

Materials

Traditionally buildings were faced with mostly matt and non-reflective materials robust enough to weather well or to be easily maintained. Timber is the most versatile material.

Modern glossy materials such as Perspex, acrylic and plastic sheeting and aluminium are less durable, can appear garish and should generally be avoided, especially in historic areas.

Although lettering sign written onto the fascia in a single style is preferred as the most appropriate means of signing on traditional frontages, applied lettering is sometimes a satisfactory alternative. Careful regard is however necessary in deciding where exactly to fix such letters taking into account the design of the shopfront and the location of other features on the building, such as upper floor windows. The indiscriminate fixing of unsuitable lettering can badly affect the appearance of a building and the wider street scene of which it forms a part.

Thin fret cut or built up plastic letters with coloured returns (in excess of 25mm) look cheap and shiny, do not read well from an angle and do not relate well to the building materials in the shopping streets. Neither, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, do they last well since they are particularly easily damaged by vandalism.



Traditional timber fascia
with hand written lettering

[top]

Use of high quality
materials sympathetic to
the underlying material-in
this case stone

[bottom]

Justification for the use of this type of sign based on lack of maintenance arguments is not considered valid. Even solidly constructed letters of wood or metal look unnecessarily clumsy and out of keeping with the character and scale of buildings if they are too thick or use unsuitable typefaces.

Modern prefabricated fascia panels, whether in reflective Perspex or some other material, are incompatible in appearance with old buildings, and totally unsuitable for use in the historic centres of the Borough of Christchurch. Similarly, pre-painted timber panels superimposed on existing fascias should be avoided as they upset the balance of an attractive frontage and often appear as if they are merely a temporary expedient.

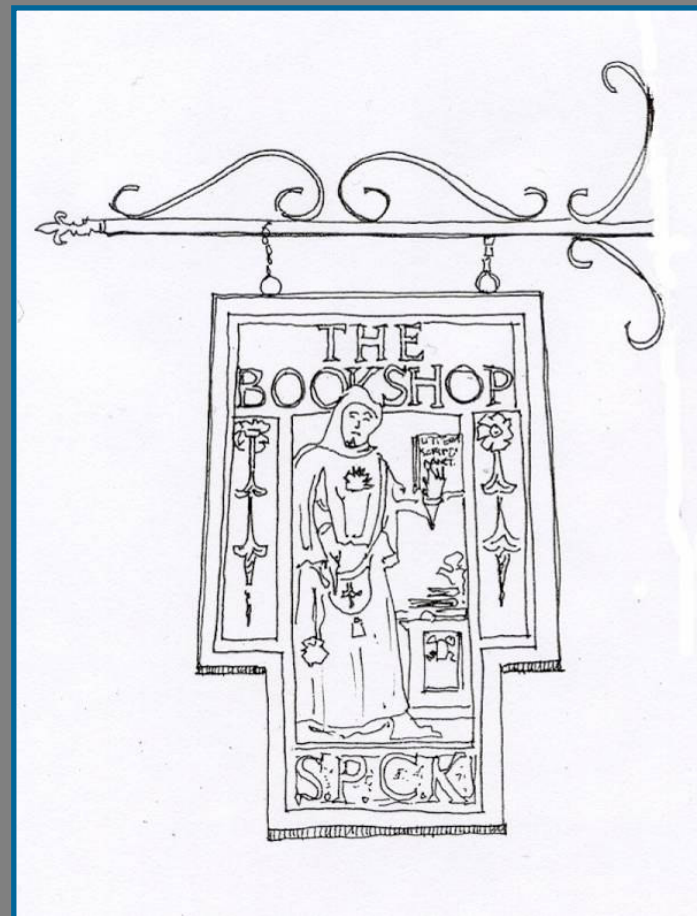
Projecting Signs

It is not always appropriate to hang a projecting sign from an historic building. However, where they are appropriate, projecting signs provide an opportunity for creativity by use of symbols to portray the type of goods or service the shop provides. Traditionally hung at right angles to the fascia, swinging from decorative wrought iron fixings, a projecting sign serves to catch the eye and advertise the shop as one looks up or down a street. Where an original style of traditional bracket survives, this should be re-used.

It is difficult to stipulate the design and size of a hanging sign but generally there should only be one – which should be of high design quality and in proportion with the rest of the building façade, not appearing over-intrusive or ridiculously small. Traditionally they were located level with first floor windows but

local traditions in each town or village may dictate otherwise.

Projecting box signs will not be appropriate in historic streets.



An example of a bespoke hanging sign – in this case a woodcut

The use of symbol signs is a tradition of many historic towns. This can upgrade the visual interest of an area, and give a unique identity which can be particularly attractive to visitors. Where the Local Planning Authority consider a hanging sign appropriate the applicant will be expected to introduce a symbol sign of quality related to the nature of the goods or services to be sold and should adhere to the following provisions:-

- The symbol and its supporting bracket should be attractive in silhouette as plain oblong signs are monotonous and do not attract attention from a distance. (Brackets should be made by a competent Blacksmith).

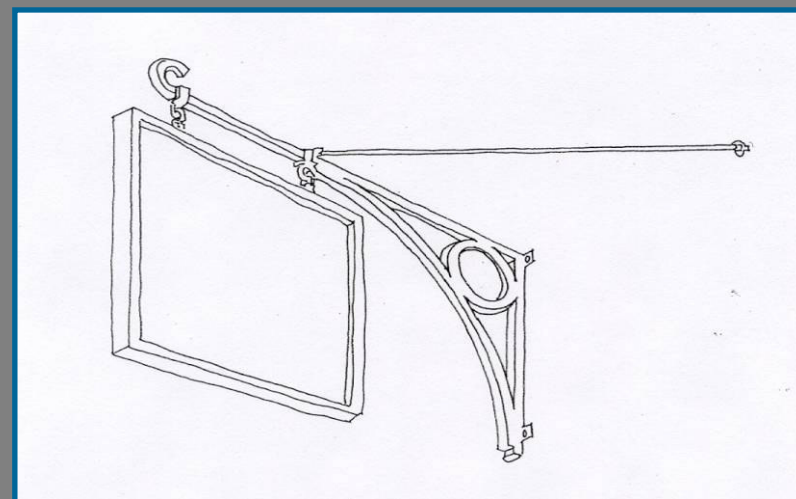
- The sign should not include the shopkeeper's name but it may indicate the type of trade i.e. jeweller, butchers etc. (The aim is to attract attention from a distance to the type of outlet and draw the shopper along).

- It should not be illuminated. (With the exception of dispensing chemists and the provisions for public houses and restaurants).

- It is to be executed to a high quality of design, material and finish so that it is sculptural and not an inferior piece of flat board or similar that will quickly deteriorate due to weathering.

- Each proposal will be determined on its merits, and considered in relation to the building on which it is located and the effect it will have on the street scene. Projecting **signs should not be less than 2.44 metres above ground level (for highway safety reasons)**.

- In some locations double sided painted board signs of a pictorial form and contained in a purpose designed frame will be considered sympathetically. Plastic signs are generally inappropriate and will not normally be permitted.



A simple timber hanging sign and bracket

Appropriate use of signage in an historic setting.

Projecting signs should not be less than 2.44 metres above ground level (for highway safety reasons).

Colour Schemes

Sensitive use of colour can enhance the street scene. Generally rich, dark colours often look good leaving the window displays to provide the highlight. Neutral colours such as white or cream, matching other paintwork on the host building, provide a contrast to a brick or stone constructed building.

As with fascia boards, bright, garish colours should be avoided and multi-national companies will be encouraged to vary their corporate colour schemes to help protect the unique character of the building and location.

It is recognised that many retailers wish to trade on the basis of house colour and a house style, however, with an emphasis on quality and traditional detailing, a corporate image can be adapted to fit in to an historic environment without compromising the basic design principles of good shopfront and signage design.

Appropriate use of colour –note the simple but effective signage.

Traditional simplicity and use of single historic colour.



Illumination

Shop signs do not need special illumination if the level of street lighting and the light from shop windows is adequate for trade. Illumination should not be used merely to draw attention to an advertisement. Low level external illumination may be acceptable in some cases, however, the source of illumination should be discrete.

Internally illuminated box fascias, individually illuminated letters, halo lit Perspex letters, swan-neck, projecting spotlights and fluorescent lighting is unlikely to be considered appropriate in historic areas.

With the exception of signs essential to the needs of dispensing chemists, which are excluded from the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations, an application is required for virtually all illuminated signs on commercial premises, whether lit internally or externally.

It is the Council's aim to encourage the architectural lighting of buildings, where these have a positive character, to increase the town centre's attractiveness at night and during winter months.

However, illumination which highlights one part of a building at the expense of the whole or at the expense of others, can detract from the overall appearance of the area. The most appropriate form of lighting is that which gives the elevation subtle visual identity. This is usually achieved by low intensity lights placed beneath the eaves, for example, which "wash" the elevation. It is most important that light fittings and wiring do not impinge on the appearance of buildings and that their brightness is in harmony with the overall appearance of the area and does not cause glare.

The lighting of merchandise displays within shop windows is considered very important to the vitality and attractiveness of shopping areas during the early hours of darkness, especially during winter months. This is believed to be more effective than illuminated signs as it relates more to pedestrian scale and the attractiveness of the shop.

Windows and Displays

Large undivided areas of glass should be avoided. The pattern of subdivision should suit the character of the shopfront and building. Doors and recesses can also be used to break up the retail area.

The method of window display is equally crucial for attracting the custom and contributing to a lively street. A few carefully arranged items will be more eye catching than a window crammed with goods and advertising.

Shop windows should not be obscured by a proliferation of stickers and advertising.

Where a business trades from the upper floors above a shopfront, sensitive advertising will be allowed in first floor windows but only in the form of the business's name which should be painted on the glass in either black, white or gilt lettering. In some cases, where appropriate, a hanging sign may also be allowed.



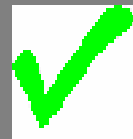
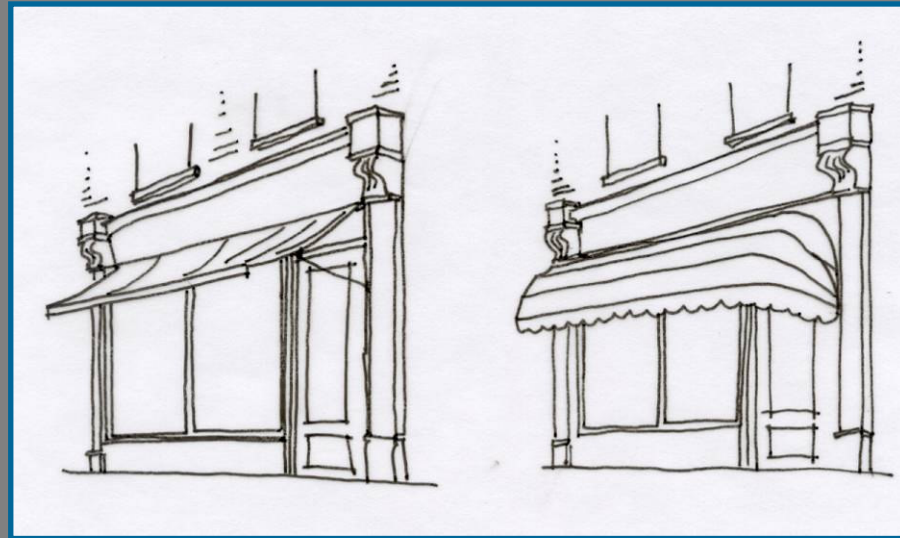
Carefully considered and well detailed historic adverts are important survivals

Canopies and Blinds

The traditional purpose of roller blinds was to protect goods from damage by sunlight. On certain elevations they are not necessary but where they are required, they should be traditional roller blinds of a non-shiny material and their storage and winding mechanism should be inbuilt within the shopfront design. Any historic roller-blind boxes should be retained and re-used where possible.

'Dutch' blinds are not part of the traditional shopfront, obscure features and detract from the group value of a row of shopfronts.

Rigid plastic 'Dutch' blinds or designs which cannot be fully retracted and obscured when out of use will not be allowed as they can obscure the fascia and introduce a dominant shape which is out of character with the street.



Security Shutters

Solid security shutters should be avoided as they have a dramatic deadening effect on the street scene, especially at night. Where security is a risk there are other ways of protecting the stock by using laminated glass or internal lattice grilles. Smaller panels of glass are less of a temptation to wilfully damage than large sheets of plate glass.

Modern 'Dutch' blinds are no replacement for traditional rollout blinds.

Banks and Cash Dispensers

In the case of some buildings used for trade it is not always appropriate to create a shopfront. Traditionally banks, building societies or solicitors usually inhabit such buildings. However, it may be necessary to insert a cash dispenser into the façade of some. Special care must be taken with the positioning, and generally it is best placed within a recessed doorway, or as an integral part of the window design.

Cash dispensers, due to their size and form can be particularly detrimental to the appearance of buildings, especially if listed. Wherever possible the provision of "lobby bank" facilities to accommodate such services is preferable.

The inclusion of garish surrounds to cash dispenser machines should be avoided in order not to exacerbate their impact on the appearance of the host building and character of the street. Where proposals for cash dispensers are being considered in isolation the Local Planning Authority will require the same degree of information to illustrate the proposal in context as it would for a new shopfront. Due regard should also be had to the needs of disabled people.

Local Traditions

Interesting local features or traditions should be retained where possible. Where they do already exist every effort should be made to ensure that they are maintained and not obscured. Where a retailer wishes to introduce a new painted business sign on a gable end, due consideration will be given based on individual merits, provided it is of a traditional style. This does not preclude quality contemporary designs.

Other local traditional features include loading doors and hoists, particularly in old stores or warehouses. These should be retained and incorporated into the overall design.

Mosaic or terrazzo floor tiles were sometimes used traditionally in a recessed doorway, creating a pattern or sometimes spelling out the shop name. Where these occur they should be preserved.

Floral Displays

Floral displays on shopfronts are generally acceptable. The arrangement of display boxes, baskets or brackets should not obscure architectural elements and boxes and baskets should be removed at the end of the flowering season. Flower boxes should be incorporated into the overall design of the shopfront and should be waterproof and of a recessive colour such as dark green or black or white, on a white shopfront. Brackets should be in metal of simple traditional design and construction. Care should be taken to avoid persistent flow of water onto the shopfront.

Other Attachments

Any other attachments such as alarm boxes, air conditioning units, external wires and drain pipes should be removed if they become redundant and any new attachments should be done discreetly, without obscuring any architectural details or compromising the character of the building.

If the building is listed it is likely that listed building consent will be required for the addition of certain attachments, for example air conditioning units, if they are considered to affect the special interest of the listed building.

Disabled Access

All new and existing shopfronts should accommodate the needs of disabled people. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) all service providers, since October 1999, have had to consider making reasonable adjustments to the way they deliver their services so that disabled people can use them. As a general principle, steps should be avoided and doors should be on a level or slightly ramped (no more than 1:12 gradient) access capable of being opened by people in wheelchairs. Frameless glass doors should be avoided as they are dangerous for the young and partially sighted. On listed buildings the needs of disabled people should be taken into account as far as possible, bearing mind the need to preserve the character of the building. The advice of the Conservation Officer should also be sought.

For further information on necessary requirements on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), please contact the Council's Building Control Section.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance is essential for shopfronts to remain attractive. If a shopfront remains vacant for any length of time the owner must ensure that maintenance and repair continue prior to the change of tenant.

Other Advertisements

Additional to fascia board and hanging signage (previously discussed) is the use of 'A' boards and banners.

'A' boards

These are free standing 'A' shaped boards put out on the street to advertise the shop and its services. A proliferation of 'A' boards on the street should be avoided as they clutter the highway, creating an obstacle for the visually impaired and disrupting the flow of pedestrians on narrow pavements. The Highway Authority controls the use of 'A' boards and its permission should be sought before putting one out. Generally, these should only be necessary in little used streets or at the end of alleyways to attract the passer-by. Where possible, alternative methods of signage should be sought.



Excessive signage; visually intrusive and repetitive and poor quality.

Banners

Banners are usually made of a weatherproof material and can either be strung across the street between two buildings or attached to the outside of a shopfront or building.

In some cases they are used to advertise an event for a given period of time and in other cases are used for more permanent signage. For further information as to whether advertisement consent is required please refer to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's publication, 'Outdoor Advertisements and Signs'.

Generally, a proliferation of banners or large banners can be detrimental to the overall appearance of an area and as such are unlikely to be considered favourably by the Local Planning Authority.

Additional guidance:

Public Houses and restaurants

Signing of premises in this category has traditionally produced some of the best quality, most imaginative and attractive results, where the skill of the sign writer is evident. This heritage is acknowledged by the Local Planning Authority and its continuance is strongly encouraged. A movement away from such traditional qualities and a tendency for over-signing is, however, becoming evident.

Greater care is thus needed to avoid premises taking on a cluttered appearance. There has, in recent times, been a noticeable trend to display promotional banners, bunting and string lighting. These features, whilst resulting in a festive appearance, can overwhelm the character of the building and devalue its appearance and setting.

Public houses and restaurants that depend largely on night time trade have a special justification for externally illuminated signs where they have hanging symbol signs, heraldic or pictorial signs provided they satisfy the criteria set out in the section on 'Advertisements'. For public houses with forecourt areas a pole sign may be considered appropriate, preferably on a gallows bracket or suspended within a frame.

Fascias on these premises may be externally lit if this can be incorporated discreetly within the cornice detail or by means of discreet mat finish light fittings. Rows of brass swan necked lamps are not acceptable.

It is not considered necessary to repeat the names of public houses and restaurants more than once on one elevation. Additional information should be at low level and not disrupt the character of the building.

GUIDANCE

(i) Signing for public houses and restaurants should follow traditional approaches, based on the use of sign written fascias with gilded lettering on a dark background and pictorial or heraldic hanging signs supported from gallows brackets or by freestanding posts on forecourts.

(ii) Illumination of signs by discreet external down lighting will normally be sympathetically considered. Where hanging signs or pole signs are illuminated, it should not be necessary for a fascia sign to also be illuminated.

(iii) Other than for the purpose of identifying separate frontages to more than one road, repetitive signing should be avoided, as should car park signs. Amenity signboards related to the entrance will normally be considered sufficient.

(iv) Promotional advertising banners, bunting and string lighting should be avoided (other than for temporary festivities such as Christmas) in order that the character of the building is not compromised by visual clutter. Lighting of elevations will be considered under the same criteria as set out in the 'Illumination' section of this guidance.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF INFORMATION REQUIRED TO SUPPORT APPLICATIONS

In order that the Local Planning Authority may process applications for Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent or Advertisement Consent as efficiently as possible, it is essential that all information submitted in support of applications are of a satisfactory standard. Proposals that give clear and accurate information to explain how the finished scheme will look in the context of the existing façade, and adjoining premises, enable the Council and any interested third parties, such as local amenity societies, to consider the proposals with confidence and will help the application to be processed with the minimum of delay.

Applications for planning permission or Listed Building Consent involving works to alter or replace a shopfront should be accompanied by:

(i) Detailed elevation drawings of the whole of the existing elevation of the building at a minimum scale of 1:50, showing all existing architectural detailing, and materials plus relevant details of the buildings on either side.

(ii) Detailed drawings at the same scale showing the front elevation of the building as proposed, indicating clearly the proposed alterations and materials to be used within the context of the whole building, including any existing features which are proposed to be altered or removed.

(iii) At least one sectional drawing of the shopfront showing its profile and position relative to the upper part of the building.

(iv) Plans, elevations and sections at a minimum scale of 1:20 showing, as necessary, the detailing of architectural features, including pilasters, cornices and window details.

(v) A precise indication of the materials and colours proposed to be used, either by the submission of samples or photographs, and by reference to British Standard numbers. The drawings accompanying applications for Advertisement Consent should include an elevation of the whole shopfront (minimum scale 1:50) with the size and design of all letters and symbols accurately shown, together with details of the colour scheme

Where individual letters are proposed, sections or samples should be submitted showing the profile and thickness of the letters, as well as details of materials and the method of fixing.

Where a projecting sign is proposed, detailed drawings should be submitted which show accurately the size, materials and shape proposed for the sign and supporting bracket, the size and design of all letters and symbols, and the colour to be used. A

drawing of the front elevation of the building is also necessary showing where the sign is to be located.