

## Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Commercial Design

# SPG 6a Shopfronts, Signage and Security

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In assessing shopfronts, adverts and security design the Council will have particular regard to the following: adopted Haringey Unitary Development Plan (1998) Policy DES 6.1 –5 (inclusive), Haringey UDP First Deposit Consultation Policies UD3, UD12, SPG 1a, SPG 6c, SPG 8b and this supplementary guidance.

1.2. Supplementary guidance is provided below on the following:

- Context
- Traditional shopfronts in the borough of Haringey
- Shopfront design
- Access and safety
- Signs
- Blinds, canopies and security fittings
- Shop building repairs
- Brickwork and stonework
- Windows and roofs
- Planning Permission

## 2. Context

2.1. The historic shopping parades and centres in Haringey are under continual pressure for changes to shopfronts and signs. Ill-conceived alterations, leading to loss of character and visual quality, can have a bad effect on the commercial viability of an area. By contrast, well designed shopfronts that respect the character of the area and the architectural unity and integrity of the shop building of which they form a part are important elements of vibrant and active shopping areas.

2.2. It is therefore the Council's objective to achieve improved standards of shopfront design throughout the borough. The Council requires all development to be of high design. (See also SPG1a: Design Guidance).

2.3. Careful and sensible design is also vital to alleviate problems encountered by people with wheelchairs and pushchairs or people with young children and heavy shopping. The Council will require that shop entrances are designed to allow easy and safe access for all members of the community.

2.4. The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the principles of design to be followed in the design and alteration of historic shopfronts in Haringey. It also provides simple guidance on the external repair of shop buildings.

### **3. TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONTS IN HARINGEY**

3.1. Historic photographs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries reveal that the commercial streets of Haringey were characterised by elaborate shopfronts that integrated well both to the buildings within which they were set and to the terrace as a whole. The strong vertical emphasis created by the arrangement of glazing bars and doorways coincided with the tall sliding sash windows common in the upper floors of traditional buildings. The use of decorated console brackets and pilasters served to denote the start of one shop and the end of another. The fascias and cornices of adjoining shops were roughly in line with each other, providing a strong horizontal element that visually tied the buildings together as shopping parades. Most important, period shopfronts were constructed mainly in timber, including the decorative pilasters and cornice, and this use of common material brought the various elements of the shopfront together as a coherent whole.

3.2. There are still some examples in Haringey of Edwardian or Victorian shopfronts that have suffered little or no alteration. These can be found throughout the Borough but are generally concentrated in historic commercial centres such as Highgate, Crouch End, and Muswell Hill and, to a certain extent, parts of Tottenham High Road. Many of these early shopfronts, particularly those in Highgate, form part of Listed Buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

3.3. The majority of shopfronts in the Borough, however, are modern but set within an older building. In many cases, the classical framework comprising pilasters, console, fascia and cornice survives. Unfortunately, many of the shopfronts in Haringey's commercial centres do not respect their context, and instead display a disjointed conglomeration of different styles, colours and materials.

### **4. SHOPFRONT DESIGN**

4.1. In buildings where the traditional or 'classical' framework still survives this should be repaired to its original appearance and maintained in all cases. The design of a new shopfront to be fitted into this framework should aim to incorporate the features and characteristics of a traditional shopfront. These are:

- A stallriser or protected area between the pavement and the glass display area.
- A shop window extending from the stall riser up to the architrave at the base of the fascia. This may take a variety of forms but individual windows should not be so large as to be visually dominating (a vertical glazing bar or mullion can be incorporated).

- A transom rail across the upper level of the window forming a clerestorey.
  - A doorway, which may be either centre or side positioned and will often be recessed. If there is a separate door to the upper floors this should be maintained.
- 4.2. These traditional elements were incorporated into shopfronts for sound functional reasons.
- 4.3. Their inclusion in new shopfront designs does not necessarily mean copying historical styles.
- 4.4. In buildings where the traditional surround and shopfront remain complete, these should be repaired and conserved wherever possible. In Listed Buildings these repairs must preserve the character of the original shopfront and be of matching style, materials and construction.
- 4.5. The design of a new shopfront within a modern building should reflect the design of the building of which it forms a part, but should also consider the appearance of neighbouring shopfronts in terms of fascia lines, stallriser height, materials and other architectural features. The imitation of historical styles (for example, by using 'Georgian' doors and bow windows) is never appropriate and should not be attempted. New shopfronts should be contained within the width of the building they occupy and should not extend over two or more original plot widths. However, the sub-division of a new shopfront for a single large shop may be acceptable if sensibly designed.
- 4.6. The materials for the construction of a new shopfront should be substantial yet unobtrusive. Timber is most suitable and will be a requirement for many shopfronts, including all Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts in Conservation Areas. Painted softwood for frames and stallrisers is traditional. Well designed powder coated aluminium may be considered in some locations, subject to other design considerations being met, but bare aluminium and UPVC shopfronts will not be permitted. Timber from environmentally managed forests should be used. (See SPG 8b: Materials).

## 5. ACCESS AND SAFETY

- 5.1. The alteration of an existing shopfront or design of a new shopfront **must** take account of requirements for easy accessibility by all members of the community, including people with disabilities.
- Entrances should be on the level of the street or, alternatively, ramped at a preferred gradient of 1:20 (and a maximum of 1:12). Achieving this may require the doorway to be set back from the street.
  - Raised thresholds should be avoided but if used should not be more than 20mm high (various proprietary makes of weather bar are available).

- Doors should give a clear opening widths of not less than 900mm. They should not be heavy to open and should be designed to stay open at an angle of 90 degrees. Revolving doors should be avoided.
- Clear wall space to the side of an opening single door should be at least 300mm to allow manoeuvrability.

5.2. In individual cases where access and safety requirements conflict with restoration or conservation requirements and guidance for historic shopfronts in Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings, the Council's conservation officer should be consulted.

5.3. For safety reasons:

- Display areas and entrance doors in modern shopfronts should not have glass all the way down to the ground (the traditional use of a stallriser and panelled door serves this purpose).
- Glazed doors should have an opaque panel or 'kick' plate of 600mm – 900mm height at the foot to act as a visual safety device.
- Doormats should be recessed within a mat well to prevent tripping.

## 6. SIGNS

6.1 Badly designed or very bright fascia and over-large or inappropriately sited signs can seriously detract from the visual quality of a street or area.

6.2 Attention must therefore be paid to designing fascias and signs that are in scale and character with the building and surrounding streetscape. In the design of shop signs and fascias:

- The fascia sign should preferably be a simple flat panel set within the existing flat or angled fascia. Panels should be custom made to fit within the confines of the fascia rather than protrude beyond it.
- Lettering should preferably be sign written or made up of individual cut letters, stating the name and trade of the premises and the shop number, and should be in scale and proportion to the fascia. Simple lettering styles are best.
- Internally illuminated box fascias are not acceptable. Fascias externally illuminated by lamps can be an acceptable alternative, subject to design and siting.
- Projecting box signs describing the name or trade of the shop should be limited to one per shop and should be located at fascia level to the side of pilaster consoles or on the pilaster shaft. Traditional hanging signs can be an especially attractive alternative.

6.3. For shopfronts in Conservation Areas and in Listed Buildings, a painted timber fascia is considered most appropriate. Box fascias and projecting box signs are unlikely to be suitable. Where fascias are included as part of a new shopfront, they should be designed in proportion to the rest of the shopfront. As a guide, the depth of the fascia should be no greater than one quarter of

the height from pavement level to the bottom of the fascia. It should not extend uninterrupted across a group of buildings.

- 6.4. The material and colours used for shop fascias and signs should preferably be of a limited range. The use of bright or highly reflective materials, for example acrylic, mosaic and unfinished metal, is unattractive and can be unsightly. Bright or garnish colours should be avoided. Large areas of acrylic signing on windows or a proliferation of window posters and stickers should also be avoided in order that windows remain clear to be looked through. The Council may ask for changes to the design of standards fascias and other 'corporate identity' materials used by retail chains.
- 6.5. For further information on shop front signs, see SPG6b: Advertisements.

## 7. **BLINDS, CANOPIES AND SECURITY FITTINGS**

- 7.1. Blinds and canopies can add attractiveness to the High Road street environment if confined to the shopfront and appropriately designed to fit below the fascia and be fully retractable. However, the incorporation of a fixed canopy can obscure the shopfront and will often be of inappropriate design and materials. Fixed canopies are therefore unsuitable for shopfronts in Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas. All blinds and canopies should clear the footpath by a minimum of 2.3 metres.
- 7.2. Mechanical security devices used to give a shop increased physical protection can have negative effects on shopping areas. The provision of solid external metal shutters will always detract from the visual environment when the shop is closed and at night, promoting an unsafe environment. The acceptable alternatives are:
  - Toughened security glass, which has the capacity to remain intact when damaged.
  - Internal open mesh roller grilles, which can be fitted neatly behind the shop fascia.
- 7.3. The use of external open mesh roller grilles should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and where no alternatives are possible. In these cases, the grille boxes should be carefully designed to fit behind or below the fascia and the grille guides should be either demountable or designed integrally to the window frame. In Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas, the use of traditional demountable timber shutters may be an appropriate alternative for certain trades.
- 7.4. Necessary, but unsightly items such as burglar and fire alarms should never cover architectural details or features and, if possible, be mounted in inconspicuous positions.

## **8. SHOP BUILDING REPAIRS**

- 8.1. Where repair works need to be undertaken to the upper floors of older shop buildings it is preferable to use traditional materials and methods. The following guidance offers simple solutions in the most common cases. The illustration in Figure 5 shows the features of a typical existing shop building. Repairs to a Listed Building or to a traditional building in a conservation area should only be undertaken after seeking the further advice of the Council's conservation officer.

## **9. BRICKWORK AND STONEMWORK**

- 9.1. The size, colour and texture of existing facing brickwork is all important to the external appearance of a building. Where brickwork needs repair this should be carried out with care using matching second-hand bricks, often London stocks or 'specials'.
- 9.2. The mortar used in any repair work or re-pointing should be mixed to include lime at the approximate proportion of 1:3:12 cement/lime/coarse sand to allow flexibility in the overall bond. Depending on the degree of exposure, pointing mortar should be no stronger than 1:1:6. Modern cement mortars are too hard and therefore not acceptable. The existing jointing size, colour and style should be followed. A flush or slightly recessed joint will probably be appropriate. Weather-struck and 'strap' pointing is unsightly and should not be used.
- 9.3. Generally, brickwork and stone on older buildings should not be painted or rendered, unless it is already covered. Both paint and render require regular maintenance if they are not to encourage damp. The application of other finishes, such as pebble-dashing or stone-cladding is out of character anywhere in Haringey and can cause trapping of water and damage to brickwork. Brickwork can be cleaned using water, very dilute acid or light brushing, but sand or grit blasting should be avoided. Specialist contractors should be engaged to undertake this kind of work.

## **10. WINDOWS & ROOFS**

- 10.1. Wherever possible existing original windows should be retained and repaired. When new windows are needed they should either be copies of the existing windows (often sliding box sashes) or be simple purpose-made modern windows fitted into the existing window openings. Timber windows are preferred, but powder-coated aluminium may be appropriate as a substitute for 1920s-1950s metal windows. New windows should be set back from the front face of the brickwork to retain a window reveal. Changing the size and shape of window openings to suit standard window joinery can be detrimental to the overall appearance of the building and adjoining buildings. If double-glazing is considered this should be carefully detailed, although in listed buildings and conservation areas double-glazing may not be appropriate. Changing windows in a conservation area may need planning permission. Listed building consent is required to replace windows in listed buildings. In

both cases, the Council's conservation officer should be consulted at an early stage.

- 10.2. Most traditional roofs in Haringey were originally covered in slate or clay tiles. Matching materials are best and could include new slate, second-hand slates or hand made clay tiles. Fibre-cement artificial slates may be acceptable outside of Conservation Areas. Modern concrete tiles should be avoided and will often be too heavy for older roof structure. Gutters and down pipes should be kept in their original positions and preferably painted black. If replacement rainwater goods are required in conservation areas they should be in cast iron or extruded aluminium rather than UPVC.

## 11. **PLANNING PERMISSION**

- 11.1. The installation of a new shopfront or significant alteration of an existing shopfront requires planning permission. In addition, any alteration of a shopfront forming part of a Listed Building requires Listed Building Consent. Many shop signs and all illuminated signs also require planning permission or advertisement consent.
- 11.2. The general principles included in this guide will be used in assessing planning applications for shops and shopfronts throughout Haringey.

*This SPG has been consulted on as part of the Haringey UDP First Deposit Consultation. As such, it is a material consideration in determining planning applications.*