

TOTTENHAM HIGH ROAD

Shopfront Design Guide

Introduction

The shopping parades and centres along Tottenham High Road see a host of changes to their shopfronts and signs in any one year. Ill-conceived changes, leading to loss of character and visual quality, can have a bad effect on the commercial viability of an area. However, the attainment of a high standard of shop design will attract shoppers and enhance the appearance of the area. It is therefore the Council's objective to achieve improved standards of shopfront design.

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.

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

Types of Shopfront in Tottenham

The predominant type of shopfront in Tottenham dates from after 1914, but is set in an older building. In these older buildings, shopfronts were generally surrounded by a 'classical' architectural framework comprising pilasters, console, fascia and cornice (see illustration in Figure 1). This framework creates a clear division between individual shops and separation from residential accommodation above. In many cases these framing features still survive intact or covered by later alterations.

There are also examples in Tottenham of shopfronts which date from before 1914, mainly Edwardian or Victorian, which have suffered little or no alteration. These are mainly located within the North Tottenham and Tottenham Green Conservation Areas and in buildings of special architectural or historic interest (Listed buildings). (See illustration in Figure 2).

In addition, there are modern shopfronts set in modern buildings, dating from 1918 onwards. Many of these also adopt a traditional framework but with modern styling.

Shopfront Design

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 characteristic of a traditional shopfront (Figure 2). These are:

- ◆ A stallriser or protected area between the pavement and the glass display area.
- ◆ A shop window extending from the stallriser up to the

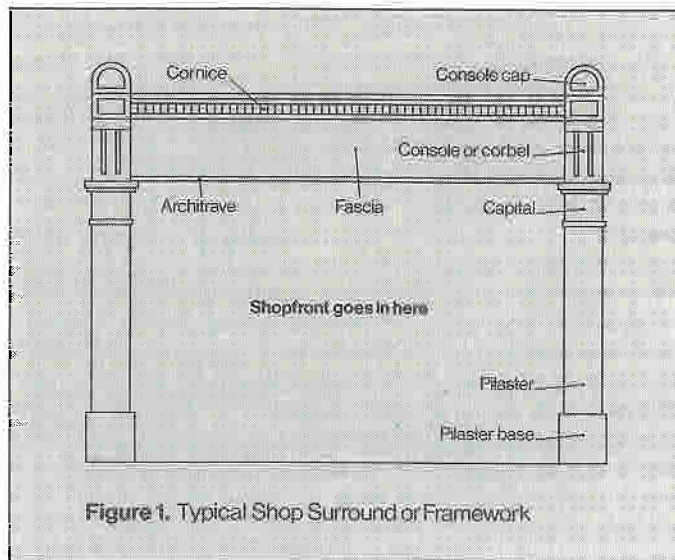


Figure 1. Typical Shop Surround or Framework

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 transome rail across the upper level of the window forming a clerestory.
- ◆ 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.

These traditional elements were incorporated into shopfronts for sound functional reasons. Their inclusion in new shopfront designs does not necessarily mean copying historical styles. The illustration in Figure 3 shows some examples of

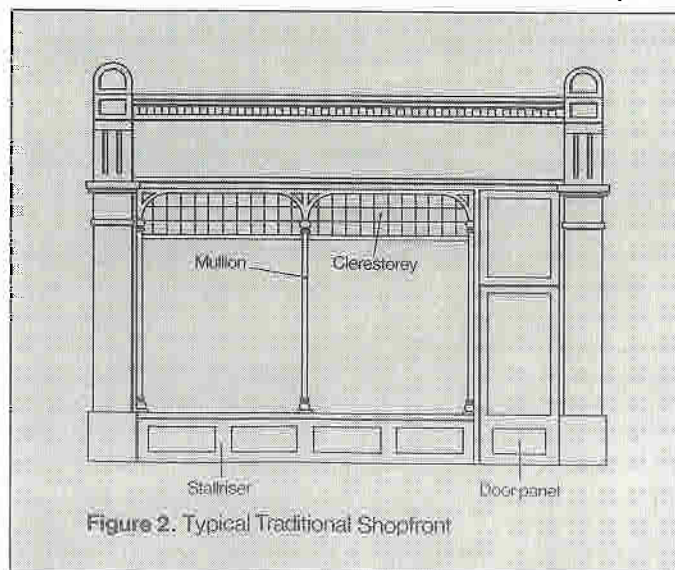


Figure 2. Typical Traditional Shopfront

sympathetic new shopfront designs incorporating these features.

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 and construction.

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 are in 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.

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 shopfronts in Conservation Areas. Painted softwood for frames and stallrisers is traditional. Bronze anodised or other dark coloured aluminium may be considered in some locations, subject to other design considerations being met, but silver satin finished aluminium and other unfinished metals should not be used. The use of shiny materials, such as acrylic and other inappropriate materials, such as reconstituted stone 'slips' and mosaics, for facing materials for stallrisers, should also not be used. The section on shop signs gives advice on facing materials to fascias.

Access and Safety

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 that the doorway is 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.

Where these requirements conflict with restoration or conservation requirements and guidance for historic shopfronts in Conservation Areas and Listed buildings, these cases will require individual consideration in consultation with an officer of the Planning Service.

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.

Shop Signs

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. 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.
- ◆ 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

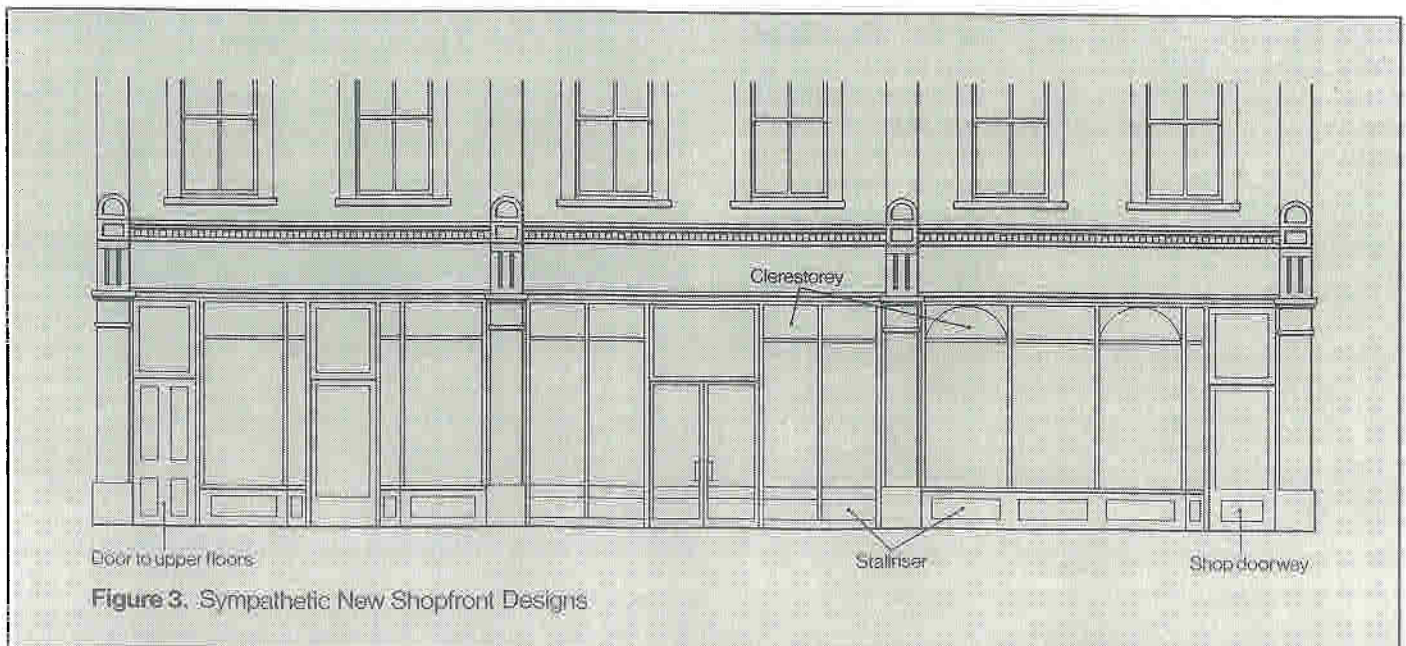


Figure 3. Sympathetic New Shopfront Designs

proportion to the fascia.

- ◆ Internally illuminated box fascias are generally not acceptable. Fascias externally illuminated by lamps can be an acceptable alternative but can be over-bright if not carefully designed and sited.
- ◆ Projecting box signs should be limited to describing the name or trade of the 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.

The illustration in Figure 4 shows an example of a new shop fascia sign.

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, the fascia 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.

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 garish 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 standard fascias and other 'corporate identity' materials used by retail chains.

Blinds, Canopies and Security Fittings

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.

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:

- ◆ Laminated 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.

The use of external open mesh roller grilles should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and where no alternative is 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.



Figure 4. New Shop Fascia Design

Necessary, but unsightly items such as burglar and fire alarms should not, if possible, be mounted in conspicuous positions on the shopfront or front elevation of a property and should never cover architectural details or features.

Shop Building Repairs

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 should only be undertaken after seeking the further advice of an officer of the Planning Service.

◆ Brickwork and Stonework

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'.

The mortar used in any repair work or re-pointing should be mixed to include lime at the approximate proportion 1:1:6 or 1:2:9 cement/lime/sand (depending on the degree of exposure) to allow flexibility in the overall bond (modern cement mortars are often too hard). 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.

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 in the High Road 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 will undertake this kind of work.

◆ Windows

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. 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.

◆ Roofs

Most roofs along the High Road were originally covered in slate. Matching materials are best and could include new slate, second-hand slates or fibre-cement artificial slates. Clay pantiles may survive on some very old buildings and these should be replaced to match where existing. Modern concrete tiles should be avoided and will often be too heavy for older roof structures. Gutters and down pipes should be kept in their original position and preferably painted black.

◆ Special Features

In general, care should be taken not to remove or spoil surviving architectural and decorative features. If such features (e.g. moulded 'string' courses, decorative ridge tiles, finials, etc) are removed during the course of repair work, care should be taken to ensure that they are reinstated.

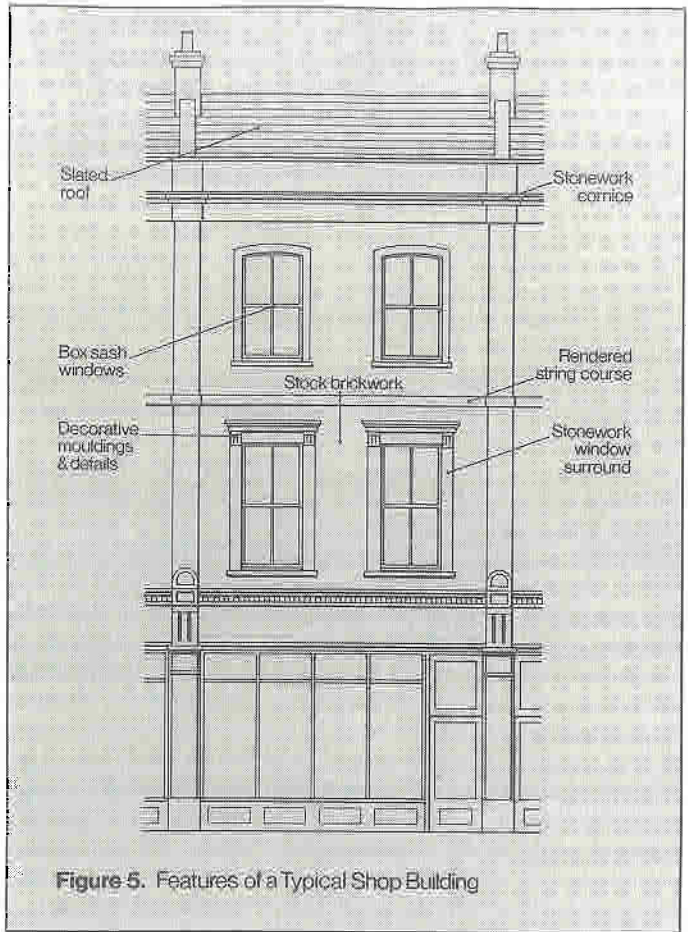


Figure 5. Features of a Typical Shop Building

The Bruce Grove Shop Improvement Scheme

The criteria proposed in this guide will be used in assessing grant applications under this scheme. To obtain a grant a new shopfront will need to comply with the optimum design standards presented in this guide.

Planning Permission

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 and the demolition of a shopfront in a Conservation Area requires Conservation Area Consent. Many shop signs and all illuminated signs also require planning permission or advertisement consent.

The general principles included in this guide will be used in assessing planning applications for shops and shopfronts in Tottenham and the east area of Haringey.

Advice

Further information and advice on shopfront design in Tottenham and the east area of Haringey is available from Derek Bean, the East Area Team, Town Planning Service, Hornsey Town Hall, London N8 9JJ. Telephone 528 9020, extension 1060.