

Local Development Framework  
**Shop Fronts and Signage Design**  
**Guidance in Conservation Areas**  
**Supplementary Planning Document**  
December 2011



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Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL



# Foreword

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We are constantly striving to enhance the Borough, and it is partly through improving the appearance of our historic retail areas that we can attract more investment and stimulate economic growth. Consequently these areas will become more lively, pleasant and visually appealing, and also safer through the implementation of more appropriate security measures.

Shop fronts are also the main advertisement for retailers. Good shop front design attracts shoppers and encourages them to stay and spend their money. The impression of high quality goods on offer begins at the shop front, tempting passers-by into the shop.

This Guide is not intended to lead to all shops looking the same, or to stifle flair or entrepreneurial spirit. However, having consideration for the appearance of a shop, as well as respect for the effect it has on its surroundings can produce benefits for the business and assist the economic prosperity of the area.

## About this document

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The Borough has attractive conservation areas, each with their own distinctive character and history. Unfortunately, the character and quality of traditional shopping streets within these areas has gradually been eroded by poor, careless and unsympathetic alterations to shop fronts.

Widespread use of relatively cheap materials and standardised shop front designs has led to a loss of local distinctiveness. Inappropriate shop fronts and large attention grabbing signs dominate the street scene, and have a negative impact on historically important buildings, as well as the whole shopping area.

The Council is committed to reversing this trend and ensuring that alterations to shop fronts are well designed, and contribute positively to the surrounding area. This will not only help businesses, but will also improve the street-scape for all the people that use it.

By following the guidelines and advice contained within the guide, operators should be able to achieve shop front solutions appropriate to various settings and budgets. It is not intended to replace the need for skilled design or architectural advice.

Telford & Wrekin Council has produced this 'Supplementary Planning Document'(SPD) to support Core Strategy Policy CS15 (Urban Design). This document has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

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# 1 Introduction



# 1 Introduction

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**1.1** Telford and Wrekin Council has designated 7 Conservation Areas within the Borough boundary; Wellington, Newport, High Ercall, Edgmond, Spring Village/Horsehay, Wrockwardine and the Severn Gorge. The character of these Conservation Areas varies from the rural nature of Wrockwardine and High Ercall, to the industrial nature of the Severn Gorge including Madeley, and to the commercial feel of the historic market towns of Wellington and Newport. These Conservation areas form a significant part of the Borough's built heritage, important to residents and visitors alike. Leisure and Tourism are vital to the local economy, and the character and appearance of these towns is a fundamental part of their attractiveness as destinations for shopping and tourism.

**1.2** This supplementary planning document (SPD) on adoption, will form part of the Local Development Framework for Telford and Wrekin. It has been prepared to provide further details with respect to policy CS15: Urban Design within the LDF Core Strategy and gives additional guidance for shop front development proposals within the Borough's Conservation Areas.

## **Who is affected by the Supplementary Planning Document**

**1.3** This guidance is aimed specifically at period commercial properties listed and unlisted within Conservation Areas, that being properties in current commercial/retail/office use, but can be equally applicable to former commercial properties with residential or non commercial use where traditional shop fronts and/or signage remain. The Telford and Wrekin Area has 7 Conservation Areas: Severn Gorge, Wellington, Newport, High Ercall, Edgmond, Horsehay & Spring Village, and Wrockwardine.

## **The Aim of the Supplementary Planning Document**

**1.4** The aim of this guidance is to provide advice for owners and occupiers of period commercial buildings who are considering external alterations to their properties. It will also be used by Council Officers and Members in considering the appropriateness of planning applications, Listed Building Consent applications and enforcement issues as well as by the general public and local amenity societies in formulating their responses to such applications.

**1.5** The guidance contained in this draft SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Although, by its nature, the guidance will apply most often to the main market towns of Wellington and Newport, there are also a smaller number of commercial properties within the other Conservation Areas within the Borough, to which it will be equally applicable. For the purpose of this document the phrase period character or period shop front refers to a design that reflects the period character of a building. This guidance may not be appropriate for some post war new build where the insertion of a traditional shop front may appear pastiche. New modern designs should not necessarily be resisted, but where such buildings are proposed, the design should be of a very high standard and complement the Conservation Area.

## 2 Planning Context

## 2 Planning Context

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### Core Strategy

**2.1** Urban design has a crucial role in creating sustainable local communities. To positively influence the quality of urban life, urban design needs to embrace the interaction of the appearance of buildings, their composition, streets spaces and the overall townscape. In this way urban design can meet the needs and maintain the pride of local communities and maintain local identity in an overall economic, environmental and social context.

**2.2** The quality of future designs will ultimately be determined by future planning permissions. But these must meet the criteria of the adopted Core Strategy. In particular policy CS15 as set out below gives the strategic perspective of urban design to which the Shop Fronts DPD provides detailed supplementary guidance.

#### ***Policy CS15 Urban Design***

*The design of development will assist in creating and sustaining safe places, strengthening local identity and projecting a positive local image. It will positively influence the appearance and use of the local environment.*

*Further guidance on design, including objectives of urban design, will be provided by supplementary documents*

### Wrekin Local Plan

**2.3** There are a broad range of policies within the Wrekin Local Plan for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Those specifically relating to commercial premises or former commercial premises are written below. Policy HE 10 and HE 11 provide the policy framework which underpins this SPD. These policies are supported nationally under PPPG15. A full list of relevant Local Plan policies is contained in Appendix 1.

## 2 Planning Context

### **HE10 Advertisements**

*The Council will strictly control the number, siting, scale and design of advertisements in Conservation Areas in particular:*

*a) signs should be of a design, location, size, number, type of lettering, materials and colour which are appropriate to the special character and appearance of the area.*

*b) when attached to a building the sign must respect the form, architectural composition and proportions of the building and should be positioned so as not to obscure important architectural features.*

*c) standard designs and logos must be adapted to respect the character of the area if their form, colour or detailed design would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.*

*d) advertisements should generally be restricted to ground floors although upper floors signs will be considered where they consist of the use of hanging signs or window lettering.*

*e) external illumination may be considered where discretely located and designed.*

Internally illuminated signs will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and the highest standard of design will be required. It must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the design complements the character of the Conservation Area.

## 2 Planning Context

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### **HE 11 Shop Fronts**

*The Council will ensure that traditional shop fronts and associated features, which contribute to the character of individual buildings and the Conservation Area, are retained and repaired as part of any development scheme. Development proposals for new shop fronts will be considered against the following criteria:*

- a) replacements must respect the character, architectural composition, proportions and details of the building to which it is attached and be sympathetic to the characteristics of adjacent buildings.*
- b) shop fronts should relate to the upper floors of the building, they should not mask first floor windows or other features of interest and should retain existing doors which give access to upper floors,*
- c) shop fronts should respect the rhythm and plot width of the buildings or group of buildings to which they relate,*
- d) the addition of inappropriate features, such as standard modern roller blinds, awnings, canopies and standard roller steel security grills will not be permitted.*
- e) new shop fronts should be designed to incorporate traditional forms and features which are appropriate to the area, such as stall risers, fascias, cornices, pilasters, glazing bars, recessed doorways and fanlights.*
- f) new designs should incorporate the use of good quality traditional materials or high quality modern materials which complement the character of the conservation area; glossy plastics, polished aluminium and u.p.v.c. elements, will not generally be acceptable.*
- g) fascias, in particular, should be carefully designed and be of a suitable proportion, size, detail, section and materials; fascia signs should be of an appropriate size so that they do not dominate the building and consist of painted letters; occasionally consent may be given for individually applied letters of a suitable size and design.*
- h) the use of standard illuminated box signs will generally be resisted and other forms of internal illumination must be treated with sensitivity. Spotlighting may be acceptable if unobtrusively designed; the use of brass cowl lamps or similar features will not be permitted.*

**2.4** Where commercial properties are Listed, appropriate Wrekin Local Plan policies are equally applicable (see Appendix 1).

### **Planning Permission**

**2.5** In Conservation Areas works of alteration, even minor works, may require one or more forms of consent. Consent is not normally required for repair works or like for like replacement (except where the building or location is subject to an Article 4 Direction such as the Ironbridge Gorge CA).

## 2 Planning Context

**2.6** Planning Permission is usually required for external alterations to commercial premises, e.g. the insertion of a new shop front, the addition of blinds, or the alteration of upper floor flat or shop windows.

**2.7** Advertisement Consent may be needed for the display of signage dependent on size and type. It will be required for illuminated signage. Advice should be sought from Planning Advice Officers as to whether consent is required for individual signage.

**2.8** Listed Building Consent will be required for most internal and external alterations to listed buildings.

**2.9** Under current law, Conservation Consent is only required for the demolition of certain unlisted buildings and structures within Conservation Areas and would not be required for the replacement of shop fronts.

**2.10** Building Regulations Approval is required for many structural alterations including access under the Disability Discrimination Act (see Section 5).

## 3 Historical Context

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### Development of shop fronts

**3.1** The purpose of a shop front is to display goods for sale and to entice customers into the shop. An attractive and well designed shop front will create a good impression to potential customers. The shop fronts we value today did not come about by accident. Their design was deliberate to entice shoppers in, whilst following the polite and stylistic fashions of the day, and its technological limitations (the elements of a traditional shop front are shown in the diagram on page 10 overleaf).

**3.2** When considering works to a shop front, a good starting point is to understand the history of their design.

**3.3** The streets of market towns have been used for the selling of goods and services for many centuries. Historically goods were sold from stalls or properties which did not have shop fronts as we would recognise them today. In the eighteenth century, shop windows started to appear, such as Georgian bowed oriel windows.

**3.4** Georgian and Regency shop fronts were a more formal version of the paired Georgian bowed windows with bays above stall risers with an entablature (cornice, frieze and architrave) above and pilasters (columns projecting from the wall). The windows often had small panes with timber glazing bars, but unlike domestic windows, shop windows have traditionally had the mouldings of the glazing bars to the external face and the putty on the inside.

**3.5** Historic shop fronts tend to have a fairly uniform appearance because plot widths were traditionally fairly regular and narrow, and window and door openings were restricted in width for structural reasons and also to the limits of glass manufacturing technology.

**3.6** Specialist national companies offered a variety of designs which could be chosen from catalogue and the level of decorative details was considerable. Although largely still classical lines, Victorian shop fronts showed greater variety in design and materials. Advances in glass technology and the introduction of plate glass in the 1820's allowed larger window panes and from about 1840 horizontal glazing bars (transoms) tended to disappear. Heavier mullions were required to hold the larger and heavier sheets of glass and Victorian shop fronts often have thicker mullions terminating in elliptical arched heads for support. Windows were often divided into two, three or four lights. Unfortunately a large number of the shop windows of this period have been lost, although some have simply been re-glazed without their mullions. Victorian shop doors were usually four panelled with the upper two panels glazed, or the whole of the upper half glazed.

### Retention of existing frontages

**3.7** Existing period shop fronts should be retained, repaired and continually maintained. The Council will resist any planning application to remove period shop fronts or any surviving architectural detailing. Consideration for removal will only be given where there is a proven structural concern or where repair is proven to be beyond economic benefit. Where removal is sanctioned, the replacement should be like for like.



## 3 Historical Context

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### Replacement frontages

**3.8** Inappropriate shop fronts such as modern or poor quality designs and materials in period properties, which often fail to replicate traditional architectural details, are detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area. The Council will actively encourage the replacement of inappropriate shop fronts through the period application of grant schemes and through the use of planning tools such as this SPD.

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

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### KEY

1. Stall riser
2. Pilasters
3. Mullions
4. Doors
5. Fascia/frieze
6. Cornice
7. Capitals
8. Hanging sign



Picture 1 Elements of traditional shop front design

### Stall risers

**4.1** The stall riser is the filled area of brick/stone/tile beneath the shop window. The purpose of the stall riser is to raise the base of the window so as to provide some additional protection from damage to the glazing. Stall risers in Victorian/Edwardian shop fronts typically range from 300mm to 800mm in height. This may vary across a single shop front if the frontage is on a gradient. In Edwardian shop fronts the stall risers were usually in filled with panelled timber or stonework, Victorian shop fronts often used glazed tiles and bricks.

**4.2** Where stall risers survive with original or period material, this should be retained. It should not be removed or covered with plywood panels, painted or rendered. Render or panels are only appropriate treatments when covering modern post war in fill materials where their replacement for more appropriate materials is not possible or in new build.

**4.3** Modern poorly designed shop fronts often dispense with the stall riser altogether in favour of a larger full height shop window. This is inappropriate for a Conservation Area. The stall riser is an integral part of the traditional shop front.



Picture 2 GOOD : A good example of a decorated stall riser, mid-late 20th century contrasting glazed tiles are used to good effect



Picture 3 POOR : Stall riser

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design



**Picture 2 GOOD :** A good example of a decorated stall riser, mid-late 20th century contrasting glazed tiles are used to good effect



**Picture 3 POOR :** Stall riser



**Picture 4 GOOD ;** The same shop with a reinstated traditional shopfront

### Pilasters

**4.4** The pilasters form the two enclosing edges of a traditional shop front and provide a visual closure to the frontage. Their detailing varies but for timber shop fronts they are typically decorated with reeded panels or elegant recessed/embossed panels. Pilasters can also be provided in a variety of other materials including marble, stone, render and brick. Pilasters are formed by the footing at the base of the pilaster, the main column and a capital to terminate at the top or a decorative bracket where the pilasters are designed to support the fascia rather than enclose it.

**4.5** Pilasters have often been removed in the past where enlargement of the shop window has occurred (usually in combination with the removal of the stall riser). Pilasters can also often suffer from wear and tear, particularly at ground level and consequently are often removed, this should be avoided. A regular programme of repair and maintenance should ensure their longevity. Removal of this element of the shop front can have a significantly detrimental effect on the overall appearance

**4.6** New shop fronts should not be considered appropriate without pilasters or associated capitals and/or brackets, and where they are incorporated they should maintain a traditional fluted/reeded/panelled appearance together with a footing and a capital/bracket. Poor quality

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

modern materials such as cheap plywood should be avoided whenever possible. Modern beadwork or picture mouldings on marine ply panels are not likely to be appropriate replacements for period material.



**Picture 5 GOOD :** Original pilasters with solid footings and moulded panels with bracket capitals to frame the fascia/signboard



**Picture 6 GOOD :** Solid recessed panels to the columns, capitals and footings. It creates a solid terminus to the shop front and clear delineation between window and door

### Capitals and brackets

**4.7** Capitals are the terminal points of the pilasters, and an often overlooked feature. Capitals can either enclose the fascia board or they can support a fascia board that runs the full width of the shop front. In cases where the fascia board runs above, scrolled brackets can also be used as a decorative terminus.

**4.8** Capitals can follow traditional architectural forms such as ionic or Doric styles, particularly in the Georgian or early Victorian examples, or they can be more bespoke and decorative as in later Victorian and Edwardian frontages.



**Picture 7 GOOD :** Fluted capitals with a cornice at the top to give protection above a recessed moulded column



**Picture 8 Good :** Raised panels on the columns and bracketed capital above contrasting paint



## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

**finish picks out the architectural detail**

### Mullions/windows

**4.9** Windows are at the heart of the shop front, they serve to advertise the wares within. Windows were often vertically divided by the presence of mullions or thick supporting collonettes. Mullions are usually moulded and can be composed from two sections where they turn a corner. Increasingly they need to be robust in section to provide sufficient support to plate, toughened or laminated glass but this can be offset with careful detailing and mouldings. Mouldings should be of an appropriate design for the age and architectural detailing of the building. Modern flat sectioned mullions are not appropriate for a Conservation Area.

**4.10** The use of a transom or high level glazing, originally for ventilation, and often in ornate patterns or featuring stained leaded lights, is a traditional feature of Edwardian shop fronts. New shop fronts should consider these detail options, particularly if ventilation is required or where the extent of the glazed area is excessive and needs to be reduced.

**4.11** From the mid 19thC cills became far more rounded and generously sized. Cills on new shop fronts should have sufficient slope so as to facilitate the run off of rainwater and should have a concealed drip mould underneath to ensure the water is thrown off. Sometimes the addition of mouldings on the cill is appropriate to provide better visual relief. Cills should not be recessed too far nor be flat enough to encourage their use as a perch which can expose the cill and window to damage.

**4.12** Upper floor windows of commercial properties are considered part of the shop front and will therefore require planning permission for any removal, replacement or alteration. Upper floor windows are equally important in preserving the character and appearance of traditional commercial premises. Traditional designs and materials should be used and period material retained where possible. Designs should be appropriate to the overall character of the building/ traditional shop front. Replacement with inappropriate modern styles or materials will be resisted, also removal of glazing bars to allow in window advertising will also be resisted.



**Picture 9 GOOD : Example of simple mullions used to reduce a large area of glass**



**Picture 10 GOOD : Example of the use of high level transom to create to allow ventilation**

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design



**Picture 9 GOOD :** Example of simple mullions used to reduce a large area of glass



**Picture 10 GOOD :** Example of the use of high level transom to create to allow ventilation

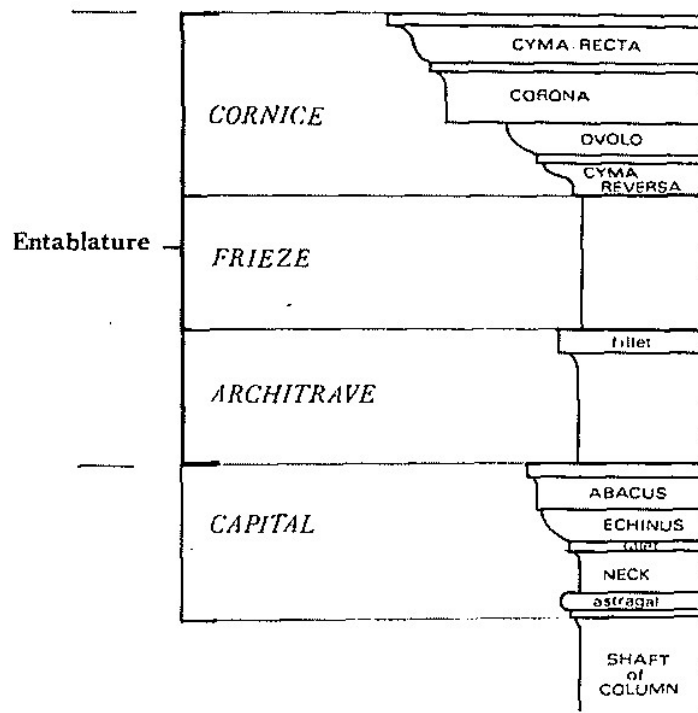


**Picture 11 POOR :**  
Mullions

### Fascia/Cornices

**4.13** The shop front fascia or frieze is the area that runs above the shop window which commonly holds the signage, the slightly protruding moulded section above the fascia is the cornice and provides some shelter to the fascia from rainwater, it is often removed or omitted in modern shop fronts to increase the fascia size. Below the fascia there is often an architrave which runs underneath which helps to frame the fascia top and bottom. Again this is often omitted or removed insensitively to increase the fascia size. Altogether these three elements are known as the 'entablature'.

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design



**Figure 1 Elements of a traditional entablature**

**4.14** Traditional fascias run the width of the shop front either enclosed by pilasters/capitals or supported by pilasters and brackets. Where the shop front is wider than the average the fascia may be split into two either side of a central door. Some traditional fascias are tilted downwards to allow for easier viewing of the signage. For issues relating to appropriate design of signage see section 6 entitled 'Signage and Lighting'.

**4.15** The removal of any fascia board from a traditional shop front should be wholly resisted. Premises requiring renewal of signage should do so within the limits of existing traditional signage. The fascia should be appropriate to the age and architectural detail of the building. Modern applied box fascias which project from the face of the building and the addition of new fascias over the top of existing fascias represent a bulky and clumsy addition which sits uncomfortably on the shop front. Such fascias often obscure historical details and are not appropriate for a Conservation Area.



## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design



**Picture 12 GOOD :** Traditional fascia, with cornice above and small architrave below, enclosed with capitals and nicely proportioned sign



**Picture 13 GOOD :** Facia



**Picture 14 GOOD :** Classical style entablature/fascia with simple hand painted signage



**Picture 15 POOR :** Oversized boxed out fascia board with no cornice or architrave or capitals to enclose it or support it. It dominates the shop front to an oppressive degree

### Doors

**4.16** Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts usually had deep recessed entrances; this was to allow a greater area of window display, leading to a glazed shop door. It is unfortunately; however, common practice when replacing shop fronts to re-design a flat frontage. This is done often to maximise frontage display or in-window advertising area immediately onto the street or to maximise floor space within the shop. The consequences of these actions is that recessed doors are becoming a rarity and where we may once have had a more undulating quality to the street scene, we now have a much more two dimensional appearance.

**4.17** The recessed door draws the eye to the entrance and becomes as much a feature of the shop front as the window itself. These recesses provide strong visual elements in the street and create an important characteristic. Their removal should be resisted and new shop front developments should be encouraged to include recessed doors as part of their design.

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

**4.18** Victorian shop doors were usually four panelled with the upper two panels glazed, or the whole of the upper half glazed. Early 20<sup>th</sup> C doors had a larger glazed panel covering perhaps two thirds of the upper area of the door with a panel below.

**4.19** Doors are one feature of traditional shop fronts which can be easily eroded. By their nature they suffer a greater degree of wear and tear and are often replaced. Replacements should be specifically designed for the premises; invariably ready made 'catalogue' doors will not be appropriate by virtue of a modern design or failing to respect the existing characteristics of the premises. Domestic style doors are not appropriate for commercial premises; doors should always be made of wood to reflect traditional materials.

**4.20** Doors traditionally had decorative brass work furniture such as handles, rubbing plates and letter boxes. Such door furniture should be respected and retained where it is of sufficient quality, and any replacements should be in appropriate style. Modern styles or materials such as plastic or stainless steel will not be appropriate in the Conservation Area.



**Picture 16 GOOD : Leaded glazed panels to upper lights picking up fanlight details**



**Picture 17 POOR : Door**

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design



Picture 18 BEFORE : Door and signage



Picture 19 AFTER : Door and signage

### Other architectural features

#### Entrance lobbies

**4.21** Floors of entrance lobbies were often decoratively tiled, in earlier examples, using buff and terracotta tiles with more decorative black and white or two tone designs. 20thC tiled floors often displayed the business name, and the tiles were set close butted with an extremely narrow line of grout between. Loss of these features is rife as it is invariably a consequence of the loss of recessed doorways. Survival of good tiled displays should be a material consideration in alteration to any shop front. Historic examples should be preserved in situ and their removal should be wholly resisted and any replacements should be like for like, or where this is not possible, of a period design, using good quality floor tiles and appropriate narrow set grouting. Concrete skimming is unlikely to be appropriate for a Conservation Area.



Picture 20 GOOD : Blue and white Edwardian tile decoration



Picture 21 GOOD : Surviving mid 20th Century advertising mosaic in a doorway



## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

### Colour

**4.22** Appropriate use of colour in the Conservation Area should be encouraged; a variety of colour can make a pleasant impact on the street scene. The Council will take a relatively flexible approach to control of colour, largely limited to resisting those colours that are felt to be highly inappropriate such as luminous colours or metallic effect paints and under certain circumstances, stained wooden finishes. However, the Council will reserve the right to influence colour design where appropriate. The Council appreciates that colours may be central to corporate identity but that this should not be allowed to override the importance of the Conservation Area. Where possible a mutually agreeable solution will be sought.

**4.23** Materials used should reflect the character of the original period shop front. This is timber in virtually all cases, except for use of traditional tile/stone work or where traditional ironwork forms part of the shop front. Marine plywood is commonly used to create shop front details, whilst this can be effective if constructed properly, it is largely false economy as it requires a good level of maintenance to preserve the original appearance. Often such plywood is accompanied by low quality beaded mouldings which are tacked on and not generally robust enough to survive and are often damaged. Materials should be fit for purpose. A better option is to appoint a traditional joiner or shop fitter to manufacture solid panels, recessed panels, mouldings, mullions and fascias from good quality soft or hardwood. This can allow delicate mouldings to be carved into the wood itself rather than tacked on later. A good hardwood should outlast the tenant if maintained at regular intervals.

**4.24** Where signage is simply being replaced, again, it is common for signage companies to use dibond composite panelling rather than wooden panels. We would encourage the use of traditional methods and materials in the construction of signs as this is, by its nature, the most effective way of achieving a traditional appearance. Where modern materials are proposed, such as dibond, the sign should be finished to a standard that replicates a traditional wooden painted sign board. Use of obviously plastic signs will be resisted.

### BLINDS

**4.25** Blinds often form part of a traditional shop front in the form of a recessed blind box with external brackets to hold the blind. Where these remain in traditional form their removal should not be encouraged. Often the material itself has rotted away but none the less the external appearance of the mechanism should be retained. If restoration is required this should be encouraged but consideration should be given to the design of the blind keeping it as plain as possible. Where blinds are to be introduced these should follow traditional form with a recessed blind box built into the fascia/cornice to prevent any outward intrusion. These should be manually operated and traditional in appearance that being wood, metal or cloth, with the avoidance of any plastic elements. Rounded 'Dutch style' canopies will not be permitted.

### SHOP FRONT CLUTTER

**4.26** Where possible intrusive modern elements should be kept away from frontages or sensitive areas. Items such as burglar alarms should be sighted with due care and as unobtrusively as possible whilst remaining practical. They should avoid being located centrally on a frontage, kept at eaves height to minimise any detracting, and designed to minimise

## 4 Elements of Traditional Shop Front Design

intrusion. Likewise the location of utility boxes for gas, electric and water, should be kept to the side or rear as a rule and where this is not the case their design should minimise their presence. Cash points should be resisted on frontages where possible, making the most of recessed doorways, and where such are necessary these should be designed with the minimum of associated clutter such as receipt bins, signage and internally illuminated signage. Listed buildings require planning permission for the placement of such items.

**4.27** Rain water goods should be traditional in style, that being of cast iron or similar appearance. The use of unpainted modern PVC rainwater goods is not appropriate for a conservation area. Appropriate guttering should be painted black or in keeping with the property to minimise intrusion. It is possible to acquire reproduction rainwater goods in modern materials that are appropriate.

## 5 Disabled Access and Building Regulations

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**5.1** The new disability regulations may require owners of commercial properties to provide reasonable access for disabled people and wheelchair users. Where commercial premises are Listed such an accommodation must be done in a manner sensitive to the architectural character of the building. Where the property is not Listed but within a Conservation Area such provision should again be sensitive to the character of both the shop front and the wider Conservation Area.

**5.2** Where provision of ramped access is to be included in a replacement shop front, consideration should be given to the re-instatement of recessed doorways to allow space for an unobtrusive tiled or paved ramp in a traditional style. Where doors are required to be widened to allow wheelchair access consideration should be given to the use of double doors to accommodate the required width rather than the creation of an overly wide single door. A single door is unlikely to be appropriate, in terms of scale, for a traditional shop front.

**5.3** Internal and external alterations to commercial properties both at shop front level and the floors above may be subject to control under the Building Regulations (2000). However there are some exemptions for historic buildings under Part L of the regulations, the Building Regulations (2000) (Part L) defines historic building as either a listed building, building within a conservation area, buildings of local interest or buildings within AONB or World Heritage Sites. Whilst the Council will generally not resist building regulations which affect issues of health and safety, we reserve the right to resist under Part L of the Building Regulations, any other alteration which is likely to have a detrimental affect on the character of the building or the Conservation Area.



**Picture 22 GOOD : Double doors used to create a wide easily accessible entrance**

## 6 Signage and Lighting



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6

### Signage

**6.1** Poor quality and over scaled signage can often detract from even the most traditional of shop fronts. This is particularly so where poor signage is combined with inappropriate inserted modern fascia boards which are often over sized. (See notes on appropriate design elements for fascia boards). Changes of signage are a common occurrence in any commercial area, prompted by changes in ownership/tenancy or a change of business or as part of a change of corporate identity. Control of signage in Conservation Areas is vital to ensure high standards are observed and period character maintained.

**6.2** When designing signage it should be done in the context of a traditional entablature so that there is a clearly defined cornice above the fascia and an architrave below. Lettering should be in an appropriate size, this will largely be affected by the size of the fascia board. A traditional fascia should in itself regulate the size of the lettering to an appropriate size. Where an oversized modern or inserted fascia is present the Council will seek to reduce the potentially detrimental effect of equally oversized signage by either encouraging a reduction in the fascia or by introducing design elements such as framing or beading around the edges or the creation of a cornice or architrave.

**6.3** Lettering should be of an appropriate font, whilst a degree of variety is welcome in the Conservation Area, intrinsically modern or overly bold fonts will be resisted where necessary.

### Hanging signs

**6.4** A traditional bracketed hanging, mounted on the wall is to be encouraged. These consist generally of framed boards, containing the sign, suspended from a decorative or classically styled wall bracket. Contemporary designs will be considered on their merits.



**Picture 23 GOOD : Example of a simple framed hanging sign**



**Picture 24 GOOD : Example of a contemporary styled hanging sign**

## 6 Signage and Lighting

### Lighting

**6.5** Internally lit signs are usually not appropriate for a Conservation Area and applications for such will be resisted (see saved policy HE10). If lighting is required it should be external in the form of unobtrusive colour co-ordinated trough lighting. Swan neck lights will also be resisted. It is common misconception that these are traditional, and whilst they may appear traditional in form, the reality is that there is no traditional lighting source for commercial premises, this is a recent development. Swan neck lights are often used to excess on shop fronts and the result is often a cluttered appearance which can detract from an otherwise appropriate shop front/sign.



**Picture 25 GOOD : Unobtrusive trough lighting running along the top of the sign board**

## 7 Shop Front Security

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Wrekin Local Plan Historic Environment Policy HE11 states that:

*“... the addition of inappropriate features, such as .....standard roller steel security grills will not be permitted.”*

**7.1** Solid roller shutters are a blight on Conservation Areas. Their use in Conservation Areas will not be permitted. Roller shutters are a symptom of a perceived problem and not a solution.

**7.2** It is clear from just a cursory inspection of some Conservation Areas, however, that this rule has not necessarily been rigorously applied in the past, this possibly due to a lack of consideration for the potential impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area during the planning application process but is also largely caused by unauthorised use of such shutters. Planning Permission is required for the use of external shutters of any description. It is hoped that this document will encourage property owners to consider alternative security solutions. It is also hoped that this document will assist in helping relevant Council Officers to understand the negative impact such shutters can have in a Conservation Area and to ensure that such applications are refused and alternatives considered. The use of shutters is a particularly sensitive issue in the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site where proposals for any form of external shutter will be wholly resisted.

**7.3** Roller shutters obscure virtually all the period architectural detail that contributes to the overall character of a Conservation Area. Additionally the shutter boxes used to house the shutter mechanism and the shutter itself when retracted is often located prominently on the shop front which again is an inappropriate feature on a period shop front. Solid roller shutters also attract graffiti which is detrimental to the appearance of the Conservation Area.

**7.4** During the compilation of this document advice was sought from West Mercia Police's Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) who is tasked with providing security advice. The ALO has also advised on the issue of shop frontages in the 'Design for Community Safety' SPD (adopted June 08) which states:

*“Whilst “Safer Places” (ODPM 2004) emphasises “protection” as one of its key attributes, ..... it advises that this can be done “without compromising the quality of the local environment”. In Conservation Areas particularly, the Council and local ALO's will not generally support the use of roller shutters, as it leads to monotonous, unattractive frontages, reinforcing the fear of crime and encouraging criminal activity. It also reduces the potential for window shopping having an effect on trade. Retailers are dependent on attracting passing trade not only during the day, but also in the evenings.”*

(Design for Community Safety SPD adopted June 08)

**7.5** The current Police view is that the vast majority of crime committed against properties, for example, within the Wellington Conservation Area, occurs at the rear of properties or through the roof and *not* through the shop front. It should also be remembered that Wellington has a town centre CCTV system in place which brings an additional level of security to the main thoroughfares of the Conservation Area. Small amounts of damage do occur

## 7 Shop Front Security

7

occasionally, as with any commercial area and, is largely caused by late night drunkenness and rowdy behaviour. These problems should be addressed through licence restrictions and planning control for change of use to entertainment venues and by more intensive use of CCTV.

**7.6** Solid rollers shutter also provide ample protection for any criminal activity taking place on the premises by preventing a clear view from the street to the shop.

**7.7** Alternatives to shutters may be considered where appropriate. The use of internal grilles to secure the shop window have the advantage that they do not require any planning permission, nor do they impact on the external appearance of the shop front or result in ugly shutter boxes or other shop front additional required for the use of roller shutters. Together with the use of laminated safety glass this should provide a good level of security.

**7.8** Where external protection is required, the use of decorative ironwork grilles is recommended. These should cover the window or door area only and should be demountable for removal during the working day, storage for such grilles can be designed into a traditional style shop front. Alternatively external grilles similar to those above could be considered where appropriate and again only covering the window and door area so as to minimise any impact on the shop front. Where boxes are required to retract such grilles, these should be internal, i.e. located behind the fascia board, external boxes of any description will be refused.



**Picture 26 GOOD :** Use of internal grilles on this modern shop front allows shop security to be maintained whilst allowing window shopping and advertising to continue out of hours, it provides a much better street impact that the shuttered property next door



**Picture 27 GOOD :** Use of demountable decorative ironworks presents a much more appropriate frontage within a Conservation Area than roller shutters

**7.9** Solid roller shutters will be rejected in Conservation Areas. Applications for other forms of shutters will be judged on a case by case basis and in respect of the impact the proposal will have on the Conservation Area. Applications that fail to demonstrate regard for the character of both the property and the Conservation Area will be resisted. It is accepted that certain businesses are at greater risk of criminal activity, such as jewellery shops. In such circumstances applications for security measures will be judged sympathetically on their individual merits but not to the detriment of the overall Conservation Area.

## 7 Shop Front Security

**7.10** For more detailed advice on good design in order to reduce crime, please refer to the council's Design for Community Safety SPD adopted June 2008.

## 8 Summary

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**8.1** It is hoped that this guidance will raise the standards of commercial design within Conservation Areas and ensure that all future development within such areas serve to preserve or enhance the character within them. Where possible we have been explicit in what is acceptable or not acceptable but by its nature architectural design is often a matter of interpretation, a matter of 'fact and degree'. It is not desirable to be too prescriptive in what is permissible lest we end up with a series of identikit shop frontages along our streets which would create a sense of false historical place. Variety within set boundaries is often the best approach and consequently this document sets out to define where those boundaries are likely to be.



## Appendix 1 - Relevant Saved Wrekin Local Plan Policies

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## **Relevant saved Wrekin Local Plan Policies affecting Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings:**

HE2 DEMOLITION IN CONSERVATION AREAS

HE3 NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

HE4 DETAILED APPLIICATIONS

HE7 FACADISM AND AMALGAMATION OF PLOTS

HE8 CHANGE OF USE AND UPPER FLOOR CONVERSIONS

HE10 ADVERTISEMENTS

HE11 SHOPFRONTS

HE15 DEMOLITION OF LISTED BUILDINGS

HE16 ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

## Appendix 2 - Other Sources and Bibliography

## Appendix 2 - Other Sources and Bibliography

Building Regulations (2002)

Building Regulations and Historic Buildings (English Heritage 2002)

PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994)

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Design for Community Safety (Telford & Wrekin SPD 2008)

Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (English Heritage 2006)

Book of Details and Good Practice in Shop Front Design (English Historic Towns Forum 1993)

Modern Practical Joinery (George Ellis 1987, reprinted from 1908 edition)



