Shopfront Design Guide
April 2002
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INTRODUCTION

The Council’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is the statutory planning framework for the future of the whole Borough.

To help you when you apply for planning permission, and give the background to both the UDP and other Council policies, the Planning Service has produced a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGs).

Although not a formal part of the UDP, the guidance is a material consideration, when the Council is dealing with planning applications.

These Guidance Notes:

• Identify the relevant UDP policy; (for a full statement of the policy, the UDP itself should be consulted);

• Give planning guidance on design and standards;

• Provide general advice as well as some information on non-town planning matters such as Building Regulations and Highways, which may need separate approvals from the Council.

This Guidance does not prescribe inflexible standards or standard solutions, but instead describes the design principles and performance criteria to be aimed for.

The word ‘normally’ is implied in much the of what follows, but has been omitted to keep the text short.

Most design principles will be well known to architects and other qualified designers, who can use the document as a checklist.

This guidance has also been prepared as a practical tool to help those who submit planning applications.

This guidance is updated more frequently than the plan itself, and you are encouraged to discuss your proposals with planning staff before you make a formal application.

Please remember that this is guidance only, and that your application will always be considered on its merits.

Public Consultation

In accordance with PPG12 ‘Development Plans’ 1999, public consultation has been carried out on this document. The document is an updated version of the previous SPG which contains changes, partly related to the adoption of a new UDP for Newham in 2001 and partly related to references to new legislation and contact details.
OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this leaflet is to encourage better shopfront design throughout the Borough and to indicate the standards the Council will be looking for when considering planning applications.

Good shopfront design is important for several reasons:-

- to improve the attractiveness of individual shops to potential customers. Remember, a shoddy shopfront implies a shoddy business.

- to raise the overall image of the Borough’s shopping areas;

- and to produce enjoyable shopping environments with their own distinctive and pleasing appearance.

The Council hopes the advice in this leaflet will help you create an attractive and acceptable shopfront design which benefits both your trade and Newham’s environment.

![Diagram showing the difference between a lack of common framework and a common framework](image)

*Loss of common framework creates chaos and clutter.*

*Individual shopfronts within a common framework looks better.*
LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROVAL

Planning permission is required for most alterations to shopfronts and for a change of use from retail to other uses. Control of advertisement use is needed for the erection of most associated signs. You may also need approval under the Building Regulations. If you wish to carry out works of this kind, first telephone the Council (see below) to:

- check if you need planning permission. If you do, you are strongly advised not to undertake works or sign a contract until you receive a planning permission or advertisement consent. The same advice applies if Building Regulations approval is required.

- obtain advice on what may be acceptable. This helps you avoid the delay and costs of revising plans. Although this leaflet indicates generally acceptable and unacceptable standards, particular care will need to be shown in Conservation Areas and for listed buildings.

WHO ELSE SHOULD I TALK TO?

London Borough of Newham, Environmental Management Division, Development Control Town Hall Annexe, Barking Road East Ham E6 2RP.
Phone: 020 8430 2000 (ask for Development Control Duty Officer)
Fax: 020 8430 2901

Please contact the Development Control Service either by telephone or in person between 9am and 5pm. Please note that planning officers may not be available without a prior appointment.

Environmental Management Division, Building Control Division, East Ham Town Hall High Street South East Ham E6 2RP.
Phone: 020 8430 2000 ext, 23300/23323
Fax: 020 8430 2901

To access minicom facilities call 020 8430 2000

Regeneration and Partnerships Division
Town Hall Annexe, Barking Road, East Ham E6 2RP.
Phone: 020 8430 3312
For business advice, etc.

Metropolitan Police Service
Borough Crime Prevention Officer
Plaistow Police Station
444 Barking Road
Plaistow, E13 8HJ
Phone: 020 7275 5857 or 020 7275 5848
SHOPFRONT DESIGN

The following guidance indicates good practice in shopfront design and the standards the Council would wish to see met in any application for planning permission, for shopfronts or signs. The guidance is divided into the following sections:

- basic principles
- shopfront features
- access for all
- community safety
- signs

**BASIC PRINCIPLES**

1. Ensure your shop has a clearly defined framework of pilasters, stall riser (or stallboard) and cornice.

2. Proportion shopfront elements (doors, windows, fascia etc.) to achieve a balanced appearance.

3. If your shop is part of a terrace, help establish a neat, unified appearance by keeping to traditional lines (eg. for fascias and stallrisers) and by retaining the regular pattern of pilasters, doors, windows and any common details. Terraces are also more striking if their repeated features are emphasised by a common scheme (e.g. one colour for all stonework) or a common theme is developed (e.g. similar style).
4. Select materials that look good, wear well and are easily cleaned. Don’t waste money on those that will, too soon, look shoddy and dingy.

5. Consider harmonising the style of your shopfront with the building above. This creates a more pleasing and striking appearance. Relate the shopfront to the building’s scale, proportions and structure.

6. Adapt corporate images to suit individual locations.

7. Design a total scheme at the outset to avoid a hotch-potch of later additions. Decide on your intended image and choose materials to suit. Harmonise colours, textures and shapes. Simple themes work best. Keep it tidy by removing any redundant signs, switches, etc.

8. Avoid features and materials that are visually intrusive (eg. over-large, garish, out-of-character). By competing for attention they create confusing and unattractive surroundings and are therefore unacceptable.

9. Improve access for disabled people, elders, shoppers with pushchairs or trolleys and other people with mobility difficulties. Please note that for disabled people cover under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, you will be required to achieve this by October 2004.

10. If you have an original shopfront, mostly unaltered, first give serious thought to retaining and refurbishing it. Remember it will already have most of the good design points mentioned above, often superior materials, plus an individual identity and character which most replacements lack. Refurbishment, besides giving good value for money, also preserves something of local significance and historical value.
SHOPFRONT FEATURES

Detailed Advice -

The following advises on how to put these basic principles into practice.

Fascias

1. All fascias should be finished by a neat, well-defined cornice.

2. Fascias should be aligned throughout a terrace by keeping to a standard depth, normally that of the capital. This promotes both a more attractive street scene and also ensures that each shopfront retains its original, balanced, proportions.

3. Normally fascia depth should not exceed a quarter of the distance between the fascia’s lower edge and the pavement otherwise the fascia becomes too obtrusive and out-of-scale.

4. Avoid treating clerestories and grille and blind boxes in a way which makes the fascia look deeper. This can unbalance established proportions. Additionally, great variation in apparent fascia depth, from one store to another, produces chaotic townscape.

5. Where a store occupies several units each should have a separate fascia, linked visually by a common design. One continuous fascia would be too dominant and cut across the pattern of the terrace.

6. Fascias should not obscure, damage or project in front of visually significant architectural details, especially capitals, nor rise above the cills of first floor windows.
The pattern of individual shopfronts should be retained even where the shop occupies more than one unit.

**Pilasters**

Pilasters establish a pattern throughout a parade, provide a framework within which a shopfront can be set and are often decorative elements in their own right. They should, therefore, not be removed, damaged or clad. Shops and terraces can be improved by repairing or reinstating pilasters and by painting them in the same colour throughout. This should preferably be a light neutral shade and used on ‘stonework’ elsewhere on the building. The pilaster should be treated as one, coherent feature. Therefore, neighbours should not clad or paint it in different colours or materials. Where a long unit is being sub-divided, pilasters must be provided between each structural bay.

*Detail of original decorated capital*

*Unnecessary damage caused by ill considered fittings*
Windows and Doors

1. Respect the small scale and vertical (taller than wider) proportions of older premises by:
   - dividing window space into panes of these proportions;
   - avoiding large and long panes of glass;
   - not removing pilasters and glazing to create a wide open ‘shop’, as sometimes occurs with car showrooms.

2. Modern buildings are often larger in scale with horizontal lines. Here wider expanses of glazing may be more appropriate.

3. Balance the proportions of doors and windows with other features. Do not, for example, brick up part of a window area or isolate a small window within a wider frame.

4. Line up features eg. cills to door panels; clerestory to fanlight.

5. If a shop is part of a terrace which still retains examples of the original doors and windows, consider replicating the pattern they produce. This will help establish continuity in the terrace and provide a design of balance and proportion.

6. Avoid mismatches of different styles; bow windows, bottle glass, multi-pane windows are not in character with Newham’s Victorian shop premises.

7. Treatments (panelling, reflective or tinted glass, etc.) used to restrict the view into a shop should be kept to the very minimum necessary.
8. Doors to upper floors should harmonise with any new shopfront. To improve public safety, access to upper floors should be provided from the front of premises. Consider this when installing a new shopfront.

9. All doors should be made light and easy to open (see “Access”).

10. Materials. Timber provides greatest scope for creating a tailor-made shopfront. It conveys quality and individuality. It is easily worked (eg. fitting extra locks) and can be revitalised by a new painting scheme. The Council particularly favours this type of shopfront, especially in areas being upgraded. Timber is the most appropriate to be the only acceptable material for Conservation Areas or listed buildings. Metal frameworks are not so versatile, but an attractive shopfront can be created if colour-coated or colour-anodised materials (not silver) are used which coordinate with the rest of the shopfront.

Stallrisers

- bring goods closer to shoppers' attention;
- provide an essential, robust base which also helps to visually frame a shop;
- screen unattractive areas of shop floor;
- can be made attractive features in their own right.

It is, therefore, often desirable to include a stallriser. Where appropriate relate its height to the adjoining pilaster base. Long stretches should be panelled and a
strong cill provided. Certainly a traditional stallriser will be required for shops in town centres. Low, but not insubstantial ones, may suit modern designs if accompanied by an attractive window display. The stallriser gets most wear so use robust and hardwearing materials. The following are normally permitted:

- Wood and stone facings. Essential for a traditional shopfront.
- Brickwork. Match to buildings above or nearby.
- Tiling. This is considered much less acceptable. Particular care in choice and execution is required. Tiling does not, generally, wear as well as wood, stone or brick. After a time tiles tend to fall off resulting in a poor appearance. Shiny tiles require expert installation as their reflectiveness highlights and emphasises any errors or unevenness in laying. Visually, matt finishes are less obtrusive and are normally preferred.
- Cladding. Anodised or colour-finished steel or aluminium (not silver or mill finish) or composite panels are suited to modern shopfronts.

In contrast, mosaics and laminates, which are less attractive and wear poorly, should be avoided.
Blinds and Canopies

Blinds and canopies should enhance both the shop itself and the street in which it stands. Give careful consideration to the following:

1. Choose blinds and canopies to suit the style of the frontage. For example, a fully retractable blind, in “canvas look” material, best complements a traditional property. For areas or buildings of special character it would usually be the only suitable type. Shiny material or Dutch blinds in these situations would be out of place.

2. The number, shape and size of canopies used should relate to the structural form of the shop unit. Separate canopies should be used above doors or windows for example. They should sit within, not over, pilasters.

3. Large or long stretches of canopy which overwhelm a building or the street scene should be avoided. A single canopy should not span across more than one structural bay.

Cross Section showing how a blind and shutter can be hidden below the fascia.
4. When adding canopies or redesigning a shopfront, integrate them into the overall scheme. Individual designs, shapes and colours should blend in with the shop and not clash with others nearby.

5. Choose materials that withstand weathering. Look around to see how different materials age and styles date.

**Ventilation**

Natural ventilation from opening casements or decorative grills is preferable. Mechanical fans, which normally look unsightly, should only be used if there is no suitable alternative.

**Upper Floors**

You may require planning permission for alterations to their external appearance. Changes which spoil the character of the building, eg. rendering, removing bays, substantially altering window openings, adding canopies, are rarely acceptable. Stone cladding never is. Restoration work is encouraged and may be made a condition of a permission. Signs should be kept to a minimum.

**SECURITY**

Choose security measures both for their effectiveness and with consideration of their impact on the image and appeal of a shop and its surroundings.

*Glazing.* Laminated and toughened glass may be used instead of plate glass. It is shatterproof and anti-smash and grab.

*Grilles and Shutters.* Rolling mesh grilles (internal or external) offer several advantages over shutters. They deter and hinder theft whilst permitting chance observation of intruders or fire. They allow out-of-hours window shopping and

*Mesh shutters offer good security but are much more attractive than solid ones*
light from within the shop can penetrate to the street so making it a safer and more desirable place to walk at night. They are visually less intrusive. If installed, they must be colour-finished in a colour which co-ordinates with the rest of the shopfront.

In contrast, solid shutters produce dead, hostile surroundings and attract stickers and offensive graffiti. Expanses of plain metal look particularly bleak and their appearance soon deteriorates. These will therefore be resisted to prevent a downgrading of the Borough’s image. Coloured shutters which include a section of grille may be an acceptable alternative where vandalism is a proven problem.

Grille boxes should be concealed behind the main fascia, or, if this is not practicable, colour finished or clad. Their projection should be minimised and never forward of pilasters. Use removable guides and/or position inconspicuously. Guides may also be faced in a material matching that of the framework.

**Burglar and Fire Alarms.** Keep your shopfront tidy by mounting these in unobtrusive positions.

**ACCESS FOR ALL**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires all buildings to be fully accessible by 2004. Wherever feasible access to, and circulation within, shops must be made possible for people covered under the Act. Improved access provision will also greatly assist elders’ young children and people with pushchairs or trolleys and therefore improve business opportunities.

Access can be improved by:-

- level/ramped (no greater than 1:14) splayed or glazed recessed entrance with a minimum 1200mm front width, 840mm door width;
- Leaf in normal use - 900mm. min.
- Optional rail to assist at entrance especially if ramp or unavoidable step
- Splay angle to protect against injury and damage
- Inset doorway with distinctive floor finish
• using, wherever possible, flat thresholds with non-slip surfaces;
• a rail at the entrance and/or across the door, not more than 1000mm above the ground;
• handles which are easy to grasp and offer support. Pad handles are difficult to grasp. Long tubular types and handles with returns are better.
• doors that are lightweight or automatic. Doors should also be made easy to locate. Distinguish them from glazing eg. by using coloured materials.
• ensure signs, “pull”, “push”, “automatic”, etc. are clearly posted.
COMMUNITY SAFETY

Dark and deeply recessed entrances can provide a space for muggers, other undesirable activities and litter. Recessed entrances should therefore be splayed or glazed and well lit. Mesh grills should also be used in preference to solid shutters since lighting from inside a shop can contribute to making shopping streets feel safer at night. These may also be used across recessed doorways.

SIGNS

To erect signs you may need to make a separate application under the Advertisement Regulations (See Supplementary Planning Guidance Note No. 23: “Advertisement Hoardings and Panels”). Effective advertising and an attractive townscape can be achieved by taking the following points into account:

Simplicity. A shop is most easily identified if it has only one or two clear signs. Numerous signs, by competing for attention, confuse, look intrusive and so are unacceptable. Avoid excessive repetition onto grille boxes, canopies etc., or putting signs on storeys above the shop.

Harmony. Aim for a balanced, tidy arrangement. Do not add advertisements without thought to the overall effect on the shopfront or the parade. Remove redundant signs.

Style. Choose signs which blend with your shop to create an overall style (consider colour, lettering, materials). Used inside and out, a style becomes a trademark that is remembered.

Fascia Signs. Use only one sign per fascia. It should fit, full-width, between capitals. This will clearly identify your store whilst avoiding a confusing and untidy appearance. Fascia signs should not be overdominant, extend above first floor window cills or run across more than one unit. When installing new ones take the opportunity to improve the unit and street scene by using a fascia sign of traditional size. Do not sacrifice the identity of the shop by using signs supplied by advertisers.

Non-illuminated signs Hand painted signs are swiftly executed and relatively cheap. They provide greatest scope for individuality and are especially suitable where traditional character is important. So too are hanging signs. These can be suspended from the fascia or above. Always consider retaining any original sign of historic merit. Pre-formed non-illuminated signs can be made more distinctive by using raised lettering or stylish typefaces.

Illuminated Signs must respect their surroundings -

- individually illuminated letters (halo or back lit) or neon tube signs are often more distinctive and attractive than box signs,
the appearance of which can soon deteriorate. Letterings are easier to read placed against a dark background. If white, yellow or opal backgrounds are used their luminance should be less than for other colours.

- light (especially from neon tubes, crown and floodlights) must not adversely affect homes above or nearby (conditions on planning consents may restrict hours of illumination).

- flashing and illuminated signs must not be used where they could be a distraction to traffic.

- box signs should fit neatly between capitals and not project noticeably in front of them.

**Windows.** Numerous stickers and adverts obscure goods for sale, they can be confusing and they produce unattractive townscape. Keep to one sign written on the glazing. A street number on the fanlight is useful.

**Lettering.** Use simple styles, average spacing and one colour - anything else will be more difficult to read. Letters must not be overlarge (normally a maximum of three-quarters traditional fascia depth).

**Projecting Signs.** These must accord with dimensions indicated in the diagram below. Only one per shop is normally acceptable. Its position should not obscure others on adjacent shops nor damage architectural details. Its ideal place is on the fascia.

**Siting requirements for projecting box signs**

(cross section)

- a) Maximum projection including fittings
- b) Minimum clearance from kerb line
- c) Minimum clearance from pavement level
Projecting box signs should not be overly obtrusive. Whilst 1000mm is the maximum projection desired, the acceptability of the sign will also depend on its height. The diagram opposite gives guidance on the type of dimensions normally permitted for two shapes of sign. These are the dimensions which will be applied in the consideration of applications for advertisement consent.

*It should also be noted that any sign which causes danger or obstruction along the highway (including the pavements) may be removed by the Council under S.152 of the Highways Act 1980. This applies to goods displayed on the pavement as well as all signs, illuminated or not, and irrespective of any advertisement consent.*
For translation phone

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