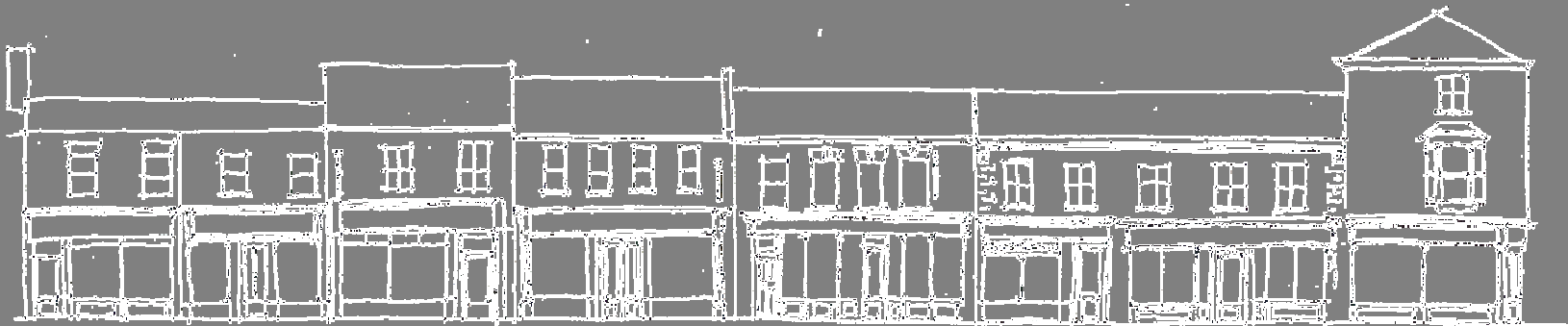


Shopfronts and advertisement design guide



Christchurch Borough Council

March 2005

Policy Background

This draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was produced in February 2005. It sets out the requirements of national and local planning policy to help people seeking planning consent for changes to shopfronts and aims to expand on Local Plan policy (and its successor) by setting out the basic principles of good shopfront and advertisement design. This guidance will be produced in accordance with Christchurch Borough Council Statement of community involvement. It is envisaged that this will be taken forward as a Supplementary Planning Document and included in the emerging Local Development Framework. At present this document should be carefully considered as formal guidance in any proposals to change shopfronts and/or advertisements in the Borough of Christchurch. Please note that this document supersedes the 'Shop Front Guidelines' published and adopted in July 1994.

Is Planning Permission Required?

Planning permission is needed for any material change to external appearance of a shop including installing blinds or shutters or enlarging the size of fascia.

Advertisement Consent is required for the display of most signs in conservation areas. All illuminated signs need consent. For further information please refer to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) publication, '[Outdoor Advertisements and Signs](#) and PPH19 Outdoor Advertisement Control 1992.

Listed Building Consent is required for any alteration affecting the character or special interest of a listed building. This can include re-painting a shopfront in a different colour, or painting the shopfront if previously not painted, installing a security alarm or extractor fan, altering the shop interior or installing shutters, grilles, blinds and advertisements inside or outside.

In all cases, as with any alterations it is worth seeking preliminary advice from the Development Control Section as well as specialist design advice from an architect.

Introduction

This guidance aims to expand on Local Plan policy (and its successor) by setting out the basic principles of good shopfront and advertisement design.

Shopfronts are a vital element in the character of the street scene and high standards of design and the use of quality materials will be expected in any new shopfront and/or replacement signage. Each building has a unique character which the shopfront design should reflect.

These guidelines can be applied to traditional and modern shopfronts, both within and outside Conservation Areas.

Shopfront Styles – A Brief History

The shopping street as we know it today first began to emerge in the late C17th.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth century shopfront design was based on a set of principles which were successful in achieving a balanced relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole. These principles still hold good today and relate to architectural detailing, proportion and quality of materials. These are described in more detail in the following pages.

C18th
Shopfront-
Bridge St.
Christchurch

C19th
Shopfront-
Church St.
Christchurch



General Principles of Shopfront Design

The shopfront should not be designed in isolation, but should be considered as part of the overall architectural composition of the property, respecting the period and style of the host building.

If a traditional shopfront is to be fitted, it must be architecturally and historically accurate – old photographs and records from the library or archives can sometimes be very useful.

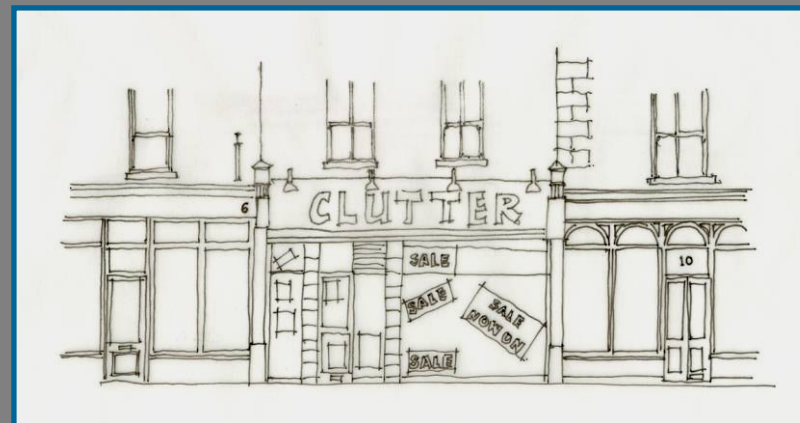
The design of the shopfront should also take into account the adjacent building styles and shopfronts in the street, the vertical and horizontal elements, the variety and also any recurring characteristics, patterns or details.



Fascias should pay careful attention to the host buildings proportions and detailing

Historic photographs can help in getting to the correct detail for reinstatement shopfronts

Clutter and confusion of poor and excessive signage and lights .



Details

There are various elements that make up a shopfront and all have a particular function. They form a frame to set off the goods inside the window. These elements are identified in **Figure 6**.

Pilasters emphasise vertical divisions between the shopfronts; the fascia provides space for advertising; the cornice provides protection from the weather and provides definition to the top of the shopfront, the stall riser gives protection at ground level and provides a solid base. Together, they form support to the building above. It is very easy to get any of the elements wrong in detailed design terms. This can have disastrous effects on the overall finished design.

Retention of Existing Shopfronts

Very few early shopfronts survive, but where they do, special care is needed to ensure they are protected and restored sensitively with careful attention to detail. Where the existing shopfront contributes to the character of the building or area, or is listed, it should be retained and restored rather than replaced. More recent shopfronts can also be of interest – designs incorporating Art Nouveau or Art Deco detailing are often of high quality, constructed from materials such as mahogany, bronze, chrome, stained glass and marble, sometimes forming part of the design of an entire façade and should therefore be retained wherever possible.

It must also be recognised that where, for example, an original Victorian shopfront exists in a Georgian building, it does not mean that it is out of keeping and should be replaced with a Georgian replica or a modern shopfront. Rather, it shows how the building has evolved over time, with often sympathetic, thoughtful and well considered alteration.



Corinthian capital

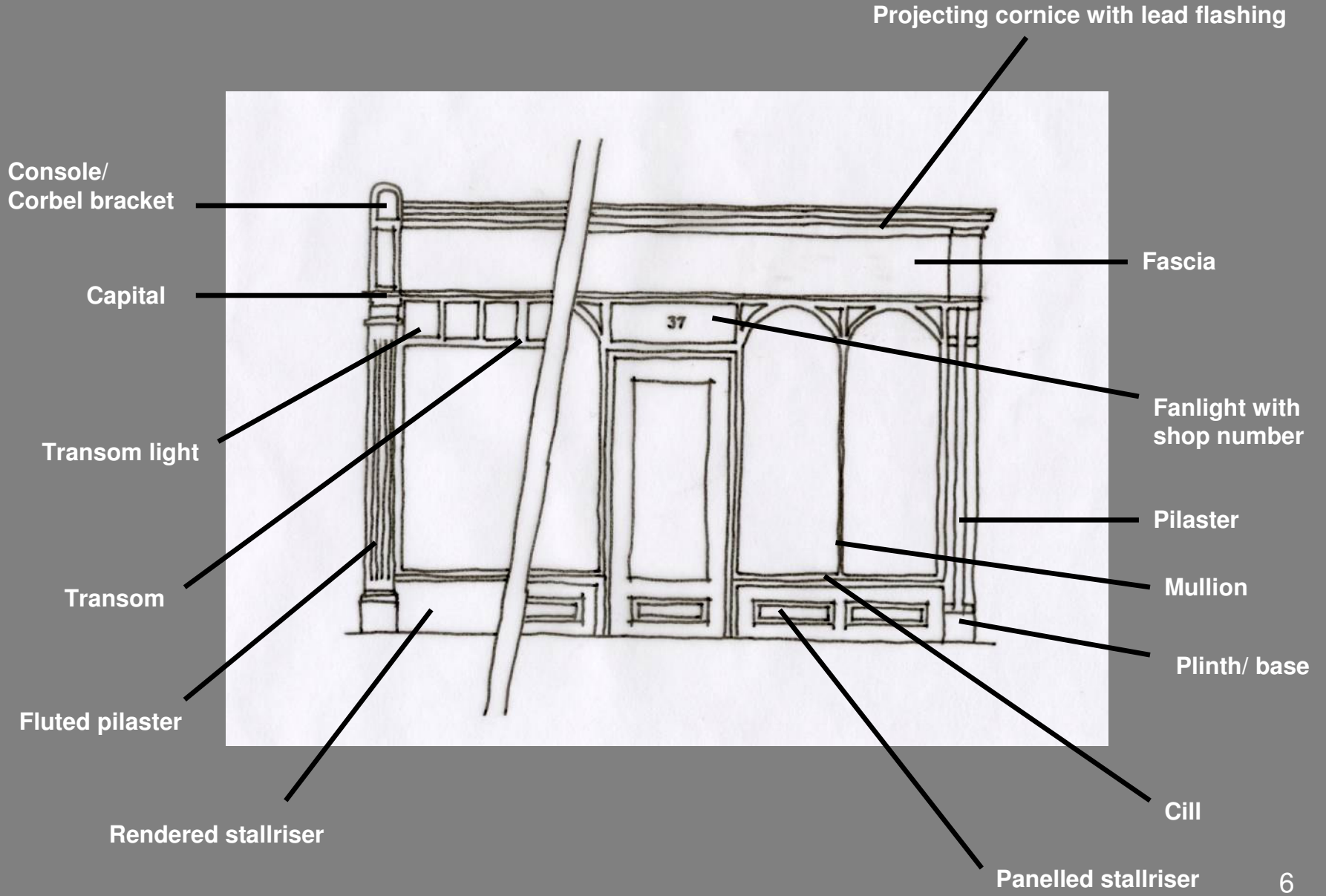
Fluted console bracket

Mullion details

Stained glass in transom, light



Key elements of a shopfront



Replacement of Shopfronts

In the majority of cases where a traditional shopfront needs replacing and in the unlikely event it is not possible or desirable to repair, it will be appropriate to replace it with a traditional replica using matching materials.

In some cases it may be desirable to replace certain shopfronts, particularly if they are poor modern shopfronts which lack detailing and correct proportioning and detract from the character of the building and the area.

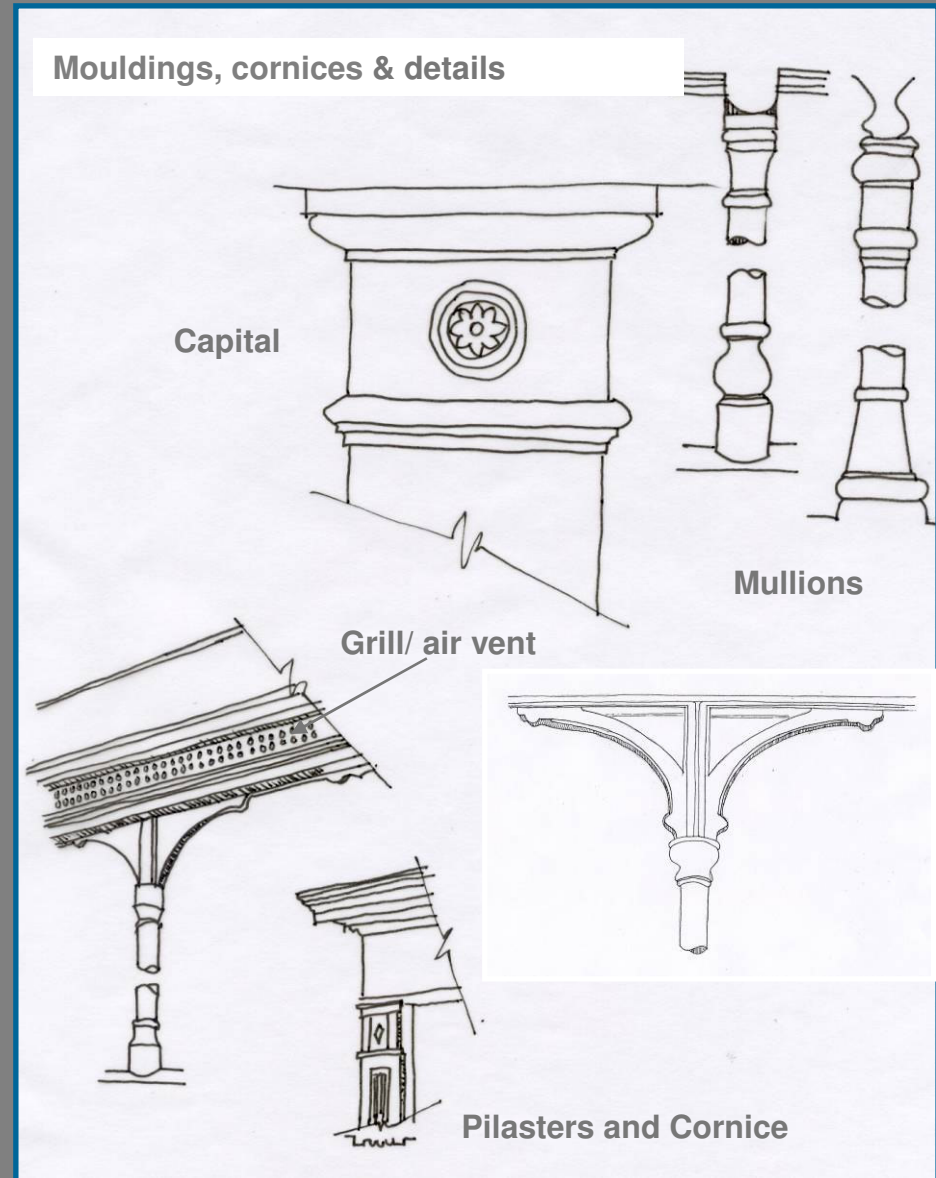
Good quality contemporary shopfronts will be encouraged within the Conservation Area in certain circumstances, particularly in modern buildings. However, standardised 'off the shelf' designs and the application of 'stick on' mouldings to flat plywood sheets will not be acceptable.

Where a shopfront is to be expanded to occupy more than one building, every effort should be made to retain the original proportions of each building, in order that from the outside the individual shopfront units are retained and have a positive relationship to the buildings above.

Stallrisers

Stallrisers act as a base or plinth to the overall shopfront design, providing protection and serving to lift the window display off the ground. The majority of stallrisers are timber but they can also be stone, brick, glazed tile or marble, depending on the overall design and materials of the shopfront. The door panel should reflect the height of the stallriser and is often recessed, providing relief to the shopfront.

Many poorly designed modern shopfronts have tried to maximise the glazing which has resulted in the loss of the original stallriser, often requiring the addition of security features such as bollards and grilles to protect the shopfront.



Advertisements

Fascia Design

Badly designed or very bright fascias and over large or inappropriately sited signs can seriously detract from the visual quality of a street or area. Close attention must therefore be paid to designing fascias and signs that are in keeping with the scale and character of the building and surrounding streetscape.

Original fascias should always be retained as they form part of the design of the shopfront. In some cases a more modern fascia may be hiding an historic fascia underneath which may be worth revealing. Every effort should be made to reinstate original fascias where they are known to exist. There will be a presumption in favour of reinstatement rather than continued use of a modern fascia.

Most traditional fascias do not exceed 40cm in depth and are constructed from timber. They should be in proportion to the shopfront and should be kept well below first floor window sills.

Hand painted timber fascias are usually associated with traditional shopfronts. Wording should be kept to a minimum, usually just the name of the retailer and number of the shop.

Excessive advertising should be avoided as it usually only serves to clutter and block the shopfront design and window displays.

Good fascia design,
well proportioned,
subtle lighting-
Chester

[top]

The fascia sits nicely
within the flanking
console brackets
and incorporates a
roll out blind box

[bottom]



Lettering

It is essential that a competent sign writer is employed and the style of lettering complements the building and is proportional to the fascia. Gilding or strong tones on a dark background often work well as they are clearly visible and reflect light at night.

Scale

Lettering that is very large and bright in itself or large in relation to the overall fascia, would be equivalent to “shouting” and therefore considered detrimental to the amenities of the area. Attention is drawn to the fact that many successful signs in Christchurch in the past have had letters not more than 150mm (6 ins) high.

Modern plastic box fascias often appear bulky, clumsy and often over-sized in relation to the building and should therefore be avoided.

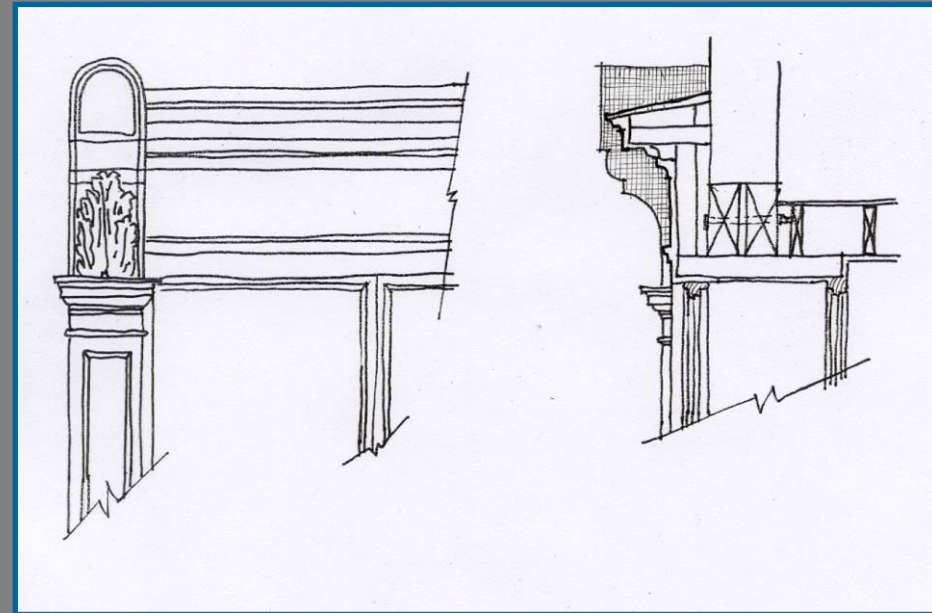
The display of fascia signs on traditional frontages should be easily readable with lettering in a single style and adjusted in size and content to suit the detailing of the fascia. Overcrowding the fascia with too much information should be avoided. The shape of the fascia, and the existing architectural details all need to be taken carefully into account when the form of advertisement is being considered.

Carefully considered
hand written
signage- note use of
corporate font

[top]

A traditional C19th box
fascia detail-note the
subtlety and importance
of cornice and
mouldings

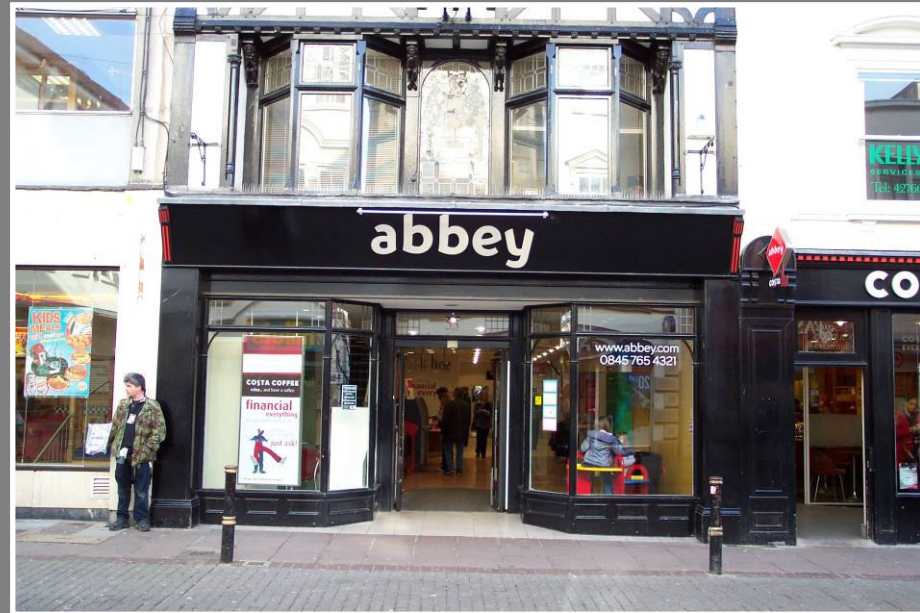
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Corporate Images

Since the 1950' signs (and shopfronts) have been increasingly affected by the application of American inspired sales techniques using "corporate sales images". Often firms of designers are commissioned to produce "manuals of standard details" which, whilst found to suit modern shopping malls, are very rigid and unsympathetic elsewhere.

This is alien to the European tradition of individuality, tempered by classical concerns of visual order, proportion and harmony. Generally, such advertising, whilst it may be appropriate on letter headings, posters, lorry sides and TV adverts, in Christchurch Borough Council's view requires modification and careful thought for shopfronts and signs particularly where the amenities of a Conservation Area are concerned.



Good application of
corporate 'badging'

The Local Planning Authority believes that it is appropriate to require that an effort is made to adapt corporate advertising to suit local circumstances. Where a company's colour scheme is clearly important to identification, this can often be cleverly adapted to a local retail outlet, particularly if it is a listed building, by interpreting it through the use of attractive building materials or adopted colour tones.

The visual principle found most applicable in such circumstances is that, in order for lettering to show up well from a distance, it is better to have light letters on a dark background.

For a shop sign this has other advantages in that the background colour (which might be a company's corporate colour) has more impact than the same colour used for the lettering only. It also acts like a picture frame in unifying individual words into an overall composition of an appropriate scale to the building.

In circumstances where lettering is attached directly to the building (in the case of there being no shopfront or fascia board) provision should be made for attaching and re-attaching signs or letters that does not harm or interfere with the fabric of the building. This enables the name or style to be changed without harming the building. When signage or lettering of this nature is changed, any damage from previous fixings should be repaired. It is sometimes useful to use a single fixed bar to attach letters to avoid damaging the wall surface.

Preference will be given to the use of alphabets that are not italic because they give a feeling of movement that does not reflect the general structural stability of the building and therefore looks restless. Alphabets based on classical proportions and spacing such as Clarendon, Perpetua Roman, Alberta, Egyptian, Rockwell etc are decorative, easily read and can be reproduced well in plywood and metal.

Font types:

Signs SIGNS

Perpetua

SIGNS SIGNS

Algerian

Signs SIGNS

Rockwell