

**Development and Regeneration
Department
Planning Control
Policy Notes**

**4. SHOP FRONTS AND
SECURITY SHUTTERS**

July 2008

**Bolton
Council**

Bolton Council

Department of Development and Regeneration

Planning Control Policy Notes

The first Unitary Development Plan for Bolton was adopted in 1995 and provided a context for the development of the Borough.

The latest plan is the Unitary Development Plan which was adopted in April 2005, after being subject to a Public Inquiry between November 2001 and December 2002.

The Council has a number of Planning Control Policy Notes, of which this is one, providing detailed policy advice to supplement UDP and SDVUDP policies and help those who wish to understand the Council's detailed planning requirements and advice. These notes will have been subject to public consultation before being finalised.

The interpretation of this advice will relate to the circumstances and particulars of a planning application which will be determined on its own merits.

In the context of changing local, regional and national planning policies it may be necessary for the Council to revise its Planning Control Policy Notes to take these changes into account.

Prospective applicants requiring clarification of the Note's contents should contact the Council's Planning Control Section.

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Shop Fronts



Bolton has a rich and varied townscape with a variety of shop front styles

Introduction

1. Shop fronts are one of the most prominent features in a street scene: this guide relates to any commercial street property having a fascia sign and/or display window and includes non-retail premises such as banks, building societies, betting offices, estate agencies and restaurants. The appearance of such premises has a major impact on the attractiveness of the town centre and other centres in the Borough; it is important therefore, that the design of shop fronts should be well thought out and executed. Potential customers will judge the quality of the shop by its appearance and thereby also make judgements on the quality of the goods on sale and the standards of service to be expected. A stylish and well-made shop front will therefore help to attract customers as well as make a positive contribution to on-street ambience.

Purpose of the guide

2. The aim of this guide is to help designers, prospective developers and shop owners to produce sensitive yet attractive shop fronts. The principles will apply to shop fronts Borough-wide but in particular to the town centre and the 25 Conservation Areas in the Borough.
3. The guide is intended to provide applicants with information on the Council's approach in considering planning applications for shop fronts and associated signage.

Context

Getting the Right Design

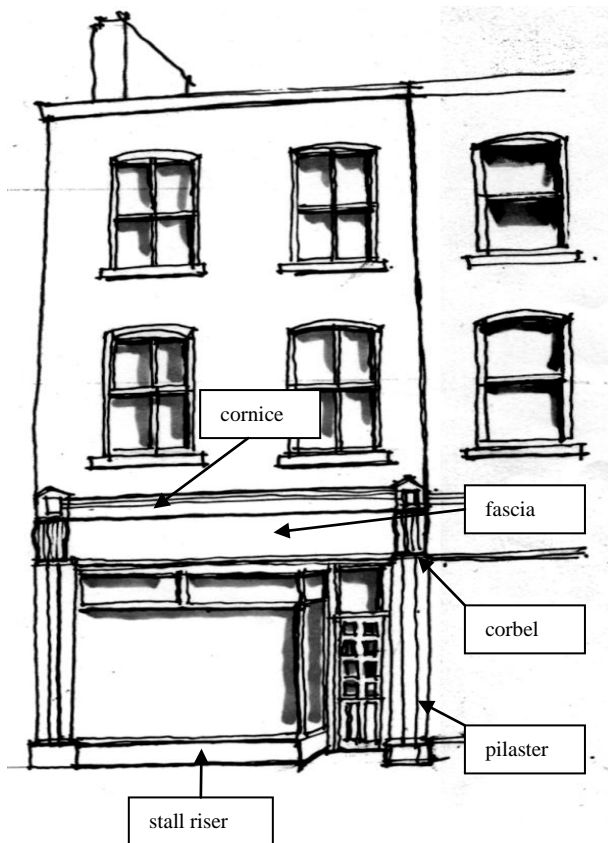
4. A principal attribute of Bolton is its rich and varied collection of buildings and shop fronts. A shop front is not an entity in itself but forms part of the building to which it belongs and thus contributes to the character of the street. Therefore, replacement shop fronts and alterations should respect the character of a property and its surroundings as well as meet businesses commercial requirements.
5. The application of corporate shop front styles that ignore their surrounding context will not normally be acceptable. By observing certain design principles it is possible to create innovative and attractive shop fronts that respect the style of the building they relate to and add to street scene diversity. It is also important to consult a qualified design professional to ensure that any new work is specified, and subsequently carried out, to a high standard using good quality materials.



'Less is more' The stone fascia and pilasters of the building above create a distinctive surround that frames the large glazed openings. Applied bronze lettering adds subtle and effective advertising.

Basic Components

6. There are definitive elements that contribute to a shop front. In combination these can be designed to enhance a property and its environs in terms of style, impression, proportion and scale. Traditional shop fronts work as 'picture frames' and comprise a number of elements. These basic components are the stall riser, pilaster, corbel, fascia and cornice.



The basic components of a shop front

Planning Policy

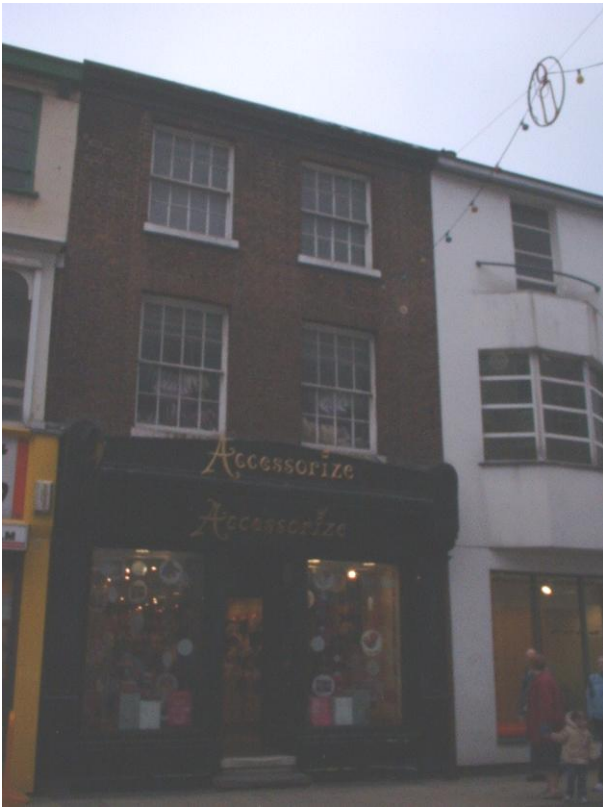
7. Policy D2 of the UDP states that the Council will only permit developments if they make a contribution to good urban design, in particular if they are compatible with or improve their surroundings in terms of their layout, density, height, massing, architectural style, materials and landscaping.
8. UDP Policy D9 requires proposals for new or replacement shop fronts in Conservation Areas to:
 - (i) **respect the period and style of the building and relate to it as a whole;**
 - (ii) **be of a high standard of design, and use appropriate materials;**
 - (iii) **avoid the use of large expanses of undivided glass;**
 - (iv) **include historically accurate detailing where the proposal is of traditional character; and**
 - (v) **retain any features of architectural or historic interest.**

Advice

9. Almost all proposals for new shop fronts, replacement shop fronts and alterations to shop fronts require planning permission. Applicants are expected to provide drawings of the existing full elevation and the proposed design when submitting their planning application, preferably at a 1:50 scale, and architectural details and signage should be shown at a 1:20 scale. Applicants should also demonstrate with street scene views, sketches or photos how the proposed new shop front respects and relates to its surroundings. Failure to provide sufficient detail may result in the application being returned for amendment before being accepted for consideration.



The Market Hall in Bolton. This traditional shop front displays all the basic components of shop front design and follow a consistent design, which provides an attractive frontage to the Market Hall



A listed shop front

Design Principles

Retention of existing shop fronts

- Many of our traditional shopping centres are dominated by terraces of tall narrow buildings facing onto the street frontage, and having strong vertical characteristics. The Council therefore expects that, when dealing with older buildings, traditional shop front elements will be retained. Where a good quality shop front exists that makes a positive contribution to the special characteristics of a Conservation Area, it should normally be retained rather than replaced. Traditional shop fronts or features on listed buildings should also be retained where they preserve the special architectural interest of the building.

New shop fronts

- The Council wishes to encourage good design by selecting from the past the best elements on offer in relation to traditional frontages, as well as by promoting innovative designs that are constructed to the highest standards and enhance the character of the buildings and the street scene. It is equally eager to encourage

innovative and imaginative shop fronts that enhance buildings and street scenes.

- Replacement shop fronts have often resulted in the imposition of corporate styles that ignore the special characteristics of buildings and their environs and, in particular, ignore the vertical emphasis that is a common theme in many traditional shopping centres.
- This can be exacerbated by the use of inappropriate materials such as plastic, particularly when surmounted by an over-large and garish fascia sign mounted flat on a building. Such shop fronts give a visually unstable top-heavy appearance and create a visible split between the ground floor and the rest of the building. The appearance of the resulting shop front can have a harmful effect on the building and street scene.
- Choice of materials and of colour schemes are also of the utmost importance, especially when working with older buildings. Materials and colours need to complement a building rather than clash with its building's features. For example, black or bronze anodised aluminium gives a rich but subtle alternative to silver or white UPVC. Quality details and finishes also improve the appearance of the final design.



A large fascia sign and lack of vertical emphasis in the shop front design fails to respect the characteristics and division of the buildings above

Main Elements

Overall design principles

15. Shop front designs should:
 - frame the shop window with visual and functional elements;
 - respect the main building and not dominate its architecture;
 - avoid linking two buildings with one fascia;
 - have individual distinctive identities that contribute to the diversity of the street scene;
 - ensure new elements of a shop front incorporate both depth and perspective to add visual interest;
 - Utilise three dimensional qualities and recessing; and,
 - be carried out to high standards of workmanship, using good quality materials and finishes.

Cornice and Fascia Design

16. Fascia signs in general should be in proportion to the height of a building, as a general rule measuring between 375mm and 600mm. There should be a suitable margin well below first floor sills and the cornice. Large fascias should be avoided, especially when they obstruct architectural details. Cornice details above fascias can provide attractive finishes and a visual break with a building.



An internally illuminated box fascia that does not relate to the size of the existing fascia and protrudes from the building. As a result it is visually unattractive



A marble stall riser provides a base to the elegant framing above

Stall Riser

17. Window displays should normally be set above a stall riser (the section of a shop front that lifts the display to a more convenient level). This feature also gives protection at lower level and creates a visual break between window and street surface.
18. Traditionally stall risers were often made of panelled timber but the use of stone or brick to match the materials of the rest of a building is often appropriate. The height of a stall riser usually ranges from 400mm to 600mm.

Pilasters

19. Pilasters frame a shop front and provide visual support to fascias and the buildings on which they are mounted. They are an essential element to shop front design and form boundaries between adjacent shops, emphasizing vertical divisions in the streetscape. They can follow decorative styles or, in more contemporary designs, can be simple verticals.

Corbels

20. A corbel sits at the top of a pilaster as a decorative capital. They are usually the most decorative part of a traditional shop front that frames the fascia board and adds visual distinctiveness.



A decorative corbel helps finish the top of the pilaster

Windows

21. The size, proportion and sub-division of shop front windows are perhaps the most fundamental element of a building.
22. Framed windows subdivided vertically emphasize the height and proportion of buildings and the vertical rhythm of the street scene.
23. When the architectural style of a building has a distinctive appearance the insertion of frameless glazing can also be successful. However, horizontal sub-divisions will often create a small and squat appearance.



Division of glazing with framing adds visual interest and breaks down the scale of the shop front

Doors/Access

24. If an entrance is a traditionally recessed doorway, it is preferable that it be retained unless removal is unavoidable. A recessed doorway provides depth to a shop front and invites customers into the premises. It is essential that attention is paid to door design, which should be in proportion to the whole shop front, that it opens inward and its dimensions are fully compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).
25. A separate entrance will be encouraged to facilitate access to upper floors, to ensure that these remain in use even if not by the shop itself. Associated doorways should also follow the rules of pattern, size, proportion and design.

Canopies

26. The addition of a canopy or blind to a shop front can be both attractive and practical. However, canopies should be retractable so that fascia boards are not permanently obscured.
27. The use of Dutch Blinds or balloon canopies should be avoided as they compromise streetscape and building design. The height of canopies should be set at an appropriate level above the pavement to allow access.



Retractable blinds can be attractive and practical

Materials

28. Materials should complement the age and style of the building above and that of adjacent properties. The range of materials used should also be kept to a minimum in order to create a degree of unity to the whole street scene.
29. The use of acrylic sheeting, perspex or plastic should in general be avoided. Matt, non-reflective materials such as painted timber or anodised bronze are good alternatives.
30. The use of colour can make the most of a good design and the worst of a poor one. Darker colours can be used to offset bright colours within a window display. Similarly, sensitive colours with subtle hues will sit alongside and compliment a building rather than conflict with it.

Accessibility

31. All new shop fronts should be fully compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). Where potential barriers to easy access exist, such as stepped entrances, these should be removed. It is necessary that sufficient space for wheelchair manoeuvre is provided wherever possible as well as the inclusion of features that will help those with impaired sight to find their way safely and conveniently. Other factors to consider are visual indicators, door weight and level change indicators (early consultation with a building Control Officer from the Authority is advisable)



Ramp access designed to visually complement the style of a building

Shutters & Security Blinds

32. Security shutters have a significant impact in the streetscene. Highly visible or crime prevention measures such as security shutters work against the creation of a vital, vibrant and attractive shopping environment, have a detrimental effect on townscape and impact negatively on the overall perception of an area.
33. When closed, solid security shutters present a blank frontage and have a deadening effect on the character of the street. Areas no longer benefit from passive surveillance by shoppers and passers-by, thereby making shops more vulnerable to attack. For these reasons solid external roller shutters, except in exceptional circumstances, will not be permitted by the Council.



Solid external roller shutters provide a dead, unattractive frontage

34. In order to minimise their impact on the building and the general character of the area, the Council encourages the use of security measures other than solid external shutters. Security is best considered at the early stages of designing a new shopfront so that measures can be integrated into the overall scheme, rather than added on as an afterthought. This should take on board the principle set down on shop front design as above.
35. There are a number of protective measures that can be taken which do not detrimentally affect the appearance of the property, which the Council recommends as alternatives to security shutters. These are set out below: -

- use of reinforced stall risers and mullions;
- use of toughened or laminated glass;
- sub-dividing and reinforcing the glazing into smaller areas;
- use of alarms and camera surveillance systems in the property;
- installing physical barriers to protect shop windows and doors, preferably through their incorporation into the shop frontage, or as part of an overall street improvement scheme, providing no obstruction to shoppers, emergency accesses, or road sweeping operations is caused;
- installing good internal lighting visible from the street;
- bringing life back into the building through the residential use of the upper floors;
- avoid door recesses which create hiding places;
- avoid glazing at ground level, especially in doors.

Development Control Requirements

36. External solid roller shutters are by far the worst option, examples of shutters that will **not** usually be permitted by the Council are shown below. They obscure architectural detail, remove the window element and display from the streetscene, invite graffiti, and can portray an overall impression of decline.
37. **For these reasons, solid metal shutters and perforated shutters (where the curved sections of the shutter are punched with thousands of minute holes) will not be permitted.**



Solid Security Shutters with protruding external shutter boxes are not acceptable



Solid Security Shutters, which cover the entire shop frontage are not acceptable

Internal Grilles

38. Consideration should first be given to internal grilles. They are fitted unobtrusively behind the glass to the shopfront, and allow for views into the premises providing opportunity for out of hours window shopping and surveillance by passers-by.
39. **Internal grilles are the Council's preferred type of security shutter. If however, an application is submitted for the installation of external shutters any such application should be accompanied by a reasoned justification which fully details why the preferred internal shutters cannot be used.**



Internal grilles provide the appearance of an active shop frontage even when the unit is closed

40. **External Grilles / Shutters**
Shutters should be of an open grille design, which allows clear visibility into the shop when down. They should not present a blank or dead frontage. Shutters should not cover the entire shop frontage and should not normally extend over the stall riser. Roller shutters will not be permitted on listed buildings and only in very special circumstances in conservation areas.
41. **Shutter boxes on shop frontages are not acceptable, they clutter shop fronts and result in bulky protrusions that detract from the character of buildings and streets.**
42. The images below show good examples of external open grille roller shutters, which allow views into the shop window displays even when the shop is closed. The colour and style are also in keeping with the character of the shop frontages.



43. Clinton Cards above shows a good example of an open grille roller shutter; however the shutters should not cover the stall riser.



44. The shutters at Prestons (above) are a good example of external open grille shutters; however improvements could be made through the use of open grille in the full height of the shutter.

Signs And Advertising

45. Competitive advertising has resulted in signs becoming progressively larger and more obtrusive. The proliferation of bold, dominant or illuminated advertising material has a detrimental affect on the character of shopping districts, especially within town centres and Conservation Areas. Subtlety and restraint promote a restful and high quality environment that creates a more conducive atmosphere for shopping and other activities. It is important that signs are sensitively designed.



Contemporary simple designs with individual applied lettering reflects a high quality product

Policy

46. Policy D4 of the UDP states:

“The Council will only permit advertisements, (including banners, blinds or canopies) that do not adversely affect the amenity of the building, the site and the local area by reason of design, size, materials, illumination, colour or number. Within Conservation Areas they should through the use of appropriate design and materials, contribute to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area. In addition to matters of visual amenity, signs which prejudice highway safety will not be permitted”

(refer also to Planning Control Policy Note No.6 “The Display of Signs and Advertisements”).

General Design Principles

47. Advertising should complement the design of buildings and shop fronts and should not form an overly dominant feature. Proliferation of advertisements should be avoided as this will result in a cluttered appearance. Illumination should be discreet and an integral part of shop front design.

Illumination

48. The clumsy appearance of bulky internally illuminated box signs fixed to a wall or fascia spoils the appearance of many buildings and should be avoided. Individually illuminated letters is a better alternative.
49. Internally illuminated box signs are not appropriate in Conservation Areas and the Council will promote the gradual removal of ones that exist.
50. External lighting by spot lights or floodlights is more likely to add to the attractiveness of a sign provided that the level of lighting is not excessive, and the fittings are unobtrusive and of good quality. Concealed trough lighting can be more discreet than a proliferation of swan neck fittings.

(Awaiting image)

Lettering with halo illumination applied to the face of a building can provide effective and subtle advertising



A simple unobtrusive projecting sign

Projecting Signs

51. Projecting signs should be located at fascia level, normally below first floor windows.
52. Projecting signs will be restricted to one per shop front in order to avoid a cluttered appearance.
53. Signs and brackets should be of a high quality, relate to the size and scale of building façades and should not appear intrusive.

Size and Content

54. Overly-large signs will be resisted and signboards should be flush with and no larger than existing fascias. Where there is no existing fascia an alternative form of advertising should be considered, such as shop window lettering, or individual letters applied to a buildings surface. Lettering height should be restricted to no more than 300mm, especially in narrow streets and within Conservation Areas. Advertising should be limited to the name or trade of a business.

Materials

50. Materials should harmonise with their respective buildings. Perspex signs will normally be unacceptable when applied to traditional buildings and especially to Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas. Individually cut out Perspex or metal letters

can be suitable for mounting directly to a wall or fascia. Painted timber signs are generally appropriate in traditional historic streets.

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