



PART 2

SHOPFRONTS BLINDS SIGNS

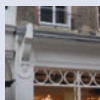
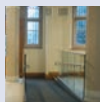
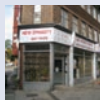
A GUIDE TO THEIR DESIGN



Charing Cross Road, London



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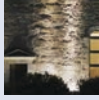
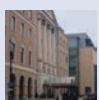
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Village Stores, Cranborne



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second volume of the Gascoyne Cecil Estates Design Guide. This volume is intended to compliment the 'Building Code' that has been produced to assist with the design of future developments and refurbishments.

The purpose of this section of the design guide is not to suggest precise ways of designing alterations or to discourage imaginative new design, but to provide guidance for the construction, alteration, replacement and restoration of shop fronts, signage and other details that are invariably associated with retail activity. It is recognised that this is a complex subject.

Gascoyne Cecil Estates attaches considerable importance to suitably-designed shop fronts, not only for the preservation of the character of buildings and areas, but also for the attractive overall appearance of shopping streets and the impact on their commercial success.

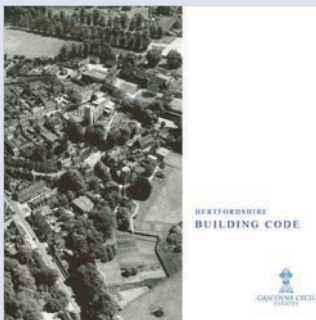
As ever the aim is to ensure that all of those involved in working with Gascoyne Cecil Estates embrace our wider vision and furthermore, that they adhere to high standards of construction and design. We very much hope and believe that these standards will translate into an attractive vibrant and commercially successful environment which can be enjoyed by all.

Anthony Downs

Director - Planning and Development

Gascoyne Cecil Estates

July 2011





✗ An unattractive frontage which is visually poor and does little for the business or local environment

THE CHALLENGE

It is well recognised that the retail industry requires adaptability and flexibility in shopfront design in order to respond to the rapidly changing market and consumer pressures. However, the architectural integrity of individual buildings and groups of buildings can be destroyed by insensitive shop front design. For example an over large plastic fascia may be inappropriate in terms of size and material and may cover traditional architectural features.

Standardised 'house designs' (i.e. standard shopfronts of multiple or 'chain' shops) present a particular problem when they are applied insensitively to existing buildings. Whilst the desire for corporate image is appreciated, in some cases standard designs will need to be modified in order to fit sympathetically with the period and architectural style of the building.

It is important, therefore, that alterations, restoration and replacement are sympathetically carried out, in order to protect their special character. Size, scale, elaborate or simple design and detailing, the use of correct materials and colour schemes are all important in making shopfronts acceptable parts of existing buildings and areas.



CONTEMPORARY DESIGN



Shop fronts and signage do not need to be reproduction or traditional in style or design. Modern contemporary design can produce innovative, individual and eye catching shopfronts.

To help achieve such successful design, the broad design principles and considerations contained in this guide should be followed. The design advice contained in this document can be applied to both modern and traditional designs.

Contemporary design can be used to good effect where shopfronts are integrated into a new development with a consistent design principle running throughout. Shopfronts of modern design can also be successfully incorporated into traditional facades if respect is paid to the architectural form of the building and to its surroundings.

Gascoyne Cecil Estates does not have a preference for either approach. However, to ensure a high standard of design that enhances the street scene, the principles of design discussed in this guide should be respected.

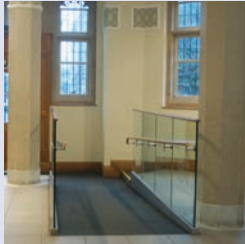
GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Certain principles should be taken into consideration when any alterations or works to a shopfront are proposed. The design principles advocated generally in these policies aim to:

1. Preserve and restore good surviving shopfronts of all periods, by retaining or reproducing them.
2. Ensure that any alterations to an existing shopfront preserve or enhance the character of the overall building.
3. Achieve imaginative, high quality modern shopfront- design (of either traditional or contemporary appearance) which respects the architectural characteristics of existing buildings and adjacent areas.

ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



In shopfront design, provision should normally be made for the easy access for people with disabilities as well as carers with prams and buggies.

Designers should think about disability in the widest possible sense. Where and whenever feasible, designs should cater for ambulant disabled and the partially sighted.

Wherever possible, doorways and entrances should be level and/or ramped and wide enough for a wheelchair to enter. Stepped access should if possible, be avoided.

In this context, listed shopfronts will be judged on their individual merits. Advertisements, sandwich boards, etc. should not be located where they can be a danger to the public.



RELATION TO THE BUILDING FACADE

A shopfront should not be designed in isolation but should be conceived as part of the whole building into which it is fitted. With traditional shopfronts, respect is paid to the scale, proportions and architectural style of the building and the relationship with other surrounding façades.

The same principle should be adopted in the design of modern shopfronts. Building widths and vertical sub-divisions in the form of pilasters, columns and fenestration, should be continued through or otherwise related to the ground, to maintain the vertical emphasis. The horizontal emphasis provided by a consistent fascia line, transoms and glazing heights should also be respected.

In Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings, shopfronts are often set within a framework of classical elements of pilasters, columns and a frieze incorporating a fascia, usually topped by a cornice.

It is important that these features are retained intact and, if damaged, replaced in replica. The materials used in original traditional shopfronts were usually wood, brick, stone and occasionally iron work. In the restoration of shopfronts, these materials should be used and plastics and reflective modern materials avoided in old buildings and in conservation areas.



RELATION TO THE STREET

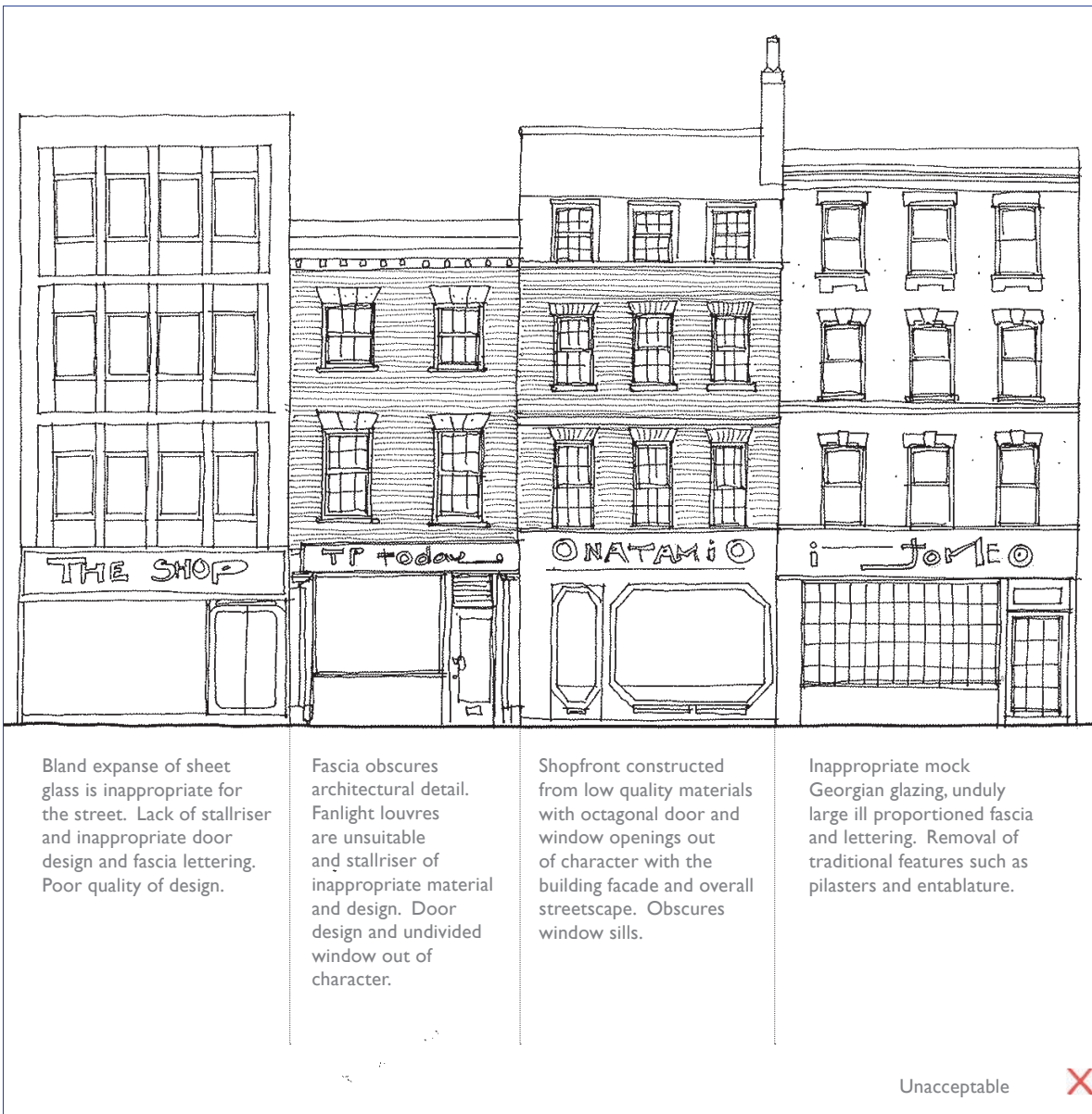
The special character of a shopping street is created either through a uniformity in design and architectural style, or by a variety of styles that can sometimes provide richness and vitality.

Street vitality and interest needs to be maintained through the use of colour, detailing and design, but not at the cost of destroying the character and quality of the street as a whole. Shopfronts ought to harmonise with and enhance the character of the street scene as well as the buildings which contain them. In the design of a new shopfront it is important to acknowledge the common features which occur in adjacent shops or throughout the street.

A common height of stallriser, consistent bay widths and depth of fascia and the existence of rhythmically positioned vertical subdividing glazing bars, mullions and columns should be noted. The materials and colours used should also be compatible with the character of the street and attention should be paid to the choice of fixtures.

Inappropriate signs, blinds, alarm bells, handles, letter boxes, doorbells etc can disrupt an otherwise consistent design. Original existing period fixtures of this type should be retained.

Making a shop 'stand out' in the context of the street, does not always make it more attractive to shoppers. Respect for the character of the street and the area, will generally produce a high quality retail environment which is likely to attract more shoppers.





Vertical subdivisions of building facade area carried down to shopfront. Subdivided window and a simple stallriser is in sympathy and character with the street.

Panelled stallriser and door, window subdivided, entablature revealed. Metal grille retained. Painted lettering and timber shopfront.

Architectural details of the original early 19th century shopfront are retained and again relate well to the proportions of the facade and the character of the street.

Architectural details, pilasters, entablature, mullions, panelled stallriser and door retained. Facade is in sympathy and character with the street.





COLOUR



Muted colours were often used on traditional shopfronts such as maroon, dark green, black, dark blue and brown. Harsh and gaudy colours, unsympathetic to the building should be avoided.

Great care in the selection of materials and colours for the use on shopfronts is required and an investigation into the various alternatives available ought to be made.

The materials and colours selected should be compatible with the building and those used on surrounding shopfronts and buildings.



DESIGN OF DETAILS

The character of a shopping street is largely determined by the design and detailing of individual buildings.

A long stretch of flat shopfronts with little or no modelling or recession of the various planes, can be bland and dull.

A more interesting effect can be created by modelling facades and juxtaposing the various elements, such as fascia, lettering, glass, and doors.

If a new shopfront is intended to be in keeping with traditional shopfronts, the design and detailing must be correct, reasonably scholarly and not over elaborate.

If it is to be a modern shopfront it ought to be clean in appearance and should acknowledge the broad design principles of adjacent original ones.

The ill-considered removal or addition of glazing bars can produce a historically incorrect and unacceptable shopfront design. To avoid this, respect should be paid to the pattern of glazing bars on the original façade.

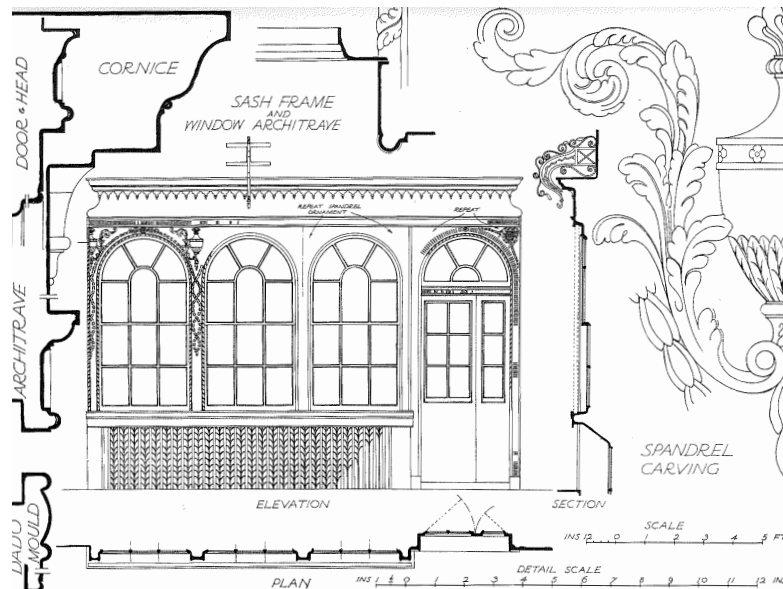


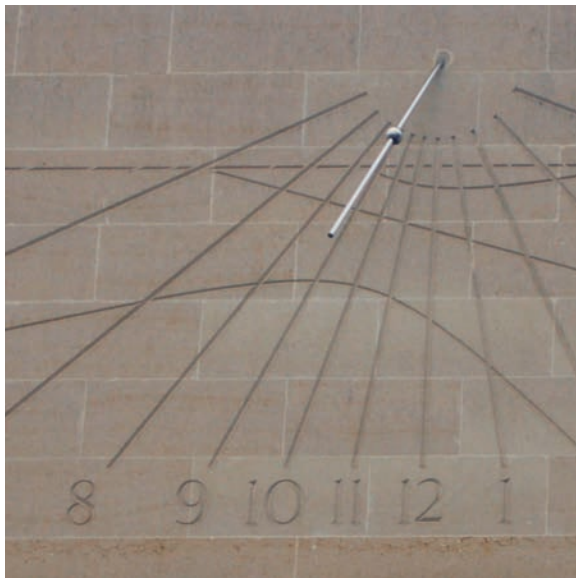
CLASSICAL DETAILING



Illustrated on this page are a variety of designs for parts of shopfronts, all based on accurate classical detailing. The details and profiles shown here are but a small selection of a variety of period details which would be suitable for use in appropriate cases of historic shopfront restoration.

It is emphasised that copying such details does not always guarantee successful restoration.





CLOCKS, PLAQUES AND CARTOUCHES



Clocks, plaques, cartouches and other details of fine craftsmanship found on period shopfronts make an important contribution to their overall appearance and to that of the street. Such features should be retained, restored and, where necessary, reinstated.

The beauty of these objects demonstrates the true value of fine craftsmanship. Any modern features of this category should be of high quality. When correctly, details of this nature are to be encouraged designed.

FASCIA SIGNS




One of the aims of this design guide is to make the shop owner / operator aware of the importance of the appearance of fascia signs, both to the overall character and quality of a street and in attracting shoppers.

A well-designed shop sign can give a shop, individuality and a unique character without showing contempt for its surroundings. In the past, shop signs were often designed as works of art and to this day modern fascias of equivalent high quality can be produced.

The fascia is an important focal part of the shopfront and its style and proportion should relate well to the surrounding building and shops. Shops with oversized fascias can break the continuity of the visual line of a string course and obscure architectural details such as cornices or corbels, thereby destroying the architectural unity.

Acrylic and shiny materials, and the use of fluorescent colours tend to clash with traditional finishes and are visually inappropriate. On more traditional buildings, a painted timber fascia with painted lettering or individual letters of another suitable material is preferable. The lettering should be in proportion with the fascia size and only show the name of the shop, the trade and the street number, with no additional advertising.



 Unacceptable

The illumination of fascias requires careful consideration. Large, internally illuminated box signs, for example, produce a crude visual effect and are inappropriate in most cases, especially in historic streets and conservation areas. More subtle and acceptable solutions can be provided by externally illuminated fascias with carefully directed light beams, back lit letters (where the background is blacked out), or halo lit (where the letters stand proud of the fascia and are individually lit from behind).

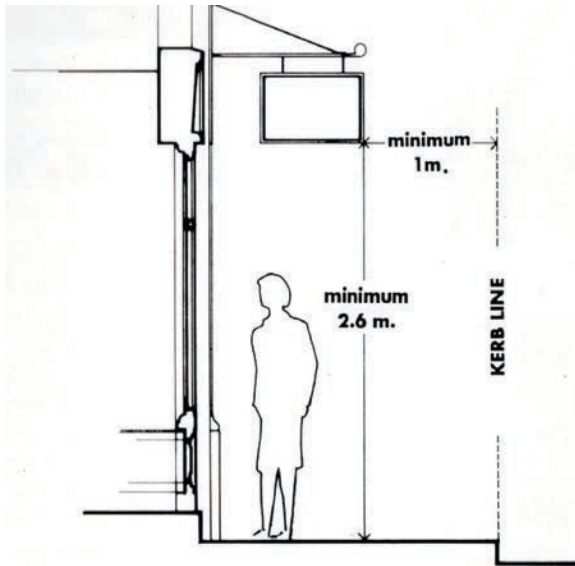


Figure 1



PROJECTING SIGNS



A well designed hanging sign suspended from traditional brackets can enhance the appearance of the shopfront and add vitality to a traditional shopping street.

Indeed, sign-written hanging boards of a modest size are an established feature of traditional streets and should be retained. Projecting box signs, however, are generally inappropriate.

A sign should relate well to the character, scale and architectural features of the building onto which it is placed. A projecting sign should be positioned centrally on a pilaster, at fascia level, at a minimum height of 2.6 m from the pavement to the underside and 1m minimum in width from the outer side to the kerb line (see Figure 1).

High level signs are inappropriate in the majority of locations. No more than one per business is permitted with deemed consent, and the size should typically not exceed 0.75 m². If these standards are exceeded or a sign of any size is illuminated, advertisement consent may be required. Listed building consent is generally also required for any type of sign attached to a listed building.

The most appropriate form of illumination for hanging signs is 'picture lighting'; i.e. a strip light covered with a metal cowl, usually attached to the top of the sign. Spotlights attached to the building adjacent to the sign are acceptable in some cases.

BLINDS



Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene if they are appropriate to the period and character of the area. Care is needed in the selection of an appropriate blind and fabric for a building. On listed buildings correct detailing and traditional craftsmanship will also be required.


Blinds made of plastic or very bright, fluorescent, glossy materials would also be inappropriate (particularly so on listed buildings) and in conservation areas, the preferred material should be canvas with a matt finish.

In general, there is no objection to the name of the firm that occupies the building or shop, appearing on the blind; however, any additional advertising is not acceptable. The use of a traditional hanging board, crest, logo or symbol is more appropriate for more prominent advertisements in the street scene, than the use of a blind for that purpose.

Gascoyne Cecil Estates will generally not permit blinds above first floor sill level. However, on old buildings which are designed to accommodate blinds on upper levels, renewal will be acceptable if the blinds are concealed behind a traditional, detailed balance and do not carry advertisements.

FLAGPOLES



 Unacceptable

Highways regulations typically require that there should be a minimum of 1m in width from the outer edge of the blind to the kerb line (or if appropriate, to the centre of an alleyway), and the height must not be less than 2.14m from the pavement level to the underside of the blind.

Canopies constructed from solid materials and designed as a fixed part of a building, require planning permission and are not considered within this Design Guide. Canopies are also subject to requirements under highways regulations but these differ from those for blinds.

The erection of a flagpole and flag(s) may require planning permission and/or advertisement consent. In all cases careful consideration needs to be given to mounting brackets and the manner in which the pole is secured to the building.

Advice should be sought on individual cases. Flagpoles may not always be appropriate in sensitive parts of conservation areas, residential areas, on listed buildings or on business premises with narrow frontages.

OPEN FRONTED SHOPFRONTS



✗ Unacceptable

BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARMS



✗ Unacceptable

The removal of shopfront features such as doors, stallrisers, transoms, mullions, glazing and glazing bars, in order to create an open fronted shop, can detract from the architectural integrity of the building and character of the street.

At night such shopfronts, which necessitate security shutters, create dead and uninviting spaces which offer no interest to the passer-by. This type of shopfront will therefore be discouraged. However, where such shopfronts exist, the installation of sliding glass panels which form a glass shopfront at night, is the preferred solution.

These items are often necessary, but their insensitive siting can be visually detrimental to a building. Sometimes it is preferable to install alarms either near ground level or on upper storeys, where they are less visually intrusive.

Ideally they should be incorporated into the design of a shopfront, which is often easy on modern shops. For traditional shops it may be possible to modify a small part of the shopfront, such as one panel of the stallriser, to accommodate such a fitting.

SECURITY SHUTTERS



✗ Unacceptable



✗ Unacceptable

FLOOD LIGHTING



Security shutters would also normally require planning permission, and for listed buildings listed building consent is also required.

Roller shutters will not normally be welcomed as they contribute nothing to the street scene, and can detract from the architectural integrity of a building. In sensitive streets and buildings which require security measures, anodised or otherwise treated, internally fitted shutters of the brick bond grill type, is the preferred solution.

Other suitable methods are internally fitted 'concertina' shutters and jewellers' security devices. If necessary, on open fronted shops, a combination of grill and roller shutter may be acceptable but their use is not encouraged. Advice should be sought on individual cases.

Floodlighting does not normally require planning permission; however the installation of the necessary light fittings does.

Where a listed building is involved listed building consent is required for the light fittings as well as the actual floodlighting. Large obtrusive fittings mounted on the building facade are generally undesirable.

It is often preferable for light fittings to be located at basement level out of view. Consideration must be given to the effect on traffic when positioning light fittings, as the light can sometimes cause confusion to drivers.









Acknowledgements

A work of this nature is always highly individual and few subjects are as emotive as architecture and the built environment.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues, fellow surveyors and architects who have contributed to the debate. Thank you also to those who have been kind enough to provide inspiration in the form of other examples of copy books and design guides.

Finally my thanks to Gavin Murray and Eleanor Wright at Brooks Murray Architects who have assisted with the production of this code.

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July 2011

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