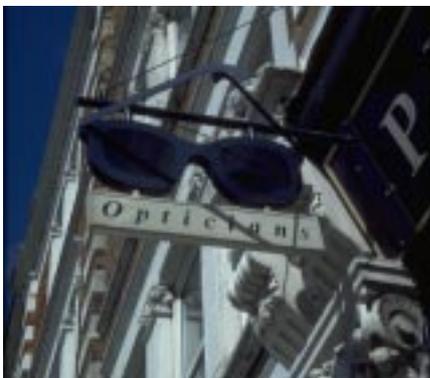


**fig. 6. Large, internally illuminated box fascias should be avoided. The fascia size should be related to the overall proportions of the building. As shown in the diagram above**

## Shop Signs

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- 7.1 If designed with skill, advertisements can project a particular image and give a sense of quality and permanence. Attention to detail in lettering style and quality of execution are important factors which can dramatically effect the appearance of the shopfront. Too many, or over large advertisements detract from the quality of the building giving it a sense of brash impermanence. The design and detailing of fascia advertisements and projecting signs should always complement the design of the shopfront and building.



**fig.7. Attractive and individual approaches to signage**

- 7.2 Shop lettering should convey the essential message of the retailer. The shop name alone will generally have most effect. If more signage is needed it could be painted on the glass. Lettering that is in scale with the shopfront is attractive and gives a sense of permanence and quality, and clear well spaced lettering is more readable than large oversized letters. Lettering is usually best painted directly onto the fascia or individual letters applied to the fascia. Fine neon tubing can be a successful lettering material if used creatively and in moderation. The style of lettering chosen can evoke an image; it can reflect the use and character of the shop as well as the building above.



**fig.8. Well designed lettering can give a shop individuality and a unique character**

- 7.3 An externally illuminated, swinging, hanging sign has more visual interest than a fixed, internally illuminated box sign. There should not be more than one hanging sign per building and it should be located at fascia level, or level with the first floor windows. The lowest part of any projecting sign should not be less than 2.3m above ground level. If illumination of the fascia or projecting sign is required, this should be done by external means e.g. concealed top light tubes or carefully positioned spot or back lights. Internally illuminated box fascias should be avoided. Fine neon lettering is an effective means of incorporating signage and illumination which does not detract from the building during the day. Shopfronts and signs that are overlit contribute to the problem of light pollution through light spill. Many buildings in commercial areas are externally lit beyond the basic requirements of both their character in the street, and the merit of their architectural detailing. This inefficient use of light can destroy the visual quality of the borough at night and also represent a significant waste of energy.

- 7.4 Each shop should have its street number displayed. This could be included as part of the fascia, on glazing above the door or on the door itself.

## Corporate Image

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- 8.1 Many retailers often wish to trade on the basis of house colour and house style, but this must be reconciled with the need to enhance the unique quality of each shop front and shopping centre. In sensitive locations corporate styles may need to be modified so that they respect the character and style of the building on which they are located. This could mean the use of non standard materials and smaller lettering or logos. Corporate image should be designed so that it can be applied to a variety of different styles of building. It needs to be adaptable and instantly recognisable in any situation.

## Windows

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- 9.1 Large expanses of glass can sometimes be out of scale and are expensive to replace. The method of subdivision of the shopfront glass should suit the character of the shopfront as well as the design of the building above. Glazing bars can be used to subdivide large windows, so that they relate to the upper parts of the building and give the shopfront a more intimate scale. Doors and recesses can also be used to break up the window area.



**fig.9. An attractive curved glass shopfront**



**fig.10. Decorative details contribute to the overall quality of the shopfront**

## Materials

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- 10.1 Excessively glossy or reflective surfaces such as acrylic or perspex are not recommended as generally those buildings of which they form part have a matt or semi-matt appearance. Timber is an appropriate material for shopfront construction, it is versatile, durable, easily and cheaply maintained or altered. If aluminium is required it should be bronzed, anodised or colour finished rather than having a bare satin finish. Where feature tiles or terrazzo are present they should be repaired or restored as part of any new proposals.

- 10.2 When considering the colour of new or replacement shopfronts it is important that the selected colour scheme complements the character and style of the building, rather than conflicting with it.
- 10.3 New materials used in replacement shopfronts should be from sustainably managed sources and the recycling of waste materials will be supported.
- 10.4 High standards of construction and installation are particularly important, it is therefore recommended that experienced shopfitters and installers are always used when altering or installing shopfronts.



**fig.11. The materials chosen for this shopfront detract from the character of the rest of the building**

## Canopies & Blinds

- 11.1 Canopies and blinds protect goods from damage by sunlight and provide shelter for shoppers in bad weather. Blinds should always be retractable, and their housings should not obscure any attractive features of the shopfront. Blinds should be made of canvas or a similar non-reflective material, not plastic.



**fig.12. Traditional canvas retractable blinds which can also be used to carry advertising**



**fig. 13. Non retractable plastic blinds are not appropriate as they permanently obscure parts of the shopfront and introduce discordant materials and shapes into the street scene, particularly in historic areas**

## Security Shutters

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- 12.1 The need for security shutters should be considered at an early stage when planning a new shopfront. Solid external shutters can have a deadening effect on the character of the shopping street. When they are down they obscure details of the shopfront, the window display is not visible and additional illumination for the street is lost. Where security is a problem, grilles of an “open” design may be acceptable in some locations but laminated glass or internal shutters are the preferred solutions.



**fig.14. Solid security shutters, as well as attracting graffiti, have a deadening affect on the street**



**fig.15. Internal open grille shutters are preferred**

## Access

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- 13.1 New shopfronts should be designed with level access. Doors should exceed 840mm in width and be either automatic or fitted with check action door closers to give people with reduced mobility time to move clear of the door. Fully glazed doors should have a coloured logo or sticker on them to warn the partially sighted. In addition, if a completely glass door is needed, its edge should be highlighted in some way. Door handles should be at waist height, however, full length and width handles are preferred. A doorbell for use by wheelchair users located at waist height can also be helpful. Mat wells should be designed so as not to impede wheelchairs or be a source of possible hazard. Non-sinkable door mats should be used ie. those made of fibre and aluminium or rubber.

## Forecourts

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- 14.1 Private forecourts should be well maintained and finished with materials that complement the paving material of the street. An attractive display on a forecourt can contribute to the

visual interest and vitality of the street. However, it is an offence to display goods, erect signs, or encroach upon the public footway in any way.

## Maintenance

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- 15.1 Regular maintenance is essential if shopfronts are to remain attractive. This is particularly important in the case of woodwork and metal surfaces. The National Association of Shopfitters has produced a leaflet on the Care and Maintenance of Shopfronts, fittings and Interiors, which is available from NAS House, 411 Limpsfield Road, Warlingham, Surrey CR3 9HA.

## Additional Considerations in Historic Areas

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- 16.1 There are many historic areas and buildings in the borough where the design of shopfronts is particularly sensitive. By controlling the design of development within these areas, the Council aims to preserve and enhance their appearance. Within these areas, the Council will therefore require new shopfronts to be designed with particular care in order to complement the character of the existing buildings. This does not mean that “traditional style” shopfronts will be required on all historic buildings, but where modern shopfronts are introduced into historic areas, their design and detailing must make a positive contribution to the locality as well as the building itself.



**fig.16. An elegant and well detailed shopfront within a conservation area**

- 16.2 Within Conservation Areas the full or partial demolition of any building is unlawful without first obtaining Conservation Area Consent from the Council. The Council is currently preparing updated Proposals Statements for each of the Borough's eleven Conservation Areas. If your shopfront is within a Conservation Area, a copy of the relevant statement can be obtained from the Council's Urban Design Team on extension 2251/2051. If your shopfront is within a Listed Building, Listed Building Consent will be required. As well as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, there are a number of Locally Listed Buildings and areas designated as Local Areas of Special Character in the Borough. Shop owners are therefore advised to contact the Council before carrying out any works to their shopfronts.

## What Needs Permission?

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- 17.1 Many alterations to shopfronts and the provision of new shopfronts, require a grant of planning permission under the Planning Acts. Advertisement consent under the Control of Advertisement Regulations is required for the display of many signs and all illuminated fascia and projecting signs and illuminated poster panels on shop forecourts. It is therefore essential that shop owners wanting to replace or alter a shopfront in any way, first contact the Council to ascertain whether or not consent is required.
- 17.2 This guidance note sets out a framework within which applications for new shopfronts and alterations to existing shopfronts will be assessed. However, if you are intending to carry out works to a shopfront you are advised to discuss your proposals with the Planning Department before submitting an application.
- 17.3 Planning Applications for shopfronts should ideally include a front elevation of the complete building showing the proposed shopfront and adjacent buildings and full details of the materials and colours proposed.
- 17.4 For advice on the need for permission or consent, and Planning or Advertisement Application forms please contact extension 5403 for properties in the north of the borough and 5404 for properties in the south. Alternatively, write to:

The Planning Department, London Borough of Croydon, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon, CR9 1JT. Telephone: 0181 686 4433 Fax: 0181 760 5406

## Croydon Design Awards

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- 18.1 The Croydon Design Awards Scheme recognises excellence in design. If you would like to enter your shopfront for an Award or would like more information please contact the Urban Design Team on extension 2051.