

■ Appendix A: Shop Front Design Guide

1. Introduction

Introduction

Chalfont St Peter Village Centre forms the retail focus for the Parish as a whole. As set out in Appendix B, the village centre has a distinctive character that is very important to the overall character and quality of Chalfont St Peter. The design of shopfronts within the village centre has a significant impact on this character and quality. This Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to protect good shopfronts and improve others through guidance that is specific to Chalfont St Peter.

In addition to shops in the village centre, there are shops within other parts of the village. This guidance also applies to these shops.

This appendix draws together draft design guidance prepared by Chiltern District Council for its Development Management DPD and issues identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Group in producing this Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council wishes to ensure that any development which involves a shop frontage is compatible with its surroundings, its host building and makes a positive contribution to its local context. For the avoidance of doubt, planning permission **will be** required for any works or alterations which materially affect the external appearance of a shop front. These works may include (but are not restricted to);

- external security shutters and grilles;
- removal of architectural features such as pilasters;
- addition or removal of permanent awnings and canopies;
- new entrances;
- replacing the whole shop front or frame; and
- new fascias.

Some signs (including illuminated and non-illuminated) may also require advertisement consent.

Shop frontage design issues

The diagram (figure 1.1) opposite sets out the key features of shopfronts.

The design issues that tend to undermine the quality and character of shop fronts in Chalfont St Peter Parish include:

- architectural features such as pilasters and stall risers are removed, so that the shop front becomes a rather bland expanse of glazing that lacks the richness of traditional shop fronts;
- solid aluminium shutters or perforated/pinhole shutters shut off light from within the shops and create dead, blank frontages to the street that can attract anti-social behaviour as well as looking unattractive; and
- new shop fronts relate poorly to the design of the building in which they are located (the 'host' building), resulting in an uncoordinated appearance.

This guidance supports policies (*insert reference nos) in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan by clearly setting out what is and is not acceptable within Chalfont St Peter Parish.

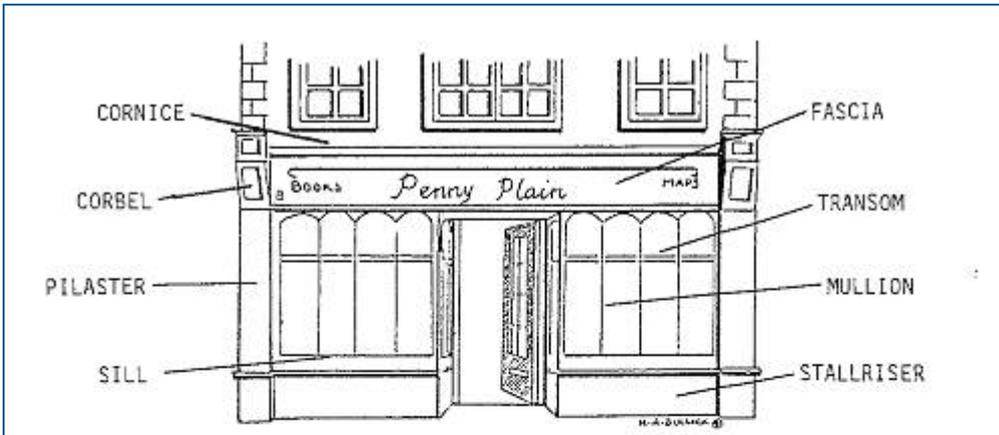


Fig 1.1: Key features of shopfronts



Fig 1.2: Solid shutters (left) leave the street 'dead' whereas open lattice shutters (right) allow shops to enliven the street even when they are shut.



Fig 1.3: The shop front on the left does not relate well to its 'host' building with its large expanse of glass. The example of the right has a more coordinated appearance

2. Design Guidance

This sections sets out guidance in relation to the following topics:

- general principles;
- doorways;
- windows;
- advertisements and signs; and
- security.

General principles

Traditional forms of shop fronts will commonly be found on listed buildings or in or nearby to Conservation Areas and these require sensitive treatment when alterations are being considered.

As general guidance, any proposed alteration to a frontage should respect the character of the area and should follow existing architectural uniformity, especially when it is located in a Conservation Area. Buildings which have existing traditional, classical or historic frames or frontages should be repaired rather than replaced in the first instance as these buildings add variety and interest to shopping centres. When repairing any frames or frontages then materials and colours, especially when painting timber, should match as closely as possible the existing building or should aim to compliment buildings which surround the shop front.

Modern frontages should be compatible with their surroundings. They should avoid excessive design aspects such as expansive, unbroken levels of glazing or unsuitable contemporary materials which clash with their surroundings. Where corporate images are being used, these should be flexible and responsive to the street scene to ensure that they remain in keeping.

Shop fronts should not try to dominate the architecture of the main building. Where two buildings have been internally linked to provide a single shop unit, their frontages should avoid appearing as a single unit. Instead, they should utilise features which break up the frontage and also complement the individual architectural merits of each building. Using elements such as stallrisers and pilasters in an appropriate manner can add interest and create visual breaks to a shop front; however, these should be used in a considered way ensuring that they reflect and respect the surrounding street scene, using materials which are appropriate to the rest of the building.



Fig 2.1 A shop front that respects the character of its 'host' building. The doorway is located between the two upper floor windows, reflecting the building's symmetry.



Fig 2.2: A shop front that does not relate well to the upper floors and tends to dominate the building as a whole, especially as the sign runs across what was formerly two shop fronts.



Fig 2.3: Although this is a modern shop front in an old building, its restrained design allows new and old to work positively together.

Doorways

Doorways provide a focal point to a shop. These should preferably be recessed or framed as this gives protection from weathering as well as relief along a frontage line. The position of the door should be in keeping with the overall symmetry of the elevation. The style and materials used should harmonise and reflect the rest of the shop front. Doorways and access points should be compliant with requirements for access by disabled people.

Windows

Careful consideration should be given to the proportions and detailing of the shop window, as this has an immediate impact on the street scene. Wherever possible, existing original windows should be retained and repaired.

New windows should reflect the scale of the rest of the building. This can be enhanced by providing or retaining pilasters at the sides of windows. Large expanses of glazing should be avoided. Window frames should use materials which match the existing building.

In Conservation Areas and on listed buildings, changes to window arrangements should be done in a considered way to prevent creating a frontage which is incompatible with its surroundings or disrupts the special historic character of a building. Design aspects such as the size of windows, their placement, material, finish and proportions should be carefully considered.

Advertisements and Signs

Certain advertisements may not require consent from the Council as they may benefit from a deemed consent granted under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)(England) Regulations 2007. Where express advertisement consent is required then the District Council will consider an advertisement's impact on amenity and public safety.

In general, the Parish and District Councils would wish to limit the amount of advertisements and signs as excessive amounts of displays, especially when not sensitively designed can result in visual clutter that is detrimental to local character. Fascia advertisements and signs can if well designed, give shops individuality and add interest to their



Fig 2.4: A fascia sign in proportion to the shop front, with well-judged lettering that avoids being overly prominent.



Fig 2.5: The large amount of signage on this shop front gives it a rather cluttered appearance.

character but if poorly designed they can detract from the appearance of the street or area.

Fascia Signs: The following guidelines apply to fascia signs:

- fascia signs should be proportionate to shop fronts;
- they should not be excessively deep or out of scale with a frontage, especially when fascias on other buildings in the surrounding are of a uniform depth;
- lettering on fascias should not be overly prominent and should be proportionate to the amount of space available on the fascia so as to prevent lettering appearing cramped or clustered; and
- in general, fascias should not be sited above first floor sill level

On traditional buildings, especially within Conservation Areas painted timber fascias with individually painted lettering are preferable. Where fascias are on more modern buildings, then modern materials may be acceptable depending on the type and style of fascias in the locality. Glossy or reflective acrylic, day-glow or fluorescent materials are however, not encouraged.

Illuminated Advertisements and Signs: In general, the District and Parish Councils will carefully consider any illuminated adverts to ensure that they are appropriate to the locality and do not adversely affect public safety. When considering an illuminated advert it is important to take into account the characteristics of a locality where an illuminated advert is proposed. In shopping areas where there are examples of existing illuminated and non-illuminated adverts, proposed display should take into account the established street scene and provide a display which compliments this. Illuminated adverts should avoid excessive levels of illumination or halo-illumination.

Advertisement displays on flank walls of buildings, particularly when a building is a corner plot, should consider carefully the impact that this will have on the surrounding locality as they can appear overly prominent, especially if a display which projects at right angles to a building.

In Conservation Areas, illuminated adverts should:

- (i) conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area;
- (ii) use traditional materials which are appropriate to existing buildings in the locality;
- (iii) when located on the front elevation of a building avoid projecting more than 0.9 metres from the building and be sited at least 2.3 metres above ground floor level;
- (iv) not be sited above first floor sill level; and
- (v) not be entirely illuminated

Security

For insurance purposes and for security and safety, the Parish Council recognises business property owners (including shops) may wish to install security products to protect properties. However, the need to protect business properties should not jeopardise the character and appearance of the surrounding street scene. Indeed, excessive levels of security have an adverse effect on the vibrancy of a street scene as they become deadened by unsympathetic security features that also can lead to an increased fear of the perception of crime.

There is a variety of business property security products available and some of these may not require planning permission from the Council; these include:

Internal Shutters: These come in variety of designs and can be an effective way to secure a shop whilst preserving the character and appearance of the street scene.

Removable Shutters: These are shutters that can temporarily be locked into position and then removed when no longer necessary. It is important that when using temporary shutters to ensure that they are removed and do not become a permanent feature on a building as they may then require planning permission.

External Shutters: Shutters which are permanently affixed to a building will require planning permission. There are a variety of types and styles of shutters and the following lists those which may be acceptable to the Parish Council:

- Tube and Link Roller Shutters / Portcullis Roller Shutters / Brickbond Style Roller Shutters;
- Lattice Patterned Roller Shutters;
- Transparent Roller Shutters

These shutters maintain an open frontage on a building and provide an adequate level of security for shops. In Conservation Areas, careful consideration should be

given to colour and finishing materials of such shutters to ensure that they blend into the street scene.

Whilst Chiltern District Council's shop front design guide states that perforated shutters may be acceptable, these will not be permitted within the Chalfont St Peter Neighbourhood Plan Area.



Fig 2.6: Unacceptable solid external shutter



Fig 2.7: Unacceptable perforated shutter



Fig 2.8: Acceptable shutter

The Parish and District Councils will not find externally fitted solid shutters acceptable as they lead to an unwelcoming street scene and cause harm to the character of an area.

Certain security shutter products allow a mix of different styles, for example solid shutters over doorways and scissor grille shutters over windows. Where these are proposed, the Parish and District Councils will assess their merits on an individual basis taking into account the character and appearance of the street scene and the mixture of product styles proposed. However, where mixed shutters incorporate excessive amounts of solid finishes this will not be acceptable to the Councils.

Secondary lines of defence: CCTV security systems range from simple video surveillance systems for small shops and business premises to large complex projects offering town centre surveillance systems. Utilising the latest in CCTV security technology, Video Analytics, ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition), High Definition cameras and IP (Internet Protocol) based CCTV provide solutions that are tailor made to meet the requirements of each premises and provide effective shop front security. These may require planning permission. Advice should be sought from Chiltern District Council on whether planning permission is required.

Alarms and DNA sprays can help provide additional security. Installing the right business security system is one of the most important parts of protecting your business. Installation of simple 'Bells Only Alarms' with speech dialer facility to fully monitored systems with a police response, are effective secondary defence measures to consider when installing new shop front security. DNA sprays are one of the most effective ways to deter commercial burglaries and smash-and-grab raids. Premises protected with DNA spray boxes make criminals wary - they know that DNA links them to crimes they commit. DNA spray is used by retail outlets, schools, jewellers, petrol stations, even major International banks, to protect their valuable stock and assets.

3. Design checklist

In deciding to improve or replace an existing shop front, there are three key issues to consider:

- the existing shop front;
- the rest of the building; and
- the street scene and local context.

Existing shop front

Before deciding on the next steps for designing, altering or replacing a shop front always consider the following:

- the character of the existing shop front;
- whether the building is Listed, Locally Listed or within a designated area e.g. Conservation Area or Local Area of Special Character;
- whether existing architectural features such as corbels pilasters etc. can be repaired or retained; and
- when considering the design of a new shop front ensure the proposed design is appropriate to its proposed use.

The rest of the building

- identify the architectural qualities and proportions of the rest of the building to ensure an appropriate design approach and use of appropriate materials; and
- ensure that the proposed shop front fits in with the rest of the building - pay particular attention to lining up the shop front mullions and doorway(s) with features in the building's upper storey(s).

Street scene and local context

- assess the rhythm of the street elevation in which the shop front will be located. Looking down a street whilst the buildings may look the same it is important to understand how the rhythm changes in a visual manner e.g. colour, texture, and size;
- assess the materials and colours used in the buildings in the locality;

- ensure that the proposed shop front fits in with the street scene; and
- where the premises are Listed, Locally listed or located in a Conservation Area or Local Area of Special Character the Parish Council recommends you choose an architect who has knowledge of the requirements of working within this context.