

SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE

Appendix 2

Supplementary Planning Document

Planning Policy Team, 2011



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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PART A:

CONTEXT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the document

1.1.1 This Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will help retailers and commercial operators, when they want to make alterations to or replace a shopfront. Northampton Borough Council is committed to ensuring that shopfronts enhance and contribute to the street scene and the local character. This will help create an attractive, safe and vibrant environment for the public, in addition to protecting and enhancing Northampton's heritage.

1.1.2 For the purposes of this Guide, a shopfront relates to all ground floor retail and commercial frontages. The Guide is to be applied to all shopfronts within Northampton's town centre, district centres, local centres, neighbourhood centres, parades and corner shops / standalone shops.

1.1.3 A shopfront, regardless of its architectural style, requires its own individual design consideration in order to take the opportunity to harmonise a building and/or a street. This Shopfront Design Guide is a tool for applicants to follow and take into consideration to ensure that this happens. It is also a tool for shopfront owners who wish to improve their shopfronts even if planning permission is not required.

1.1.4 However, it is strongly recommended that the applicant consults a planning expert and / or Northampton Borough Council Planning Officers if clarity is needed on when planning permission is legally required. It is also recommended that the applicant seeks the professional advice of an architect when drawing up proposals for the shopfront.

1.1.5 Northampton Borough Council has produced this SPD to support relevant saved policies contained in the adopted 1997 Northampton Local Plan as well as emerging policies contained in the Central Area Action Plan and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. It also replaces the existing Shopfront Design Guide, published by Northampton Borough Council in April 1998.

1.2 The Benefits of Improving Shopfront Design

1.2.1 A successful and thriving town centre is reflected by the high number of visitors (both during the day and in the evenings) and high financial spend per person. People are particularly attracted to town centres which not only offer variety but also security and an attractive environment. District and local centres serve people within their catchment areas.

1.2.2 Evidence shows that Northampton's town centre continues to perform solidly, but with clear potential for improvement. One way in which the town and other commercial centres can improve is through their physical appearance and quality of shopfronts. Cumulative shopfront improvements will:

- Improve the physical aspects of a shopping frontage – creative, attractive, stylish and period sensitive shopfronts create a vibrancy in the street scene attracting shoppers and visitors alike. The street becomes a dynamic place encouraging people to return;
- Encourage vitality of the area, increasing investment in other shopfronts and encourage good maintenance of existing shopfronts;
- Bring more visitors into town - this comes with economic growth, leading to an increase in demand for commercial space and offers of investment; and
- Make the town feel safer – empty streets or shopfronts that lend themselves to easy vandalism can be intimidating



Figure 1: Gold Street, Northampton

2.0 THE PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 Planning Permission

2.1.1 For all building work, the owner of the property is ultimately responsible for complying with the relevant planning laws and building regulations (regardless of the need to apply for planning permission and/or building regulations approval or not).

2.1.2 Failure to comply with the relevant laws could result in the owner being liable for prosecution, any remedial action (which could go as far as demolition and/or restoration) and any other related enforcement actions. The general advice is to always discuss your proposals with a planning expert and / or Northampton Borough Council Planning Officers before starting work.

2.1.3 The Planning Portal is the Government's official planning website. Every local authority in England and Wales accepts planning applications via the Planning Portal (www.northampton.gov.uk/planning).

2.1.4 There are many types of planning processes which may be applicable to undertaking changes or creating a new shopfront. These include:

- standard planning permission
- advertisement consent
- listed building consent
- conservation area consent
- lawful development certificates

For further information on seeking pre-application advice, submitting a planning application, key contacts and a brief Do's and Don'ts Guide see, *Appendices 1 and 2*.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 Planning Policy Context

3.1.1 This Guide provides details and interpretation of relevant policies contained in the existing adopted Northampton Local Plan June 1997, the pre-submission draft Central Area Action Plan November 2010 and the pre-submission draft West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy February 2011 (see *Appendix 3*). The saved policies will remain a material consideration for the purposes of determining planning applications until replaced by new policies.

3.1.2 This SPD also conforms to Government guidelines contained in *Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering for Sustainable Development)*, *Planning Policy Statement 4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Development)* and *Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment)* as well as Highways Regulations.

3.2 Supporting Evidence

3.2.1 In preparing the Central Area Action Plan and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy various technical studies were published as part of the need to provide robust evidence to support policy formulation. These technical studies were equally useful for updating this Shopfront Design Guide.

3.2.2 Key messages emerging from these technical studies include:

- **Fixtures and fittings:** redundant, inappropriate and poorly sited fixtures and fitting should be removed or redesigned/relocated. These include permanent and temporary items such as security alarm boxes and pigeon deterrents;
- **Maintenance:** within the town centre, Abington Street is considered to have poor standard of maintenance of fixtures and fittings, especially street furniture. Gold Street is characterised by rundown, poorly maintained buildings;
- **Lighting:** there should be a balance between shop display lighting, street lighting and architectural lighting. Lighting which is aesthetically sympathetic to the buildings and streetscape should be provided;
- **Environment:** some streets, such as Abington Street, are increasingly blighted by boarded up shops and “to let” signs;
- **Heritage:** development proposals should be well-designed and imaginative whilst still respecting the appearance and setting of heritage assets;
- **Design and Innovation:** high quality and creatively design shopfronts which exhibit a harmonious relationship with their surroundings will collectively reinforce the identity and commercial aspects of that street or parade; and
- **Sustainable development:** utilising high quality materials and creating well-designed buildings will help ensure that they last for longer periods and require less resources to run on a daily basis.

3.3 Sustainability Objectives of the Guide

3.3.1 The sustainability objectives for preparing the Guide builds on the requirements contained in the saved policies of the adopted Local Plan and the policy direction of both the Central Area Action Plan and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy given in *Appendix 3*. The objectives are:

Social objectives

- To provide clarity and guidance to shopfront owners about the planning process and the design principles for their shopfronts;
- To ensure that shops and commercial units on the ground floors are accessible to everyone including those from vulnerable groups; and
- To reduce crime and fear of crime.

Economic objectives

- To regenerate Northampton's town centre;
- To encourage investment in the town centre by setting a good standard of street scene; and
- To retain and promote the vitality and viability of district, local and neighbourhood centres.

Environmental objectives

- To achieve a high quality and pleasant street scene; and
- To maintain and enhance Northampton's historic and architectural heritage.

3.3.2 These objectives and the design principles listed have been subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal report accompanies this SPD and can be viewed online.

4.0 ACCESS FOR ALL

4.1 The Disability and Equalities Act 2010 (known as the Equality Act 2010)

4.1.1 The design principles contained in this Guide comply with the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that they do not discriminate, nor are deemed to discriminate against anyone, especially those within the protected characteristics.

4.1.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that new development improves accessibility for everyone, including vulnerable groups. In formulating the design principles, the Council has consulted key Community Forums to establish how their requirements can be incorporated, whilst balancing against other legislative controls.

4.1.3 According to the Census 2001, there were just under 58,000 people aged 50 and upwards living in Northampton at that time. Evidence shows that the population increase to 2026 will be made up in the majority by the more elderly age bands. The Northamptonshire Association for the Blind stated that there are about 3,000 people in Northamptonshire who are registered or partially sighted. However, it is estimated that there are 19,000 people aged 65 or over who have substantial sight problems. Northamptonshire Observatory states that in November 2009 (most recent available dataset), there were 9,440 people claiming disability living allowance in Northampton and 28,820 in Northamptonshire.

4.1.4 It is therefore essential that they consider Northampton to be their main destination for leisure and shopping, not just to secure return visits but also to contribute to the economy in the town.

PART B:

DESIGN GUIDANCE

5.0 DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Understanding Shopfronts

5.1.1 Shopfronts have an important role to play in respect of; promoting the vitality of the street scene, providing advertisement opportunities for businesses and promoting the safety of the general public.

5.1.2 The design of a shopfront should not therefore be considered in isolation but as a key part of the overall composition of the building itself and the wider rhythm of the street. In order to understand how to design a shopfront, it is important to understand the key features of a high quality shopfront (see *Figure 2* below). Many of these features such as fascias, pilaster and stallrisers are still seen in shopfront design today.

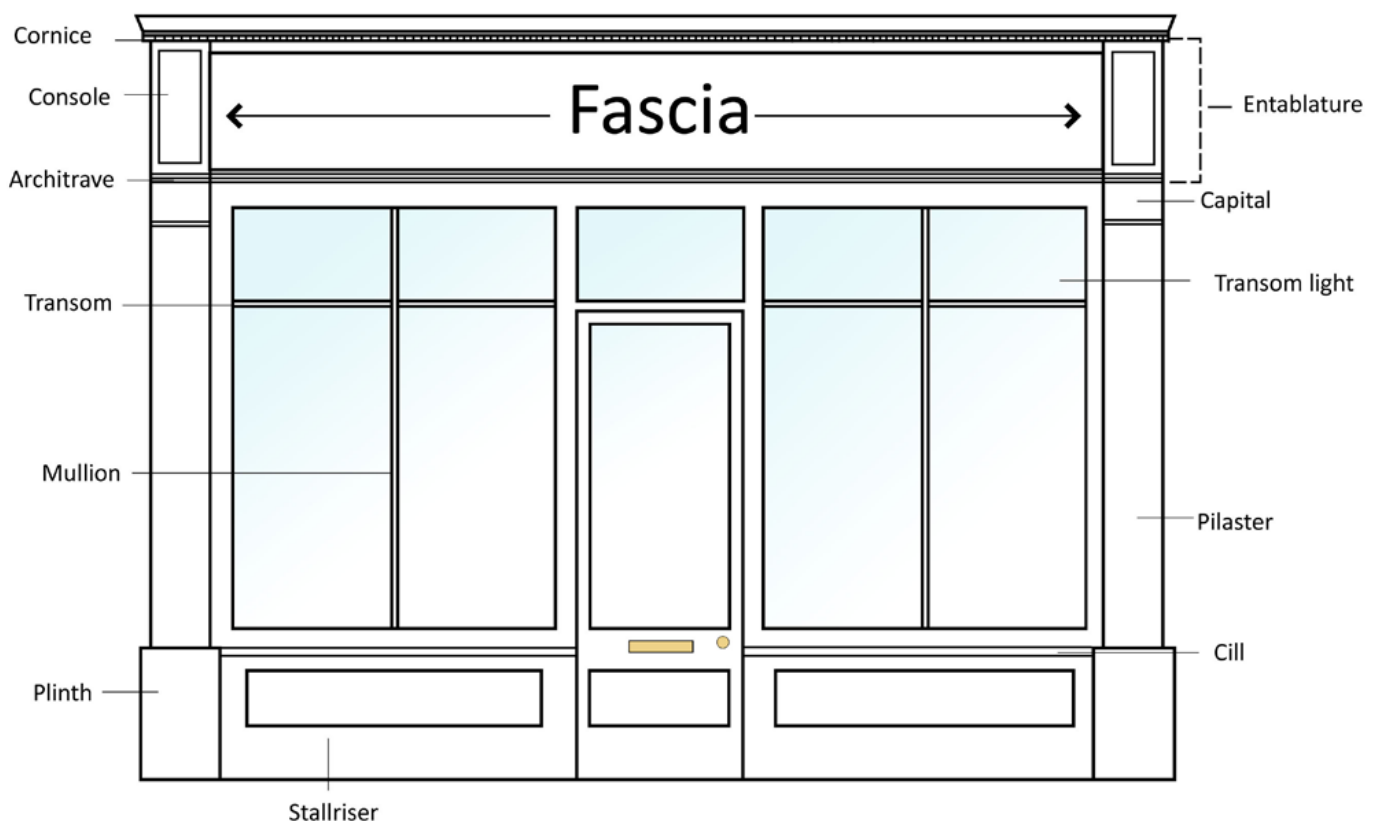


Figure 2: A guide to shopfront terminology

5.2 Northampton Shopfronts

5.2.1 Northampton has a variety of shopfronts which range in style and quality. The following section of the Guide briefly describes three common types of shopfront in Northampton. It is important to identify and understand the different types of shopfronts to improve and enhance the character of retail centres and shopping parades. Despite the variation in shopfront styles throughout Northampton the Shopfront Design Principles (*Section 6*) can be equally and successfully applied to maintain and enhance the aesthetic appearance and overall quality of the shopfront and the streetscape.

Traditional Shopfronts – (19th century Victorian)

5.2.2 In the late 19th century came the traditional shopfront based on the principles of Greek Classical design. Features of a traditional shopfront such as the plinth and column are borne from the design of classical buildings. Adopting this approach to design helps ensure that the shopfront and the building are not developed as two separate entities, but as a whole building.

5.2.3 Advances in materials and different technologies allowed for subtle variations in the shopfront design, however, the flexibility and adaptability of design within the traditional shopfront format, allowed for a fairly consistent approach to shopfront design through the Victorian periods.

Edwardian and Modernist Shopfronts (1900 - 1950)

5.2.4 The rise of Modern shopfronts came in early to mid 20th century and encompassed styles such as Art-Deco. The Modernist approach further embraced the growing desire of shop owners to display more of their merchandise to the passing public. Thus, an increased amount of glazing was incorporated into designs and different materials such as marble and aluminium became prominent in the design of shopfronts.

5.2.5 Modernist shopfronts were more open in design with a recessed doorway making more room for display areas and glazing. To increase the attractiveness of shopfronts the use of electric lighting was incorporated in window displays and on the exterior of shopfronts for the first time.

Post Modernist (1950 – Present day)

5.2.6 Post Modern shopfronts in the late 20th and 21st century possess a variety of different architectural styles and are increasingly different aesthetically, due to further advances in materials and technologies. Shopfronts have now become a trading asset for businesses to reinforce their brand and overall reputation.

5.2.7 Most businesses today want a creative and attractive shopfront that stands out and competes. However, this has often led to the installation of new corporate style shopfronts that have little relationship with the rest of the building and streetscene.



Figure 3: Victorian Shopfront, St Giles Street



Figure 4: Modernist shopfront, Abington Street



Figure 5: Post Modern shopfront, Abington Street

5.2.8 The late 20th Century saw the installation of many poor quality shopfronts. Such shopfronts have little in the way of quality and pride in their appearance and sometimes lack detailing and some of the constituent elements of a traditional shopfront e.g. stallrisers and architraves. Moreover shopfronts are used as cheap advertisement opportunities, with limited consideration for design issues. The advent of security grilles and shutters during this time has also hindered the design quality of shopfronts.

Please see *Appendix 4* for a brief overview of the history of shopfronts and their varying characteristics



Figure 6: Poor quality post modern shopfront

5.3 Rhythm of the Street

5.3.1 When formulating design proposals for shopfronts it is vital to consider the architectural styles of adjoining buildings/shopfronts and the wider street scene. Materials, colour and proportions of key elements of a shopfront should provide variation to the streetscape whilst maintaining the architectural rhythm of the street and integrity of the individual building.



Figure 7: Rhythm of the street -The negative impacts of mixing shopfront styles without due regard for street scene. Negatives on this street include the mixture of; signage, fascias, doorways, materials and the colour palette.



Figure 8: Rhythm of the street - A positive street scene which still possesses a variety in shopfront styles and materials

5.4 Respect the Building

5.4.1 A shopfront should look to complement the character and structural integrity of the whole building whilst retaining an element of creativity and individual style. *Figure 9* shows how the appropriate use of colour, windows and architectural style have been incorporated into the design of the shopfront in order to complement the whole building and its setting in Northampton's historic Market Square.

5.4.2 *Figure 10* shows how a poor quality and insensitively designed shopfront can damage the integrity of a building. The composition, colour, signage and materials used in this shopfront have no relationship with the upper floors of the building.



Figure 9: Market Square, Northampton



Figure 10

6.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

6.1 General Shopfront design principles

6.1.1 The General Shopfront Design Principles outline the key requirements and considerations for property owners and Development Control Officers when assessing proposals to repair, replace or install a new shopfront. Guidance on specific shopfront design challenges is outlined in Design Principles 2-12.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1: GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Shopfronts in harmony

When considering a proposal to replace a shopfront, the applicant should consider how the shopfront can be restored and enhanced, not just in isolation but in conjunction with the architectural style and character of the whole property, its neighbours and its immediate public realm (*Figure 11*).

2. Removal of historic shopfronts

The partial or complete removal of a historic shopfront (on a heritage asset and on a building within a conservation area) will be resisted, unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify removal.

3. Shopfront Design Cues

New shopfront design should look to respect and take design cues from existing features of architectural merit and/or historical records (*Figure 12*).

4. Corporate branding

The corporate branding of a shopfront, by a residing business, comes secondary to the quality of the shopfront design and the need to create a positive relationship between the shopfront and the rest of the building and surrounding street scene (*Figure 13*).



Figure 11: Shopfronts design should complement the individual building and adjoining properties.



Figure 12: Shopfronts design should look to reinstate positive design features such as fascias.



Figure 13: Accessorize & Carphone Warehouse show varying approaches to the relationship between shopfront design and corporate branding

5. Access

The design of the shopfront should incorporate safe, easy and convenient access to the premises for everyone, including disabled and elderly customers, and customers with twin buggies (*Figure 14*).

6. Separate doors

Where a separate door to upper floors is required, these should be designed as an integral part of a shopfront. Such new shopfronts should respect and complement the design of an existing entrance, provided these entrances are themselves of aesthetic quality (*Figure 15*).

7. Materials

Materials should be in harmony with the age and design features of the rest of the main building and neighbouring properties. The type and number of different materials should be kept to a minimum.

8. Scale and proportion

The scale and proportion of window frames, doors, fascias and any other external features should respect the established character of the streetscape as well as the architectural and historical features of the upper floors (*Figure 16*).

Horizontal features including stallrisers and door panels should be aligned and not be clearly disproportionate to their neighbouring feature.



Figure 14: Easy store access.



Figure 15: On the left, a well integrated door to upper floor of a building. On the right, an inappropriate door to upper floors in terms of its fenestration, materials, colour and style.



Figure 16: A row of shopfronts that vary in style whilst still respecting scales and proportions. However street clutter is still a problem.

6.2 Fascia

6.2.1 Fascias form the dominant feature of the shopfront. The fascia is key to advertising a shop's product and/or service and is usually the first feature a customer will take notice of. Therefore it is critical that acceptable materials for fascias are used and subsequently incorporated into the wider design of the shopfront. This will ensure that it remains an attraction without harming the overall shopfront.



Figure 17: Fascias should complement the overall shopfront design and adjoining buildings.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2: FASCIAS

The design of a fascia should:

- be of a scale proportionate to the rest of the building;
- not extend below the top of the capital;
- not obscure windows and architectural detailing; and
- not extend above the ground floor level.

In addition:

- any existing fascias of historic and/or architectural merit on shopfronts should be incorporated into design proposals and not be covered by a new fascia or sign;
- the use of box fascias should be avoided as they are often unsympathetic to their surroundings in terms of bulk, size, materials and the lighting within the box fascia; and
- non acrylic and matt finish materials should be used in fascia design on heritage assets.

6.3 Doors and Windows

Doors

6.3.1 Northampton's shopfronts contain a combination of both modern and traditional styles. The more traditional shopfronts, such as those in the Market Square and along St Giles Street and Gold Street, contain recessed doorways. These provide depth to the shopfront and break the monotony of an aligned feature. They also offer opportunities for additional retail display space.

6.3.2 However, recessed doors can encourage anti-social behaviour such as street fouling, litter and sleeping rough. Where there is evidence of such behaviour, these recessed doors need to be given proper security measures (see *Design Principle 8* for more details).

6.3.3 Doors are used to access both the shops and the units above. The Council would like to see an imaginative approach to the design of doors, to ensure that they not only complement the whole shopfront and the rest of the property, but also improve accessibility for all including disadvantaged groups.

Windows

6.3.4 A variety of design for windows can also be seen across Northampton. The Market Square and St Giles Street possesses some traditional style windows such as oriel windows and sash windows, which complement the character of the individual building and the wider streetscape. This is to be encouraged. The design of the windows is an essential part of achieving good shopfront design.

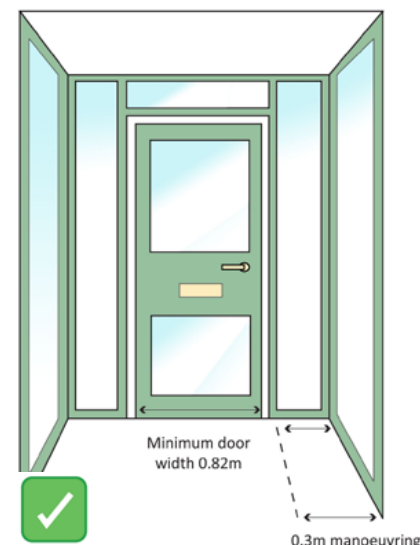


Figure 18: The minimum door width



Figure 19 & 20: Differing styles of windows in Northampton town centre

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3: DOORS AND WINDOWS

Windows

When designing windows, the applicant should take into account existing window design above the shopfront and consider how their proposal will complement the individual building and the rhythm of the streetscape. Glazed areas should be sub-divided to achieve a well proportioned shopfront.

Doors

When designing the door of a shopfront:

- the entrance into the premises should be located centrally or adjacent to either pilaster.

- doorways and entrances should be level with the footpath and / or ramped; and
- the entrance should be easily accessible by all through the imaginative use of colours and materials, with a minimum unobstructed opening of 0.82m (see paragraph 6.5.2).

Where recessed doorways are already in place, (not on historic assets) consideration should be given to fitting gates for use after close of business.

6.4 Stallriser

6.4.1 Stallrisers have both a visual and security function. Where appropriate materials are used, and colours which blend in with its surroundings chosen, stallrisers will add positively to the appearance of the shopfront whilst enhancing the display of goods on sale. They can also protect the shopfronts from accidental knocks, splashes and other potential damage, therefore adding to the security of the shopfront. Common materials for stallrisers include: timber, stone, brick and ceramics.



Figure 21: A high quality stallriser on a postmodern shopfront



Figure 22: A traditional stallriser

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4: STALLRISER

Proposals which will result in improvements and enhancements to stallrisers will be supported, particularly where it has been shown that new materials to be incorporated into the design would not detract visually from the individual building and neighbouring shopfronts.

Stallrisers should be incorporated into new shopfront design proposals where appropriate. The scale of the stallriser required should be in proportion with the plinth supporting the pilaster.

6.5 Materials and Colours

6.5.1 Materials, in terms of types, colour, variations and quality; can either enhance or detract from the physical appearance of a shopfront. Using appropriate type and quality of materials is essential to ensure the protection and enhancement of an individual building and the wider streetscape.

6.5.2 The imaginative use of materials can also positively aid access for people with visual impairment. Contrasting colours and textures, for instance, including those on doors and shop floor entrances, will make them recognisable therefore allowing ease of access.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5: MATERIALS AND COLOURS

All materials used should be high quality, durable and robust. The design of attractive and unique shopfronts through the creative use of materials and colour will be supported provided that proposals meet Design Principle 1.

Colour contrast between the frame and door, and the door and handle needs to conform to the requirements contained in the Building Control Approved Document M. The use of tactile paving at the entrance to a shop to aid the visually impaired will be supported.

For shopfronts on heritage assets or within conservation areas, materials and the colour of materials for all constituent parts of the shopfront should complement the architectural style and period of the individual building and the surrounding streetscape.

6.6 Pilaster

6.6.1 The pilaster is a vertical column which frames the shopfront and provides visual support to the fascia and the upper floors of the building. Pilasters usually project from the rest of the shopfront and incorporate a capital at the top and a plinth on the bottom.

6.6.2 Within traditional shopfronts, when a single shopfront extends across two or more buildings, the use / retention of pilasters provides the ideal design solution when shopfront design is seeking to respect the character and identity of an individual building.

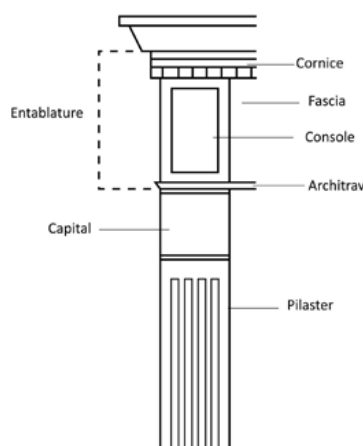


Figure 23: Pilaster detailing



Figure 24: Supporting console bracket

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6: PILASTERS

Pilasters are an integral part of shopfront design and should always be incorporated into shopfront design in some capacity. The design of a pilaster in terms of height, width, materials and make up will vary depending on the shopfront style and the building itself.

When there is opportunity, particularly on heritage assets, moulding on pilasters (and capitals) should take prompts from surrounding properties and historic records.

6.7 Signs & Lettering

6.7.1 Signs are used to advertise a shop's product or service and is often incorporated into the design of a shopfront's fascia, glazing, hanging sign and projecting sign. The design of signs including the use of lettering and colour, needs to respect the character of the individual building and wider streetscape in order to harmonise the shopfront with its surroundings. Whilst working within these parameters, designing signs also provides businesses with the opportunity to be creative and innovative in order to capture the interests of passers by and develop a vibrant and interesting streetscape.

6.7.2 Shops, banks, restaurants and commercial premises often have a corporate style which is incorporated into shopfronts, signs and lettering. In some circumstances there may be a need to adapt signs and lettering, so that it is proportionate to the fascia and the rest of the shopfront, without compromising the overall legibility of the signs. The use of colour in signs can enhance or intrude upon the streetscape, so it may be necessary to tone down corporate branding in order to harmonise with both the shopfront and the streetscape.

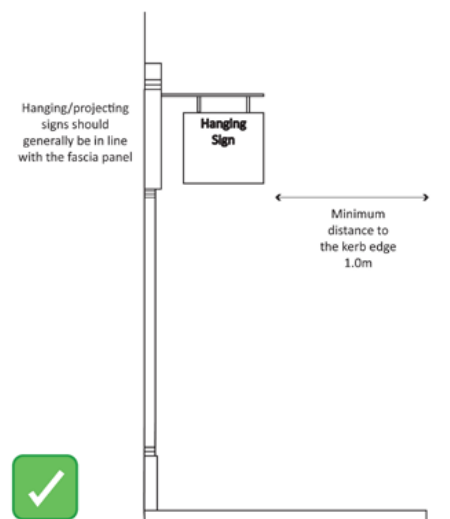


Figure 25: Dimensions for hanging and projecting signs

Figure 26-28: Examples of box and hanging signs in Northampton



Appropriate style and lettering on hanging signs



Well located box sign, however there is evidence of clutter on the shopfront

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7: SIGNS

Signs should respect the character of the individual building and adjoining properties. Businesses located within a heritage asset or conservation area should adapt their corporate style in terms of signage in order to preserve and enhance the integrity of the shopfront / building and the wider streetscape.

Projecting or hanging signs should:

- not obscure architectural detailing;
- be located below the first floor window cill (preferably at fascia level);
- clear the highway by a minimum height of 2.14m; and
- allow for a minimum distance of 1m between its furthest projecting edge and the vehicular highway.

Projecting box signs are not suitable in conservation areas or on heritage assets. External illumination can be achieved by subtle trough lighting. In addition, there should only be one box or hanging sign per shopfront.

Lettering on signs and fascias should:

- enhance the appearance and attraction of the shopfront whilst respecting the character of the shopfront and streetscape;
- be spaced and sized appropriately; and
- not project beyond the width of the existing fascia board.

6.8 Shopfront Security

6.8.1 Retail centres and shopping parades should be places where people feel confident and safe to shop, live, work and undertake leisure pursuits, not just on their own, but with their families and friends. This should remain the case even outside normal shopping hours.

6.8.2 Shopfront security should be included as a complementary part of any design from the outset and should not dominate the shopfront when the premises are closed. Solid steel and metal shutters, create a dull and an unwelcoming atmosphere. Solid steel shutters reduce the surveillance of the street and provide a surface that can easily be used for graffiti. The key to successful shopfront security is to ensure that the area is kept busy and well lit over the course of the day and into the evening. Even if the shops are closed, it is preferable for the shopfronts not to be closed off completely.

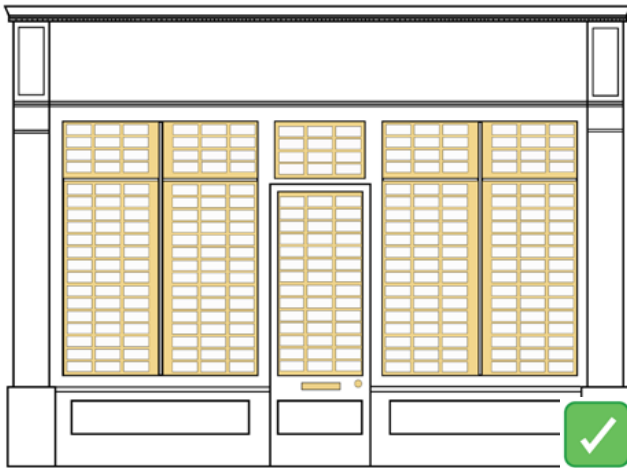


Figure 29: Internal or external lattice shutters are appropriate if needed

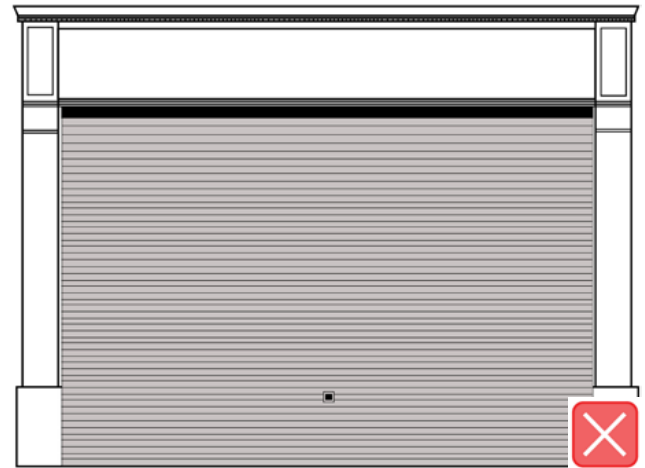


Figure 30: Solid roller shutters detract from the street scene, and are unacceptable.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 8: SECURITY

The following security measures may be acceptable:

- laminated glazing;
- lattice grill or perforated shutters which offer a level of transparency on to the street (shutter boxes should be located within the shopfront or recessed level with the fascia); and
- expandable gates and lockable metal gates on recessed doors.

The use of solid shutters on shopfronts is wholly unacceptable. The use of external security shutters will not be acceptable on heritage assets and on buildings located within conservation areas.

6.9 Lighting and Illumination

Lighting of shopfronts and facades

6.9.1 Lighting and illuminations can add to or detract from the attractiveness of the shopfront and its neighbouring frontages. The principle of lighting a shopfront, especially artistic lighting, is usually positive as it can: increase advertising and future sales opportunities for businesses, improve the vibrancy of the streetscene at night and improve the quality of the local environment for users. Lighting and illumination also plays an important role in shop security as it has the ability to indirectly impact on the behaviour of the general public.

6.9.2 Ultimately, how a shopfront is illuminated will depend on the individual characteristics of the building. However the addition of lighting fixtures and fittings should not have a detrimental impact on the overall character of the building and the wider street scene. Caution and care should be applied to avoid unnecessary light pollution.

Lighting

6.9.3 As with lighting the shopfront and window display, the illumination of signs should be considered as part of the overall design proposal and be appropriate to its immediate and wider street context. Projecting box lighting and fascias should be avoided in favour of halo lighting, this is of particular importance on traditional shopfronts within the Borough.

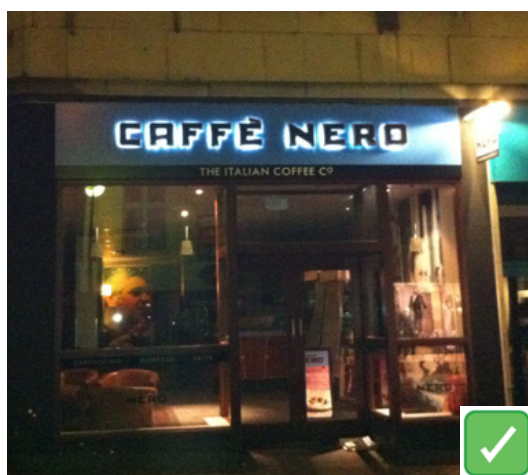


Figure 31: Halo lighting, Abington Street

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 9: LIGHTING

Building Lighting

Illuminations will be acceptable where:

- it can be demonstrated that the visual appearance of the shopfront can be improved without having a negative impact on neighbouring shopfronts; and
- fixtures and fittings such as cabling are suitably concealed within any design proposals.

Signage Illuminations

Illuminations will be acceptable where:

- the lighting used comprises halo lighting behind individual letters or small quantity of spotlights; and
- internally projected illuminations are unacceptable on heritage assets and within conservation areas.

All illuminations should be aesthetically sympathetic to the individual building and the streetscape.

6.10 Blinds and Canopies

6.10.1 Blinds and canopies are primarily used to provide protection from the weather for shoppers and goods inside or outside a shop. They can be an attractive addition to a shopfront and the wider street scene when included in the overall shopfront design, not as a separate 'add-on' entity. Highways regulations require that all blinds and canopies should clear the pavement by a minimum height of 2.14m, the distance between the far edge of the canopy/blind and the kerb should be at least 1m. Fixed, Dutch or folding canopies could be considered inappropriate additions to shopfronts as they may be visually obtrusive when open and fully retracted.

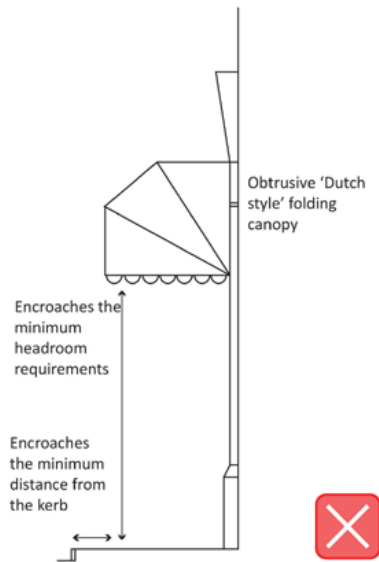


Figure 32: Inappropriate dimensions for a 'Dutch style' canopy

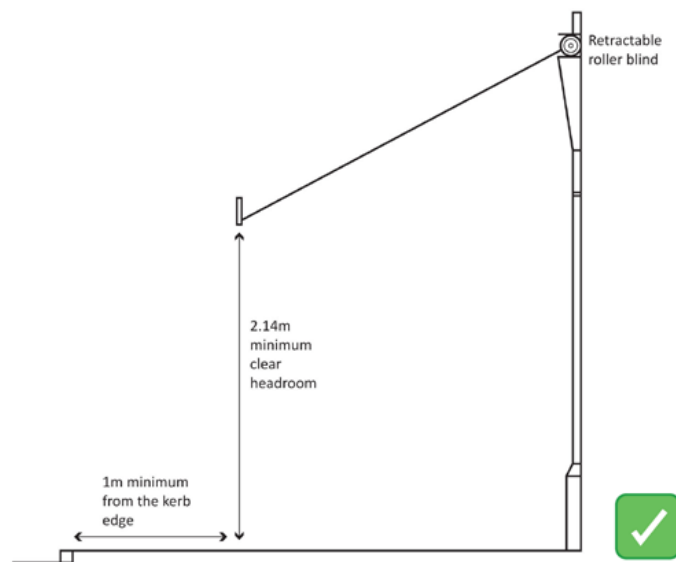


Figure 33: Acceptable dimensions for installing a roller blind/canopy

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 10: BLINDS AND CANOPIES

The most suitable type of canopy/blind is a straight canvas retractable canopy/blind (see Figure 33). The blind/canopy should be the width of the shopfront's fascia and the accompanying blind box should be fitted flush with or behind the fascia. Proposals will be required to meet the following criteria:

- the blind box should be successfully incorporated into shopfront design;
- the size, shape, colour and materials of blinds/canopies (and any accompanying blind box) should be compatible with the character of the shopfront, the building and the street scene;
- blinds and canopies should be positioned appropriately in the context of the shop and not to obscure any architectural detailing;
- the use of non retractable canopies will not be permitted in conservation areas and on heritage assets;
- the outer edge of the blind/canopy needs to be a minimum of 1m from to the kerb line; and
- the height of the blind/canopy must be no less than 2.14m from pavement level.

6.11 Fixtures and Fittings

6.11.1 The visual appeal of a building's frontage, particularly on heritage assets, can be enhanced or reduced, depending on the existence, nature, amount and location of fixtures and fittings such as redundant security alarms, external cable runs and pigeon deterrents.

6.11.2 Where new ATM's are to be installed, it is essential that they be installed securely, for the benefit of both the public and the banks.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 11: FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Redundant fixtures and fittings should be removed as part of the planning application, with the exception of those which add to the character of a heritage asset. Any holes or marks left on the building following removal should be sympathetically repaired with materials that will not have a detrimental impact upon the fabric of the building.

If new fixtures and fittings are required, these need to be discreetly positioned within the building and should not cover any existing architectural detailing. If required a rod and wire deterrent system should be used to deter pigeons.

Where new ATM machines (cash machines) are to be installed they should be:

- sited in a well lit area where the machine can be well surveilled by passing pedestrians and vehicles;
- sensitively sited in the context of their location; and
- installed flush with the wall and not positioned in a recess.

6.12 Shopfronts on corner plots

6.12.1 Shops located on the corner of a parade have an advantage in attracting visitors because of dual frontage. When designing the shopfront, careful consideration needs to be given to providing access on the corner plot.



Figure 34: Providing the entrance to a unit on the corner can draw the attention of pedestrians on both streets.

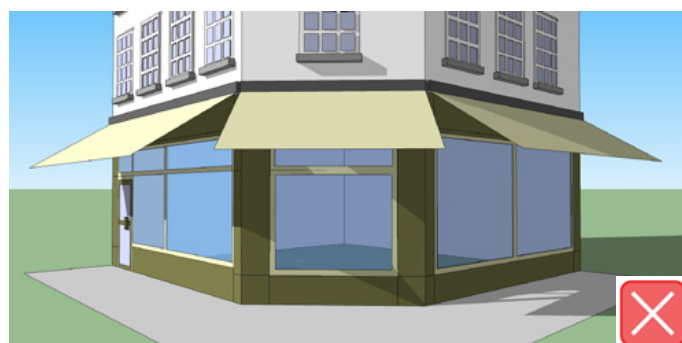


Figure 35: Poorly placed unit entrances reduce the legibility of the building for users

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 12: SHOPFRONTS ON CORNER PLOTS

Where possible, shopfronts spanning the corner of a parade should look to provide pedestrian access to the unit on the corner of the site as shown in Figure 35. If an entrance has been accommodated on the corner unit, it may also be acceptable to provide an additional entrance on either side of the unit.

To maximise advertisement opportunities on corner units whilst reducing clutter on shopfronts, hanging and projecting signs should be located at the end of the fascia, which is farthest away from the corner.

6.13 Shopfronts on new buildings / developments

6.13.1 Northampton's population is expected to grow, and this will be accompanied by a similar increase in job opportunities. This means that Northampton's town centre needs to expand to cater for increasing demand in retail and other commercial leisure activities. One way in which this can be achieved is through new development, including the proposal for a redeveloped Grosvenor Centre.

6.13.2 Shopfronts within new indoor shopping centres do not need planning consent. However, the following design principles will secure the provision of well designed shopfronts within indoor shopping centres. Within new indoor/covered shopping centres, shopfronts should aim to:

- provide a clear visual division between the individual shops, including through the creative use of pilasters, contrasting colour and high quality materials;
- provide fascias of an acceptable proportion to the rest of the building; and
- incorporate recessed doorways where possible to break up the monotony of the streetscape and / or set a clear point of entry into the individual shops.



Figure 36: New high quality shopfronts, Bury St Edmunds

7.0 Delivery

7.1 Business Improvement District

7.1.1 The Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID), which will generate additional funding to help promote local businesses and attract shoppers and visitors, was formed in 2010. The BID covers all the commercial sectors within Northampton town centre's inner ring road and lasts for 5 years.

7.1.2 The BID has a number of short and long terms goals, including the objective of encouraging more investors into town and looking at different ways to use vacant units. This will improve trading conditions for businesses, reduce operating costs and increase the competitiveness of the local area.

7.1.3 Businesses within the BID have the power to manage their own trading environment, funded by a small levy (about 1%) of each of their business rates. This creates a pot of money which they can use to deliver extra services that they would jointly choose to improve the Northampton town centre.

7.1.4 For further information on the BID, please contact the current Chair (details in *Appendix 2*)

7.2 Alternative Sources of Funding

7.2.1 In addition to the more well known sources of funding, for instance, small business loans from high street banks, there are other sources of funding which shopfront owners could investigate. These include:

- **European Investment Bank** – they offer intermediated loans for small and medium sized businesses. These loans can support all types of investment or expenditure necessary to grow a small business;
- **Heritage Lottery Fund** – applicants should be charitable or non-profit distributing bodies concerned with heritage. Applications for projects requesting less than £50,000 can be considered, provided the scheme addresses, amongst others, the underlying priorities of conserving heritage and opening up heritage resources and sites to wider audiences; and
- **Townscape Heritage Fund** – this provides support for schemes, led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests, that aim to regenerate the conservation areas across the United Kingdom. Eligible activities include structural and external repair of historic buildings that are still being used, and the repair/conversion for new uses of vacant or partly-used historic buildings. Local authorities and not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply.

7.3 Maintenance

7.3.1 Once a shopfront undergoes an alteration or a complete change, it is essential that a shopfront is proactively maintained by the occupant to ensure that the character of the property and wider street scene is kept to a high standard.

7.4 Monitoring

7.4.1 The effectiveness of the design principles contained in this Guide can be monitored through an annual assessment of the number of planning applications which have been approved, contrary to the Guide.

7.4.2 To do this, it is anticipated that there will be an annual environmental audit of shopfront approvals.

8.0 GLOSSARY

Architrave:	It is a lintel or beam that rests on the capitals of pilasters.
Capital:	An ornamental feature at the top of a pilaster.
Cill:	Horizontal bar at the bottom of a window or a door.
Console/Corbel:	An ornamental bracket used to support a horizontal feature.
Cornice:	Projecting moulding at the top of a building or other architectural feature.
Dutch Canopy:	Hooded shopfront canopy made popular in continental Europe.
Edwardian:	The Edwardian period of architecture in the United Kingdom is the period covering the reign of King Edward VII and the early 20th century.
Entablature:	The whole of the horizontal structure above the capitals in a Classical order.
Facade:	The front exterior face of a building.
Fascia:	Flat or canted surface above a shop window, which often displays the name or the shop / commercial use.
Georgian:	English architectural style of c1714 - 1810.
Heritage Asset:	Buildings of architectural merit that are afforded special consideration in making planning decisions.
Modernism:	An architectural style from the first half of the 20th century. This architectural style embraced the use of new modern materials.
Mullion:	Vertical bar that separates panes of glass in a window into sections.
Oriel window:	Style of window dating back to the Georgian period.
Pilaster:	Shallow / flat rectangular column attached to the face of a wall.
Plinth:	Moulded projecting base at the foot of a pilaster.
Post Modernism:	Architectural style from the 1950s, onwards.
Sash window:	Window with vertically or horizontally sliding wooden frames holding glass panes.
Stallriser:	Vertical surface between the pavement and the window.
Transom:	Horizontal bar across a window.
Victorian:	Architecture style pertaining to the reign of Queen Victoria 1837 - 1901

9.0 REFERENCES

National

1. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (CLG, 2005)
2. Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (CLG, 2009)
3. Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (CLG, 2010)
4. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (CLG, 2008)
5. Safer Places: the Planning System and Crime Prevention (DCLG, Feb 2004)
6. Urban Design compendium (*English Partnership/Housing Corporation, 2000*)

Local

1. West Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report (*West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit 2009/10*)
2. West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy pre-submission draft (*West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, February 2011*)
3. Central Area Action Plan pre-submission draft (*Northampton Borough Council, November 2010*)
4. Sustainability Appraisal (*Environ UK, October 2010*)
5. Statement of Community Involvement (*Northampton Borough Council, March 2006*)
6. Northampton Shopfront Design Guide (*Northampton Borough Council, April 1998*)
7. Northampton Local Plan (*Northampton Borough Council, June 1997*)

Technical Studies

1. Population, Households and Labour Force technical paper (*West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, February 2011*)
2. Northampton Central Area Character Assessment (*Space, July 2010*)
3. Town Centre Health Check (*Roger Tym & Partners, October 2009*)
4. Northampton Town Centre Environmental Audit (*Northamptonshire Police, July 2009*)
5. Building Frontage Appraisal for Market Square and Abington Street (*Rodney Melville and Partners, May 2008*)

Others

1. Cragoe, C.A (2009), *How to Read Buildings a Crash Course in Architecture*, Herbert Press, London
2. Morrison, K (2003), *English Shops and Shopping*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London
3. Northamptonshire Observatory website datasets
4. Geoffrey Hunt Building Services Ltd (2008), *Architectural Timeline*

PART C:

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

Making a Planning Application and Key Contacts

Pre-application Advice

Northampton Borough Council offers pre-application advice. For further information on pre-application advice, please access www.northampton.gov.uk or contact 0300 330 7000 and ask to speak to a Planning Officer in the Development Control section.

Submitting a Planning Application

All planning applications must comprise:

- the completed and signed forms – to include precise information about the proposals;
- a site location plan with the property outlined in red;
- the appropriate fee;
- accurately scaled drawings and clear annotations of the materials to be used;
- a Design & Access Statement if in a conservation area and/or is a Listed Building; and
- a recent, dated photograph of the shop and adjacent units (optional)

Planning application forms can be obtained in the following ways:

- online by accessing the planning portal on www.northampton.gov.uk and viewing the National Standards 1 APP forms;
- requesting a hard copy by post by calling 01604 838 915; and
- obtaining a hard copy directly from the Council's Planning Department located at the Guildhall.

Three hard copies of the form and the supporting documents need to be completed if they are to be posted or delivered by hand. If completing on-line, 1 copy of the form and all supporting documents are required.

Submitting a Building Regulations Application

Applicants are encouraged to submit a Buildings Regulations Application either simultaneously with the planning application or straight after planning permission has been granted. Key regulations to be met relate to opening, access and cleaning requirements for elements of the building that are glazed including windows and doors. Further information can be found by accessing the link below.

- Reference Building Regs Document M in relation to Access and Use of Buildings - <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved>
- Reference Building Regs Approved Document N in relation to Access and Use - <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partn/approved>

Applicants are recommended to speak to a Building Control Officer to ascertain whether there are any other relevant regulations to be met or whether these guidelines have been updated.

Key Contacts

For further information relating to the use of this design guide, or a pre-application discussion, please contact Officers within the following divisions during normal working hours:

Northampton Borough Council

- Main switchboard (0300 330 7000)
- Development Control (01604 838 915 option 2)
- Built and Natural Environment (01604 837 637)
- Building Control (01604 838 920)
- Community Engagement and Equalities Division (01604 837 566)

Northamptonshire County Council

- Highway Regulations (01604 236 236)

Northamptonshire Police

- Crime Prevention Design Advisor (03000 111 222)

Northampton Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID)

- Stephen Chown (01604 60 40 50) or his successor (Chair of BID)

Northamptonshire County Council Historic Records Office

- General Enquiries (01604 762129)

APPENDIX 2

Do's and Don'ts

The information below is a checklist to guide shopfront owners:

DO:



- Speak to a Planning Officer at the Borough Council before undertaking any works to your shopfront and check if planning consent is required;
- Speak to representatives of Community Forums, they can help you with your design;
- Undertake a proper survey of your shopfront, your neighbours' shopfronts and the floors above your shop when thinking about what you want to do;
- Look at historical pictures of how the shopfront used to look like to assist you further;
- Utilise existing shopfront features which have architectural or historical merit and incorporate them into your proposals;
- Consider how your new shopfront will look as part of the individual building and wider street or parade;
- Make sure that you complete and submit all the relevant forms and drawings, this will save you time; and
- Be creative, it is an opportunity to create attractive and unique shopfronts, but do so in conformity to the design principles contained in this guide.

DON'T:



- Forget the details when thinking about your shopfront design – for instance the scale, architectural detailing, the materials and the colour;
- Keep any redundant fixtures and fittings which create clutter on your shopfronts, unless it can be demonstrated that they add to the character of the building
- Put more than one hanging sign / projecting box sign on your shopfront; and
- Install a new fascia board over an existing one. The existing fascia board might have some historical or architectural merit. Keeping and improving an original fascia board might make your shopfront look more interesting and appealing to customers.

APPENDIX 3

1997 Northampton Adopted Local Plan Saved Policies

Northampton's Local Plan was adopted in June 1997. Following the establishment of a new planning system under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, some of the policies were saved by Government Office for East Midlands to assist with the determination of planning applications. The relevant saved policies for the purposes of this Guide are:

Saved Policy E29 – Shopping Environment

Planning permission for new or replacement shopfronts will be granted where:

- The quality of design complements the character of the building and its locality
- The quality and use of materials complements the townscape
- The proposal does not detract from the character and appearance of the street scene
- Provision has been made for an advertisement as an integral part of the overall design
- The proposal would not involve the removal of an historic shopfront



Saved Policy E30 – Shop Front Security

Planning permission will be granted for external security protection to new and existing shopfronts where the fittings:

- Allow visibility into the premises where they are fitted
- Are colour coated, preferably in a factory-applied colour in keeping with the shopfront
- Are designed to be as unobtrusive as possible during business hours
- Will not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a listed building or Conservation Area

Northampton's Central Area Action Plan – Pre Submission draft (November 2010)

The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) is being prepared by Northampton Borough Council. It is the future development plan which will guide how Northampton's town centre and its immediate surrounding area will develop. When adopted, it will guide and regulate the type, quality and quantity of development up to the period 2026.

The CAAP completed its Pre-Submission publication stage in December 2010. This means that the policies contained in the published CAAP carry some weight. Policies provide details on the policy direction which the Council intends to take to Examination by an independent Government Inspector. This shopfront design guide will therefore support Policies 2 and 14 of the Central Area Action Plan.

Policy 2 – Promoting Design Excellence (extracts)

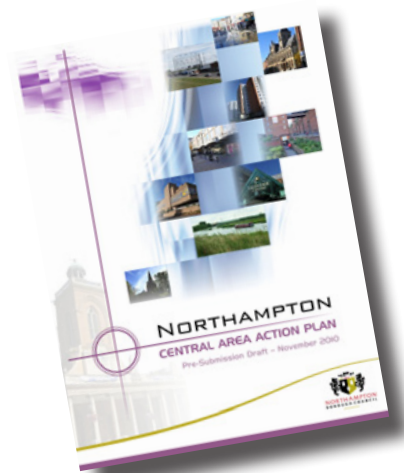
All new development within the Central Area must demonstrate a high design standard and successfully address the following design objectives:

- preserve and enhance the character, appearance and setting of the Central Area's heritage assets; and
- promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact on the character and quality of an area.

Policy 14 – Improving the Retail Offer (extracts)

Development at ground floor level within the Central Area will be expected to:

- Positively contribute to the character and function of a frontage and be compatible with adjoining uses;
- Provide high quality shopfronts which will be consistent with the Shopfront Design Guide; and
- In the case of non-retail uses, provide an active frontage with views into the unit, or, if this cannot be achieved, a high quality window display.



West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) is being prepared by the Joint Planning Unit, covering the administrative areas of Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Daventry. It will set out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of West Northamptonshire to 2026, as well as strategic policies for steering and shaping developments.

The WNJCS reached its Publication stage in February 2011, and was released for consultation on the 17th February, for a period of 6 weeks. The key policy which the Shopfront SPD will conform to is Policy S10.

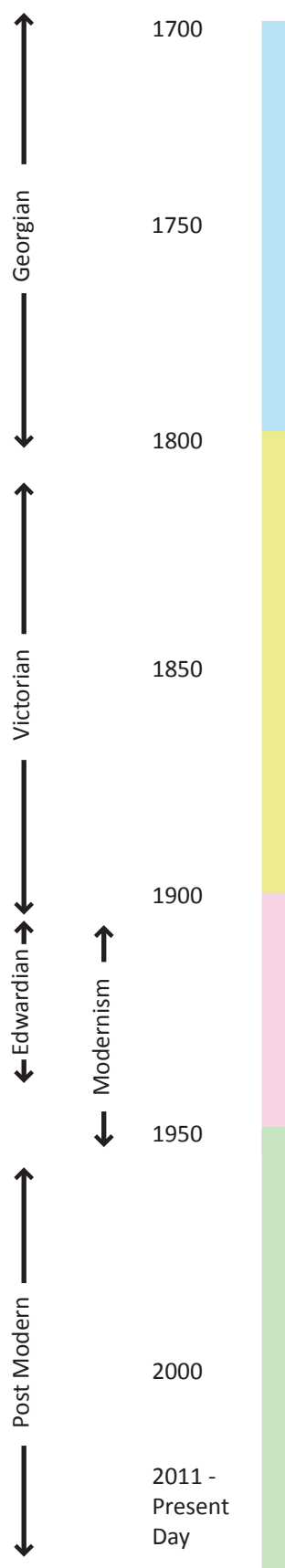
Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles (extracts)

In order to achieve the overarching goals of sustainability, development will:

- Achieve the highest standards of design including in relation to safety and security

Architectural Styles & Shopfront Timeline

Shopfront Characteristics: Key Facts



Georgian Shopfronts: 1700 - 1810

- Oriel windows on either side of the doorway,
- Classical design inspirations (the use of Greek lines),
- Georgian bowed windows (full/cantered bays above the stallriser),
- Thin entablature,
- Small panes of windows,
- Horizontal sliding Sash windows

Victorian Shopfronts: 1810 - 1900

- Design still largely based on Classical design ethos,
- Vertical sliding Sash windows now more commonly used,
- Plate glass begins to be incorporated in shopfront design,
- Thicker mullions required to support heavier sheets of glass,
- Arches are incorporated into the design at the top of mullions,
- Full entablatures begin to be replaced by fascias ending in consoles,
- Classical columns begin to be replaced by pilasters,
- Panes of glass become taller and thinner in the 1850's and 1860's.

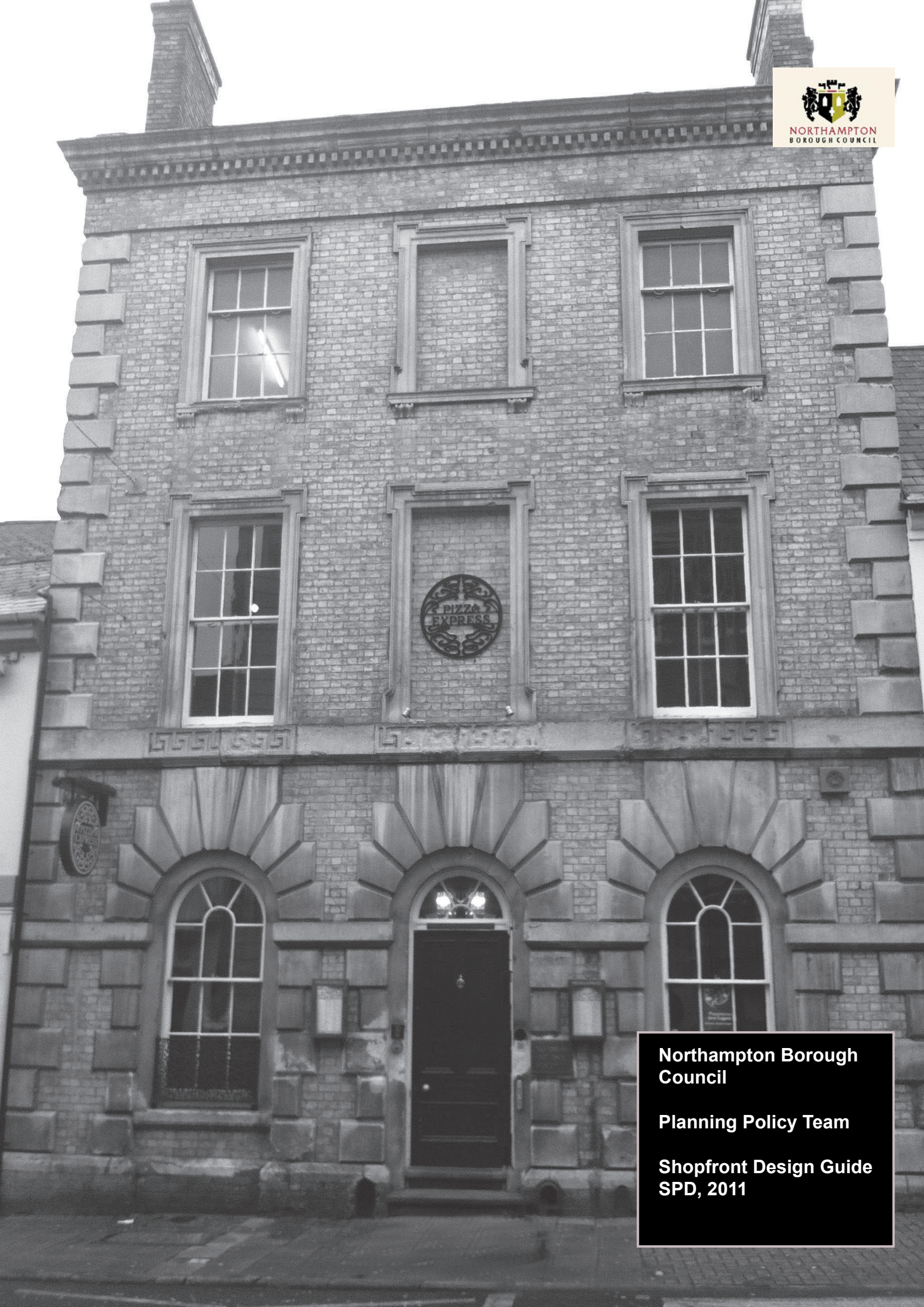
Edwardian & Modernist Shopfronts: 1900 - 1950

- Taller shopfronts provide a greater vertical emphasis,
- Lower stallrisers,
- Angled fascias,
- Recessed doorways,
- Storey height glazed facades and curved glass,
- Thinner pilasters,
- The use of mullions in shopfront design subsides,
- Lighting now more commonly incorporated into design proposals,
- Mahogany frames
- British Avant-garde shopfronts of the 1920s and 1930s characterised by shiny smooth materials e.g. chrome

Post Modern Shopfronts: 1950 - Present day

- Shopfronts become a more active trading/corporate asset,
- Undivided display windows,
- Shop security becomes part of the design process, e.g. grilles and shutters,
- UPVC and double glazed windows incorporated in design proposals,
- Stainless steel and plastics more commonly used in shopfronts with varying levels of design success,
- Energy conservation and 'Access for All' requirements now considerations as part of the design process





**Northampton Borough
Council**

Planning Policy Team

**Shopfront Design Guide
SPD, 2011**