



Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

**West Suffolk**  
working together

# **West Suffolk Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guidance**

Consultation Draft ~~October 2014~~ February 2015



# Contents

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1. Introduction	4
2. Planning policy context	5
3. The need for permission	6
4. Parts of a shop front	7
5. Design principles	8
6. Design approach	9
<i>Design principle 1: Design approach</i>	9
7. Materials and colour	16
<i>Design principle 2: Materials and colour</i>	16
8. Signage and lighting	18
<i>Design principle 3: Signage and lighting</i>	18
9. Blinds and canopies	22
<i>Design principle 4: Blinds and canopies</i>	22
10. Security	24
<i>Design principle 5: Security measures</i>	24
11. Other fixtures	26
12. Contacts	27
13. Glossary	28
14. Bibliography, further reading and links	29

# 1. Introduction

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This supplementary planning document provides guidance to improve the general standard of shop front design and advertisements throughout West Suffolk. It aims to provide an understanding of the design of shop fronts and advertisements that the local planning authorities in West Suffolk will support when reaching a decision on any planning application or application for advertisement consent.

A shop front is a retailer’s window to present the best possible advertisement for their business. It creates the first impression of the trade with potential customers. A good shop front should add interest to the street scene, attracting shoppers and encouraging them to stay and spend. This guidance offers advice on appropriate alterations to traditional shop fronts in West Suffolk’s historic retail areas whilst not stifling modern innovative designs where suitable.

Good design and a high quality environment go hand in hand. A carefully designed and eye-catching shop front is good for business and can make a positive contribution to the character of the street and the vitality of our retail areas. Conversely, a poorly designed shop front can be visually intrusive and harm the retail area. An attractive shopping street is good for all.

In this guide the term ‘shop’ is defined as any commercial premises having a fascia sign or display window, including non-retail premises such as banks, public houses, betting offices, amusement centres, restaurants, takeaways, estate agents, building societies and other businesses in a shopping area.

This guide was adopted by Forest Heath District Council on \*\*/\*\*/15 and St Edmundsbury Borough Council on \*\*/\*\*/15 as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It forms part of both councils’ planning policy framework, supplementing the design and conservation policies of each council’s Core Strategy and the Joint Development Management Policies Local Plan Document as detailed in section 2 below. As such, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning and advertisement applications.



## 2. Planning policy context

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- 2.1 The context for this design guide is set by policies in the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies Document (Adoption Date). The following policies are of particular relevance:
- a. Policy DM38 (Shop fronts and advertisements) states: 'Proposals to alter an existing shop front or create a new shop front, including the installation of external security measures, advertisements or canopies, or advertisements proposed in any other location, must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the building or location of which it forms a part, and the street scene in which the proposal is located, and must not adversely affect amenity and / or public safety. Advertisements unrelated to the site on which they are displayed will not normally be permitted.'
  - b. Policy DM35 (Proposals within town centre boundaries) requires in criteria (b) any proposal to retain or provide a shop front with a display function and entrances which relate well to the design of the host building and the street scene and its setting in terms of materials, form and proportions.
  - c. Policy DM18 (Conservation areas) states: 'New shop fronts, fascias, awnings, canopies, advertisements and other alterations to commercial premises must be of a high standard of design which respects the character of the Conservation Area and the building to which they relate. Standardised shop fronts, unsympathetic 'House' signs, projecting box signs, internally illuminated signs and externally lit signs will not normally be granted consent. Where it can be demonstrated that a premises relies principally on trading after dark, externally illuminated signs sympathetic to the character of the building and the surrounding area may be permissible.'

Note: The above policies are taken from the Submission Joint Development Management Policies Document and may be subject to change before adoption. (Delete note and amend DM Policies if appropriate as a result of Inspectors Report)

- 2.2 These policies seek to strike an appropriate balance between the need for development, the conservation of historic shop fronts and encouraging high quality inclusive design while not preventing appropriate innovation in accordance with national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. This design guidance supplements these policies with advice and specific design principles. Proposals for new or altered shop fronts and advertisements are likely to meet the requirements of the Local Plan policies if they satisfy all of the design principles and accompanying guidance in this document.

## 3. The need for permission

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- 3.1 Most alterations to shop fronts will require approval under the Planning Acts, Advertisement Regulations and Building Regulations. More than one type of consent may be required. Before making any alterations, contact Planning Services to check if consent is needed (see section 12).

### Planning permission

- 3.2 Planning permission will be required for any alterations that materially affect the external appearance of a shop front, such as the replacement of the shop front or frame, changes to the fascia, the installation of external security shutters and grilles, the installation of a canopy, blind or awning, or illuminated signs. Permission is also needed for changes to the materials used. Works that do not materially affect the appearance of the shop front, such as repainting in an appropriate colour and maintenance, do not require planning permission.

### Listed building consent

- 3.3 Any alterations to a listed building, both externally and internally, require listed building consent if the works affect the character or appearance of the building. This can include small changes to features such as doors, decorative details, and fire and burglar alarms. It is always advisable to contact our Conservation Team for advice on works to a listed building (see section 12).

### Advertisement consent

- 3.4 Consent is required for most advertisement works, such as installing a new fascia or projecting sign, or changing the materials or colour of a sign. Most illuminated signs require advertisement consent. In conservation areas and on listed buildings all illuminated signs require consent.

The regulations can be complex and it is advisable to seek advice from the duty planning officer, Planning Services (see section 12).

### Building regulations

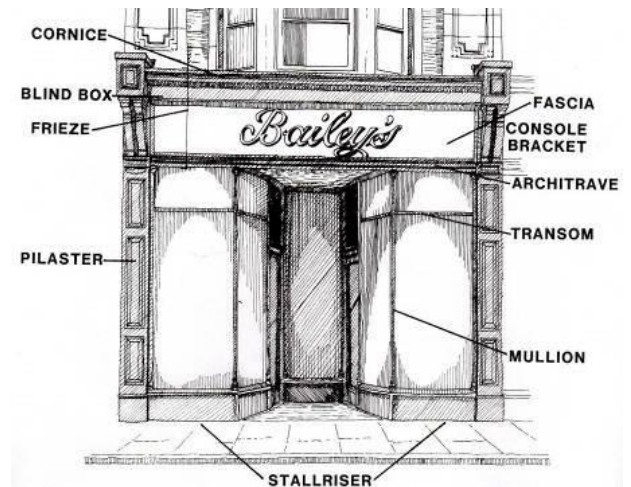
- 3.5 In addition to planning and advertisement consent, certain works to shop fronts need to comply with building regulations legislation – for example, if work involves structural alterations, alterations to access and approach, or if there are implications for fire escape.

### Pre-application advice

- 3.6 It is recommended that before submitting any application to carry out works, you discuss your proposal with Planning Services. This will ensure that your proposal is appropriate and increase the chance of obtaining permission. Full details are available on our website: [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

## 4. Parts of a shop front

- 4.1 Shop fronts are composed of functional parts which together form a complete visual composition. Each part has a specific role. These apply equally to any period of construction, not just shop fronts on historic buildings or in conservation areas. They are a sound basis for designing a new shop front, including a modern design. The key parts of a traditional shop front are:



### Cornice, frieze, fascia, architrave and console bracket (entablature)

(Source new dia. showing elements of modern / traditional shopfronts)

- 4.2 The frieze or fascia board is located across the shop between the console brackets at the top of the pilasters. This is the place for the shop name and was traditionally angled towards the street to be easily read.

At the top above is a cornice which provides a distinctive horizontal divide from the upper floors. A projecting moulded cornice protects the fascia and shop below from rainwater runoff. A horizontal moulding known as an architrave runs along the bottom of the fascia. Decorative carved console brackets form 'bookends' to the fascia between the cornice and pilaster. They help frame the fascia and add vertical rhythm to the shop front. All these elements above the shop window are known as the entablature.

### Pilasters and stall riser

- 4.3 Pilasters form the uprights either side of the shop front, give vertical framing and visual support to the fascia and upper floors and help to visually frame the shop front. They comprise a plinth, a column the height of the window and a console bracket. A pilaster establishes a visual separation between neighbouring properties. The stall riser forms a solid visual base to the shop front and gives protection to the glazed area above; it is often constructed of stone, brick, render or paneled timber.

### Windows

- 4.4 Windows are subdivided by transoms and mullions to form horizontal and vertical divisions. Vertical divisions often reflect the vertical division of the upper floors. The cill supports windows and, like the stall riser, provides protection.

### Entrance

- 4.5 The entrance is typically centrally located and from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century often became recessed to give visual interest, shelter and maximise display space.

## 5. Design principles

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- 5.1 A shop front should project the best possible image of the business. It needs to display goods or services effectively and attract customers. It is in the shop owner's interest to make sure that the shop front is well-designed and makes a positive contribution to the street. Attractive shopping streets that provide a pleasing shopping experience will lead to higher custom.
- 5.2 In the past, most shop fronts were designed as an integral part of the building and based on classical proportions, with the various elements forming a balanced composition with the building. While we have some excellent shop fronts in West Suffolk, others have been harmed by unsympathetic alterations and are out of keeping with the building and the street scene.
- 5.3 This guide does not set out to prescribe specific styles and is not intended to restrict ideas, but to encourage appropriate high quality sympathetic design. The style which a new shop front should take will vary depending on the age and type of the building. A well designed shop front will complement the building and enhance the character of the street.

For a shop front to be successfully integrated into its surroundings it is important to follow certain established design principles.

### The street scene

- 5.4 Consider the impact of the design on the character of the street. Proportions, materials and details should maintain and reflect the variation of nearby buildings. The shop front should not dominate its surroundings.

### The building

- 5.5 Consider the shop front as part of the whole building. A well designed shop front will harmonise with the style and proportions of the building. Good guidance can be obtained from looking at the style and proportions of the building and any surviving fabric and historic photographs, looking at neighbouring buildings and other sympathetic shop fronts on similar buildings in the area.





## 6. Design approach

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### Design principle 1: Design approach

- a. Assess the appropriateness of repair and the opportunity for enhancement.
- b. If a new shop front is required the design should take account of the architectural style of the building and the street scene and include:
  - pilasters (for visual separation between shop fronts), a cornice (for visual support and enclosure) and a stall riser (for a visual base); and
  - a fascia which:
    - is in proportion to the building;
    - does not extend below the bottom of the console bracket or above the ground floor ceiling level;
    - does not obscure any architectural detailing;
    - aligns with adjacent fascias, if part of a group;
    - is not a projecting box design.

- 6.1 Having made an appraisal of the building and its surroundings, it is important to consider the design approach to follow.
- 6.2 The removal of a traditional shop front that is part of a listed building or within a conservation area will not be permitted if it is appropriate to the building or is of architectural or historic interest in its own right.
- 6.3 Where an existing shop front is sympathetic to the building or of historic interest it should be refurbished and repaired rather than replaced. Traditional detailing should be conserved. Where an original shop front has been altered, much of the architectural framework, such as pilasters or fascias boxed in and hidden by later work, often survives and this can be revealed.
- 6.4 The local planning authority will encourage owners firstly to repair original shop fronts if they are sympathetic to the building; secondly to repair or re-establish the traditional architectural frame of a shop front if it has been concealed but still survives; and lastly to propose a well proportioned, high quality, modern design if repair, restoration or re-establishment are not feasible.

### Traditional shop fronts

- 6.6 Where there is evidence of the original shop front on older buildings, the reinstatement of a traditional design is encouraged. This approach is normally called for in within conservation areas, on listed buildings or buildings of local interest.
- 6.7 A traditionally designed shop front will have a timber architectural framework around the shop front of pilasters, with capital and plinth, console bracket, cornice, fascia and stallriser framing the display windows and giving visual support to the upper floors. The shop window will

typically include timber vertical mullions and a transom rail at door head height with transom lights above. The entrance door is normally set back from the edge of the pavement.



Examples of traditionally designed shopfronts retaining original detail



Traditional designed shop front retaining original detail

Poorly designed shopfront

### Modern shop fronts

6.8 In some locations a modern shop front will be appropriate and new shop fronts of a high quality and innovative design are encouraged. Good modern designs are often based on the re-interpretation of traditional forms. A design could be developed within the traditional architectural framework or within a new shop frame that re-interprets the proportions of adjacent shop fronts in a contemporary way. The surround should look capable of supporting the upper floors and the design should add visual interest to the street.

A modern design can sometimes be successfully incorporated into traditional building facades where careful consideration is given to the age, style and proportions of the building, as well as materials and craftsmanship. A good modern design can be achieved by reinterpreting traditional shopfront features in a modern way to create a quality contemporary shopfront appropriate to both the street and the host building.



Examples of modern shop fronts

(Insert new para 6.9 'New Shops' – See page 15 and renumber subsequent paras accordingly)

### Scale, height and proportions

- 6.9 The scale, height and proportions of a shop front should be in proportion with the building as a whole. The shop front and any upper floors should work together rather than separately.

Vertical sub-divisions should be used to retain the appearance of separate shops. This can be done by retaining dividing pilasters and respecting differences in adjacent fascias and stall risers. Individual fascias should be used. (Credit photo or use example from West Suffolk)



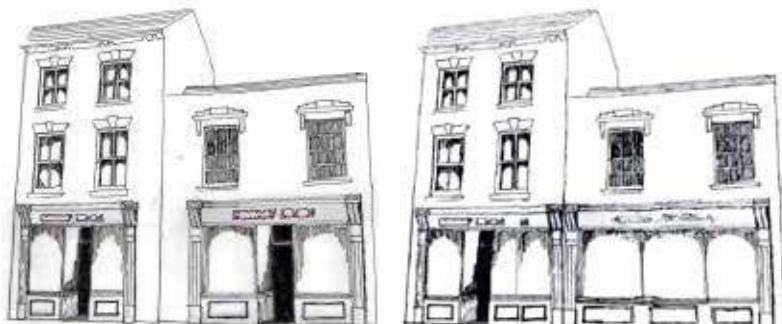
Where a shop front covers more than one building or facade, shop fronts should be individually designed for each unit of facade. Where a shop straddles two different buildings, the shop fronts can abut on the line of the party wall with a double pilaster and use common colour schemes and materials (illustrated overleaf).



*Shopfront unsympathetic to building  
(Consider redrawing or sourcing new illustrations)*

*Shopfront straddling two buildings*

*Poor quality shopfronts can erode local character and provide an unattractive place for visitors to shop. Long unbroken shopfronts do not respect the character of the building and have little visual appeal.*



*Shopfronts designed in sympathy with the building*



*Shopfronts in sympathy with the buildings above using a common colour scheme*

*Well-designed shopfronts improve the shopping experience and enhance their surroundings. A sympathetically-designed shopfront will enhance a building and restore its architectural unity.*

## Fascia and detailing

- ~~6.10~~ The fascia is the most important part of a shop front as it provides the space for advertising. It should be well proportioned and typically be no deeper than 1/5th of the height of the shop front. A fascia should not obscure any existing architectural features; extend above the ground floor ceiling level or across more than one building.
- ~~6.11~~ Oversized fascias have an unattractive, heavy and dominant appearance. They harm the proportions of a shop front and are often used to conceal suspended ceilings within the shop. The change in level can be overcome through transom lights with opaque glass or setting the suspended ceiling back inside the shop and splayed.
- ~~6.12~~ Moulded cornices should have a detailed lead flashing for weather protection and, if appropriate with the Development Management Policies mentioned in section 2 and the projection is sufficient, can be used to incorporate discreet lighting.
- ~~6.13~~ Modern projecting box fascias detract from the appearance of a shop front and are usually unsympathetic to the street scene. They are not permitted in conservation areas or on heritage buildings. If used on a modern building, they should be recessed behind the fascia.



*Inappropriate oversized fascias and deep projecting box fascias (Replace above with higher quality images)*



*Contemporary style fascia*



*Traditional style fascia*

- ~~6.14~~ Pilasters and console brackets should be used to provide vertical emphasis, give visual support to the fascia and upper floors and enclosure to the shop front. They should project beyond the shop front and be free of fixtures such as signs, alarm boxes and blind fittings.

## Stall risers

~~6.15~~ Stall risers are normally required to provide a visual base to the shop front and support and protect the glazing. They also add a sense of security. Appropriate depth will be set by the design of the shop front, although typically a solid up-stand of at least 450mm is suitable. The materials used should respect and enhance the building and shop front. Existing stall risers of quality should be retained. Contemporary designs should also include some form of stall riser.



*Contemporary stall riser*



*Traditional timber stall riser*

## Doors and access

~~6.16~~ Access to shops must take into account the needs of all members of the public. A level access should be provided wherever possible. All work should be compliant with the Building Regulations 2010 as amended and the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Advice is available from our Building Control Team (see section 12).

~~6.17~~ Doors should preferably be located centrally to give visual interest and clearly define the entrance. Recessed doorways are a common feature of traditional shop fronts and add interest. They provide an increased window display, protect customers from rain and provide a level access. An existing recessed entrance door opening should be retained.

~~6.18~~ Windows and doors should be made of the same material and painted the same colour. Fixtures and fittings should complement the style of the shop front. The traditional door is normally part glazed. Door panels should match the height of the stall riser. Attractive paving or floor tiles in the recessed entrance can enhance the character of the shop.



*Well designed entrance: recessed, level access and outward opening*



*Decorative mosaic tiles in recessed entrance*

**6.19** Creating independent access to upper floors, if they are in a different use, should be considered as part of any refurbishment scheme. The treatment of any such access should be in keeping with the materials and proportions of the shop front.

### Windows and glazing

**6.20** The size and style of shop windows, including mullions and transoms, should be in scale and proportion with the shop front and the character of the building. Windows should be taken down to a cill and stall riser. Large single sheets of glass should be avoided on traditional shop fronts. Laminated glass should be used for public safety and as a security measure.

### **New Shops** (To be inserted on page 11)

6.9 New shops and shopping centres give the opportunity to design a shop front as an integral part of the street and new building. High quality, inclusive and innovative designs which respond to the local context and raise the standard of design in the area are likely to be supported. Poorly designed new shops or centres that fail to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions are unlikely to gain permission. In new developments the shopfront should be a key element of a new buildings design. This should normally include a main frame, which is a fascia supported by pillars and stallriser to anchor the shopfront to the ground. Each of these traditional features can be interpreted in a contemporary way as part of a modern design solution. The proportions of the frame should relate to the whole building in which it is placed and the adjacent buildings as it will contribute to the streets façade and rhythm. Attention to detail, a limited palette of materials and colours together with quiet, respectful and sympathetically proportioned advertising will normally help to create quality in a shopping street.

## 7. Materials and colour

### Design principle 2: Materials and colour

- a. The design should utilise high quality materials.
- b. Traditional materials will be expected on any listed building or building making a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area.
- c. The colour scheme should be in keeping with the colour scheme of the building itself and adjoining buildings in the area.
- d. The finish should enhance the shop front design.

Non-traditional materials may be used where it is demonstrated that they will respect the street scene and not harm the appearance of the building.

- 7.1 High quality materials and finish will be required in any shop front design. These should harmonise with and complement the building.
- 7.2 Painted timber should be the basis of new designs in conservation areas and listed buildings. It is most adaptable and versatile and can be easily repaired. Non-traditional materials (such as plastics and plain aluminium) will not normally be permitted. Other materials, such as metal frames in a dark coated finish, bronze, stone and brick, may be appropriate if the host building's design and age lean towards the use of these materials.
- 7.3 The use of UPVC should be avoided as this will normally detract from the architectural quality of the building and character of an area. This material typically has a shiny plastic like appearance, crude simple sections and is normally not as cost effective as timber or aluminium shop fronts and therefore is not encouraged.



*Examples of shop fronts incorporating the basic elements of good shop front design and quality materials (Add images of well designed modern shop fronts)*





Examples of shopfronts incorporating the basic elements of good shopfront design and quality materials

### Colour

7.4 Colour is a very important consideration. Colour schemes should harmonise with the rest of the building and add to the street scene. Standard corporate colour schemes should be adapted to suit the character of the area. The range of colours used should generally be kept to a minimum. Timber shop fronts should be painted and not stained or varnished.



Effective use of colour adding vibrancy to the street scene



Inappropriate use of visually dominant colours

7.5 A single colour should be used for all major elements, perhaps with a contrasting colour picking out key features to good effect. Bright, strident, fluorescent or clashing colours should be avoided.

## 8. Signage and lighting

### Design principle 3: Signage and lighting

Projecting or hanging signs should:

- a. not obscure architectural detailing;
- b. be located at fascia level;
- c. be clear of the highway by a minimum height of 2.4m;
- d. be a minimum distance of 60cm from the carriageway.

Lettering on signs and fascias should:

- a. be in proportion to the size of the fascia board;
- b. enhance the appearance of the shop front and the surroundings.

Lighting a fascia, where it is not detrimental to the building and surroundings and complies with policies (see section 2), will be acceptable where the illumination is sensitively incorporated into the shop front, is subdued and the fixtures and fittings are discreetly concealed.

Signage lighting, where it is not detrimental to the building and surroundings and complies with policies (see section 2), will be acceptable where this takes the form of discreet / recessed LED trough lights in a cornice or a small number of spotlights or halo lighting behind individual letters and where the letters have a small projection.

- 8.1 The function of a shop sign is to advertise the shop and attract customers. It is important that signage is considered as an integral part of the design of a shop front. Lettering, materials, size, colour, location and illumination all need to respect the character of the building and its surroundings. Good and effective signs are simple, uncomplicated and uncluttered.

### Fascia signs and lettering

- 8.2 The content should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential information. Telephone numbers and website addresses can be positioned in a less obtrusive place, such as on a door or in a window. Signs above fascia level will not normally be permitted.
- 8.3 In conservation areas and on traditional shop fronts, fascias should be of timber, painted with sign-written letters. High quality transfer lettering, if it is of a traditional appearance, may be a suitable alternative to hand painted lettering in some instances. Individual cut out lettering applied to a painted timber fascia may be acceptable where the letters project no more than 10mm off the fascia. Plastic letters or transfers on historic buildings or buildings within a conservation area are not supported.
- 8.4 Lettering and graphics should be clear and simple and not dominate, but relate to, the architectural style of the building. Good effect can be gained by shading letters. Letters should be in proportion to the size of the fascia board. As a guide lettering should not be more than 65% of the height or 75% of the width of the fascia and should be centrally placed.



*Good examples of applied and hand painted lettering*

- 8.5 The increased use of corporate styles has led to a loss of individual identity and harmed the character and appearance of many retail areas. There is a need to balance the requirements of national multiple retailers with a respect for the character of local areas. Standard house styles should be adapted where necessary to respect historic areas and buildings.
- 8.6 Where there is no proper shop front, individual letters fixed directly to the wall without causing damage, or to window glass, can be used.
- 8.7 Window stickers, poster displays and illuminated box signs in shop windows are often unsympathetic to the building and the area and will be discouraged. In unlisted buildings, window stickers should be restrained and cover no more than 20% of the total window area. In listed buildings, window stickers are very rarely appropriate and may need listed building consent. Window signs in upper floors will only be permitted for a business operating solely on the upper floors. Lettering on windows using gilded paint in an appropriate style and size is very appropriate.



*Window stickers can dominate and deaden a shop frontage*



*Gilded paint window lettering in an appropriate size and style for the building*

8.8 Projecting box fascia signs (see page 13) are not appropriate on historic buildings and in conservation areas. They normally detract from the appearance of the shop front and are over-dominant in the street scene. If used on a modern building, a single box should be fully recessed behind the fascia, with lettering flush or fret cut letters projecting slightly off the panel. A moulded frame around the fascia gives the signage some depth and adds interest.

### Projecting signs

8.9 Traditional style projecting or hanging signs on a decorative metal bracket can add interest to a building and the street scene. Where appropriate, these should be small and compact, made of wood or metal only and complement the business and shop front. Only one hanging / projecting sign will be permitted per building and this should normally be positioned at fascia level. It may be appropriate to locate a sign above the fascia level only if this is to avoid obscuring architectural detailing.

8.10 Projecting signs at fascia level should be a maximum of 0.2 sq metres, for example 500mm x 400mm. Hanging signs above fascia level where appropriate, should not exceed 800mm high x 600mm wide. The sign should be a minimum 2.4m above the footway and the outer edge should be a minimum distance of 60cm from the kerb. A well-designed, traditional symbol representing the business can be an eye-catching alternative. On more modern buildings, simple projecting signs may be acceptable.



*Good examples of modern and traditional hanging signs*

### Lighting

8.11 Street lighting and lighting from window displays can effectively provide a visually interesting night time environment and is therefore often preferable to illuminating signage.

8.12 If acceptable in policy terms (see section 2), illumination of the fascia needs to be given careful thought and be sensitively incorporated into the shop front composition. Where external lighting is proposed and appropriate, it should be subdued, discreet and sympathetic to the building and the surroundings. Full internal illumination of fascia boxes and hanging signs will not be supported as this is almost always visually dominant.

8.13 Where lighting is appropriate, external lighting of the fascia is normally preferable. This should be by means of concealed lighting such as slimline LED trough lighting (preferably recessed into a projecting cornice). Carefully positioned small spotlights may be an alternative. Large spotlights, swan neck lamps or heavy canopy lights should be avoided, as they can clutter a building and be over-bright. Suffolk County Council should be consulted regarding luminance standards for lighting fronting the highway. In all situations, only the lettering to a sign, and not the whole fascia, should be illuminated. Outside conservation areas and not on listed buildings, individual halo lit letters can be a subtle form of lighting, providing the letters have a small projection off the fascia.



*Example of halo style lighting  
(Credit Images or replace)*

*Cornice incorporating recessed lighting*

- 8.14 On hanging signs, if illumination is appropriate for the building or area, this should be through discreet slimline LED lights attached a short distance (approximately 80mm) off the bracket arm.
- 8.15 Lit window displays can have a positive impact on the quality of the retail area and create a sense of security for users. Carefully illuminated window displays using discreet light fittings can be attractive outside trading hours. Where a shop is lit overnight for security, the shop window should be illuminated from inside and not from the fascia.

## 9. Blinds and canopies

### Design principle 4: Blinds and canopies

A new blind or canopy should:

- a. cover the width of the shop front fascia;
- b. be incorporated into the fascia, flush or behind the fascia, and not obscure any architectural detailing;
- c. be of materials and colour to complement the shop front and building;
- d. have the outer edge a minimum of 60cm from the kerb and be no less than 2.4m above the pavement.

If the building is a heritage asset or is within a conservation area, only fully retractable canopies / blinds will be permitted.

- 9.1 Blinds and canopies are traditionally used to protect goods from damage by sunlight. Traditional retractable blinds were made of canvas, with a blind box incorporated into the fascia cornice. Blinds can provide colour and interest, although it is important that they are appropriate to the period of the building and are designed as an integral part of the shop front.
- 9.2 Dutch blinds and similar non-retractable blinds are primarily used for advertising and are not traditional streetscape features and are often out of character with the area. They are generally inappropriate in conservation areas and on historic buildings because of their shape, shiny synthetic material and bright colours.
- 9.3 New blinds should be of a traditional design in canvas or similar non-reflective material. Blinds and canopies should cover the width of the shop front fascia between the pilasters and be retractable into a blind box, preferably incorporated into the cornice, or fitted flush with the fascia. Any lettering should be minimal and the style should co-ordinate with the fascia sign.



*Unsympathetic non-retractable Dutch canopy*



*Retractable cloth awning / roller blinds*

- 9.4 Highway regulations require that all blinds and canopies should be a minimum 2.4m above the footway and a minimum distance of 60cm from the kerb. If the blind covers all or part of an area where smoking occurs then it should comply with the relevant smoking legislation. A blind or canopy will normally require planning permission and advertisement consent may also be required.
- 9.5 Local corner or village shops usually serve specific community needs and bring distinctiveness and vibrancy to an area. Where a local shop has a forecourt to the rear of the footway, it is often used for the display of goods. Free-standing or fixed forecourt canopies require planning permission and advertisement consent may also be required. Acceptable canopies are those which respect the character and architectural quality of the building and have limited impact on the street scene and the residential amenity of adjoining residents.



*Detail of a closed traditional blind incorporated into the cornice above the fascia*

(Check on site re console brackets. Either source another blind photo or add EH suggested wording re fascia if appropriate)

## 10. Security

### Design principle 5: Security measures

The installation of an external security shutter will only be acceptable if:

- a. the use of a shutter is supported by Suffolk Constabulary;
- b. the shutter box is concealed within, or recessed into, or level with, the fascia;
- c. the shutter does not cover pilasters, the stall riser or fascia when in the down position;
- d. the shutter allows high visibility into the shop when in the down position;
- e. the shutter is coloured to match the shop front or compatible with its setting;
- f. the building is not located within a conservation area or is a heritage asset.

10.1 We understand the need for security. However, the risk must be balanced against an objective to ensure our streets are attractive, welcoming and safe places when shops are closed. Shop front security should be considered during the design stage and the physical solution should be restrained and unobtrusive. Any application to install external shutters or grilles will be expected to evidence the crime history or future crime risk assessment for the property.

### Shutters

10.2 Solid external shutters are visually intrusive, ‘deaden’ the street frontage and create an unwelcoming environment. They are vulnerable to graffiti and fly-posting. External shutters are only acceptable in special circumstances with the support of Suffolk Constabulary where there is a persistent problem of crime or vandalism which cannot be addressed by any other measures. (Delete images below and replace)



*Visually harsh and unsympathetic external roller security shutters with bulky grille boxes*



*External brick bond lattice roller shutter with housing concealed in the fascia*



- 10.3 Where it is agreed that the use of an external shutter is acceptable, the shutter box should be concealed within the fascia or installed flush beneath it. The shutter should be of a letter box style, allowing high visibility into the shop when down, and be coloured to match the shop front. Uncoated or galvanised metal shutters are not acceptable. Side runners should be concealed or painted, or removed during the day. Across recessed entrances hinged and demountable gates or brick bond style external roller shutters, where the coil can be concealed behind or inside the fascia, are acceptable.



*Internal sliding grille*



*Permanently fixed internal bars*

Internal lattice or brick bond roller type grilles are preferable to external shutters as they can be set between the display and the glass with the coil fitted in an existing false ceiling or the window soffit and not seen from outside.

- 10.4 As an alternative to solid roller shutters, external demountable mesh grilles painted in a dark colour and placed over windows, can be supported. Shutter guides should be removable or integrated into the pilasters or glazing bars and painted to match.
- 10.5 The use of laminated glass, internal brick bond style shutters and traditional stallrisers to improve the security of shop fronts are supported. The availability of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras will also be taken into account when determining the degree and type of security measures considered appropriate.

## 11. Other fixtures

### Name plates

- 11.1 Where the upper floor of a shop is in use by a separate business, the size of a name plate at the street entrance should be modest and not illuminated.

### Alarm boxes, wires and cables

- 11.2 External wiring should be as discreet as possible and follow building edges; it should not cut across decorative features of the building. Burglar and fire alarms and CCTV should be sited sensitively, for example immediately below projecting eaves, within a recess or above a flat roofed porch or bay window. Alarm boxes should be of a colour that coordinates with the building and alarm company stickers restricted to rear elevations. Any redundant fixtures should be removed to avoid clutter. Listed building consent is likely to be required to fix alarm boxes or CCTV cameras to listed buildings and their location on prominent elevations will be discouraged.

### ATMs (cash machines)

- 11.3 Where a new ATM is to be installed, it should be sensitively sited in a well lit area where the machine can be surveyed by passing pedestrians. It should be installed flush with the façade with the minimum amount of illumination necessary. New ATMs should have regard to the ATM Best Practice Guide document prepared by the ATM Security Working Group.



*Sensitively sited and restrained ATM*



*Alarm boxes should be as discreet as possible*

## 12. Contacts

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### West Suffolk Planning Services

The West Suffolk Planning Services team covers both Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Bury St Edmunds address:  
Planning and Regulatory Services,  
West Suffolk House,  
Western Way,  
Bury St Edmunds,  
Suffolk, IP33 3YU.  
Telephone: 01284 757675.

Mildenhall address:  
Planning and Regulatory Services,  
District Offices,  
College Heath Road,  
Mildenhall,  
Suffolk, IP28 7EY.  
Telephone: 01638 719480.

Email: [planning.help@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:planning.help@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### Listed buildings and conservation areas

Telephone: 01284 757356 or 01284 757339.

Planning Services operate a duty officer system from 9am to 1pm Monday to Friday.

The duty officer can provide general planning advice to customers by phone or email. You can also visit the above offices in person, although it is advisable to call 24 hours in advance to check that an officer will be available. This advice is oral and free, regardless of the type of proposal. Planning officers are unable to provide site-specific advice; this will be provided by the case officer dealing with your application.

## 13. Glossary

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<b>Architrave</b>	The lowest part of an entablature, the lower edge of a fascia (or frieze).
<b><u>Building of Local Interest</u></b>	<u>A building, structure or feature which, whilst not listed by the Secretary of State, we feel is an important part of Birmingham's heritage due to its architectural, historic or archaeological significance.</u>
<b>Capital</b>	An ornamental feature at the top of a pilaster.
<b>Cill / Sill</b>	A horizontal, often projecting, member at the bottom of a window or door.
<b>Clerestory</b>	The high level glazed panel above the transom.
<b>Conservation area</b>	An area designated for protection because of its special historical or architectural interest.
<b>Console / corbel</b>	A decorated bracket to support a horizontal feature, may be carved.
<b>Cornice</b>	The upper projecting decorative portion of an entablature.
<b>Downlights</b>	Lighting typically recessed into a projecting cornice to light a fascia board.
<b>Entablature</b>	In the context of a shop this forms the top of the shop front and normally comprises three or four elements: cornice, fascia, architrave and console.
<b>Facade</b>	The exterior of a building.
<b>Fanlight</b>	A glazed panel over the door.
<b>Fascia</b>	The flat surface above a shop window and below the cornice.
<b>Halo lighting</b>	A glow of light around lettering by illuminating the fascia from behind the letters (back lit letters).
<b>Heritage asset</b>	A building, monument, site or area identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of heritage interest (including listed buildings, conservation areas and locally listed buildings).
<b><u>Listed Building</u></b>	<u>A listed building, in the United Kingdom, is a building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.</u>
<b>Moulding</b>	A continuous projection or groove used decoratively to throw shadow or rainwater off a surface.
<b>Mullion</b>	The main vertical supports for glass dividing a window into sections.
<b>Pilaster</b>	A vertical rectangular column, projecting slightly from a wall forming division between bays of a building or a stop to a shop front.
<b>Plinth</b>	A moulded projecting base at the foot of a pilaster.
<b>Stall riser</b>	The area below the cill, provides protection and decoration.
<b>Swan neck lighting</b>	Individual spotlight style lights with a curved stem.
<b>Transom</b>	The main horizontal supports dividing a window into sections.
<b>Trough lighting</b>	An enclosed lighting unit that shines light onto a fascia board below.

## 14. Bibliography, further reading and links

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English Historic Towns Forum (1991) Shopfronts and Advertisements in Historic Towns.

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Historic Scotland (2010) Traditional Shopfronts - a Short Guide for Shop Owners.

Stewart, Bill (1984) Signwork A Craftsman's Manual, BSP Professional Books, Oxford.

Sutherland, W (1987) The Art and Craft of Signwriting Omega Books Ltd, London.

The Shopfront Bible (two volumes) [www.echochamber.com/retailoxygen/shopfrontbible.html](http://www.echochamber.com/retailoxygen/shopfrontbible.html)

Wilkinson, Peter and Ashley, Peter (2009) The English Buildings Book - An Architectural Guide English Heritage (See chapter on Buildings for Commerce)

[Peterborough City Council, Peterborough Shop Front Design Guidance \(2014\)](#)

For further advice, refer to the Planning Act 1990, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Control of Advertisement Regulations 1992 and the Building Regulations.





