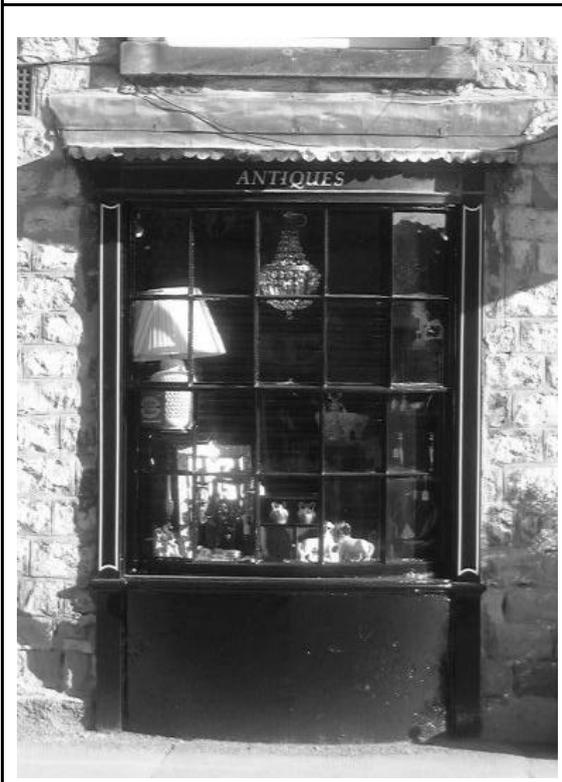


SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING  
DOCUMENT

SHOPFRONT DESIGN  
AND SIGNS



*Ryedale District Council  
Forward Planning and Conservation & Development Control  
Document Adopted February 2005*

# CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Existing Local Plan Policies</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>	Policy C1	17
<b>Retention of Traditional Shopfronts</b>	<b>3</b>	New development and changes of use within Conservation Areas	
<b>New Shopfronts</b>	<b>4</b>	Policy C11	17
<b>Architectural Details</b>	<b>5</b>	Advertisements on Listed Buildings	
Fascia	6	Policy C7	18
Fascia lettering	6	Alterations or extensions to Listed Buildings	
Pilasters	7	Policy R9	18
Cornice	8	Shopfronts	
Window	8	Policy R10	18
Stall Riser	8	Shop advertisements	
Doors	8		
Adverts on shop windows	11	<b>Local Authority Controls</b>	<b>19</b>
Colours	11	Planning permission	19
Materials	12	Non-‘Listed’ Buildings in Conservation Areas	19
Lighting	12	Listed Building Consent	19
Blinds	12	Advertisement Consent	19
Shopfront security	12-14	Application Plans	19
Hanging signs	14	Typical large scale details	20
Upper floor signs	15	Application checklist	20
<b>Modern shopfronts</b>	<b>15</b>		
Things to avoid	16		
Access issues	16		
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>		

# INTRODUCTION

This document provides supplementary planning guidance on the subject of the design of shopfronts and signs. It is part of the Council's overall aim to promote and improve the vitality of our market towns. The success and competitiveness of the District's town centres depends, in part on improving the image and attractiveness of shopping streets for residents and visitors alike. Good quality design and the promotion of local distinctiveness play a large part in presenting Ryedale's towns in their best light.

This document is intended to give a practical outline of the principles of good shop front and advertisement design. This guidance emphasises the traditional elements of shop fronts, which are of particular importance to historic areas. It does not however, seek to impose wholly traditional shopfronts or a standard solution on every retail unit or to remove flexibility for innovation and flair.

It is not always necessary to gain permission for the erection of signs but it is hoped that the best practice within this guidance will be followed in all instances. The advice contained within however, should not be seen as a substitute for professional help.

## **The aim of this guidance is to:**

- Demonstrate the value of existing historic shopfronts
- Illustrate the principles of good shopfront design
- Encourage better design for replacement shopfronts
- Illustrate the significance of ancillary elements in shopfront design
- To state clearly, the policies which will be used when dealing with planning applications, conservation area consent applications and listed building consent applications.

This document amplifies the existing policies of the Ryedale Local Plan, which are set out at the rear of this guidance. Applications for planning permission or other consents will be assessed against Local Plan Policies and the guidelines in this booklet.

***For the purposes of this guide a 'shop' includes such non-retail premises as banks, betting offices, restaurants, estate agents etc.***

# RETENTION OF TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONTS

Great care should be taken to ensure the retention of traditional shopfronts. Where a traditional shopfront exists, there should always be a presumption in favour of repair rather than replacement, especially on Listed Buildings and in conservation areas.

Where an existing shopfront is to be refurbished, good quality traditional materials should be used. The traditional elements of the shopfront should be restored if previously missing.

In considering proposals affecting historic or good quality shopfronts, the Council may require the removal of existing inappropriate features and the restoration and /or re-introduction of original features.

In certain cases conditions may be attached to permissions requiring the opening up or investigation of the shop front to establish whether traditional features exist and can be re-used.



*A beautiful example of a traditional shopfront in Castlegate, Malton*

# NEW SHOPFRONTS

Where an existing shopfront is to be replaced the question arises as to how the replacement should be designed. It is helpful to understand what is important about a site and why. Without an understanding of a site and its context, it is difficult to make informed and appropriate decisions about proposals for change.

An important principle is that the shopfront should not be designed in isolation but should be considered as part of the architectural composition of the building.

The design should therefore respect the

period and style of the building in which it is fitted giving due regard to the design, scale and materials of the building above.

New shopfronts should be of a high standard of design. The sketch below illustrates two treatments of the same buildings, one that takes the upper storeys into account and one that flagrantly disregards the individuality.

When applications for planning permission or other consents are made to replace or alter a shopfront, the council will require the replacement of poor quality shopfronts by more appropriate designs.



*This design does not recognise the differences above the shopfront*



*This design treats each building individually*

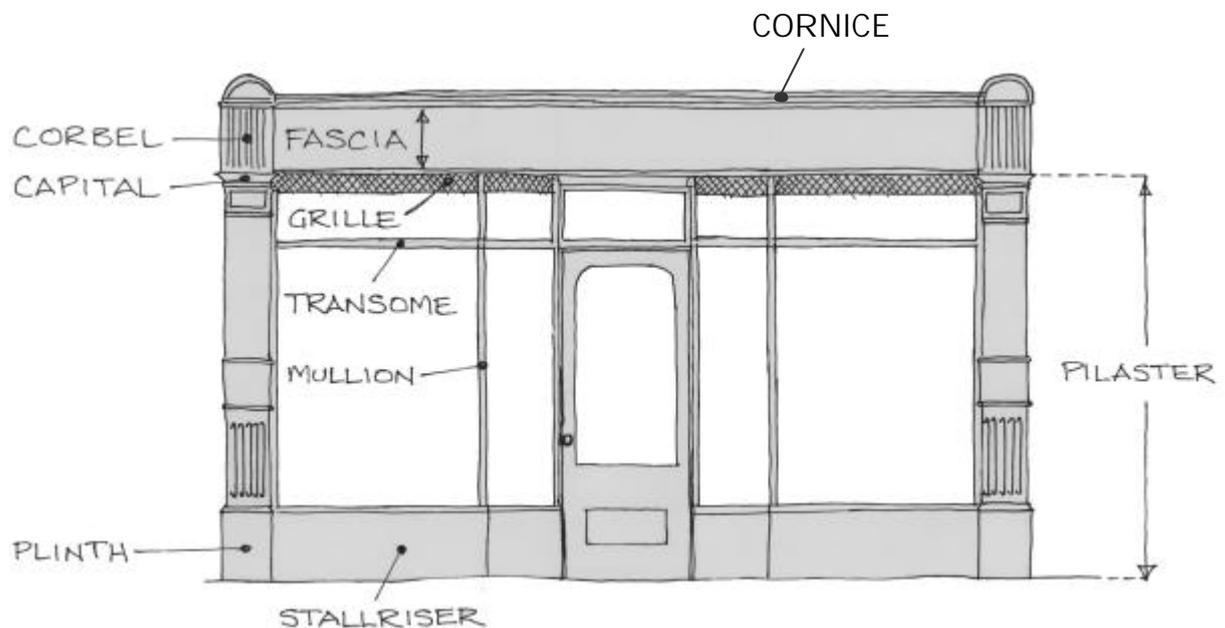
# ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

If a shopfront is to be fitted in a traditional style then it should try to be historically accurate and appropriate to the building and to the locality.

Old records, local libraries, photo libraries can assist in establishing appropriate precedents, however it is not always easy to track down historical photographs. Therefore when replacing a shopfront in a historic building the

following architectural principles may wish to be followed to aid a successful design.

Traditional shop fronts are variations on the same basic theme. They were based on principles, which were successful in achieving satisfactory relationships between the shopfronts and the buildings. These principles still hold good today.



*Elements of a traditional shopfront*

**Pilasters** identify the vertical division between the shopfronts.

The **cornice** gives a strong line at the top of the shopfront and protection from the weather.

The **fascia** provides the space for advertising.

The **stallriser** gives a protection at ground level and provides a solid base;

All of these elements form a frame which suggests visually, a method of support for the building façade above. These principles are as valid for new shopfronts as for traditional ones.

## **Fascia**

Fascias must be correctly proportioned in relation to the building and the street scene. The depth of a fascia should be kept to a minimum and respect the overall height of the shop front.

Traditional fascias are not more than 450 mm high. Fascias or signs should not obscure existing first floor windows and architectural features, such as decorative brickwork or pilasters. There should always be a space between the top of the fascia and the window sills of the floor above. The trend towards bigger and brighter fascias has a harmful effect on the historic character of shopping streets in conservation areas.

In a uniform terrace, or where a number of small shops occupy a single large building, fascia positions, projection and depth should generally line up to maintain continuity.

The linking of two distinctly different buildings by a common fascia is however, inappropriate. In this instance, they should be read as two units with different architectural characteristics.

Fascia materials are an important feature. Modern materials such as plastics, are generally inappropriate on older buildings or in conservation areas. Wooden matt fascias are preferred. Internally illuminated fascia boxes are not appropriate for historic buildings or areas.

Where excessively deep fascias have been introduced in the past, the overall height should be reduced to expose the wall surface above. The existence of a former unsuitable fascia should not be allowed to influence the design of the replacement.

Where a false ceiling or structural beam is being inserted within the shop it will not be appropriate to increase the fascia depth in conjunction with it. Other methods should be considered such as setting back and forming a splayed bulkhead, or in the use of an obscured glazed transom light or sub fascia.

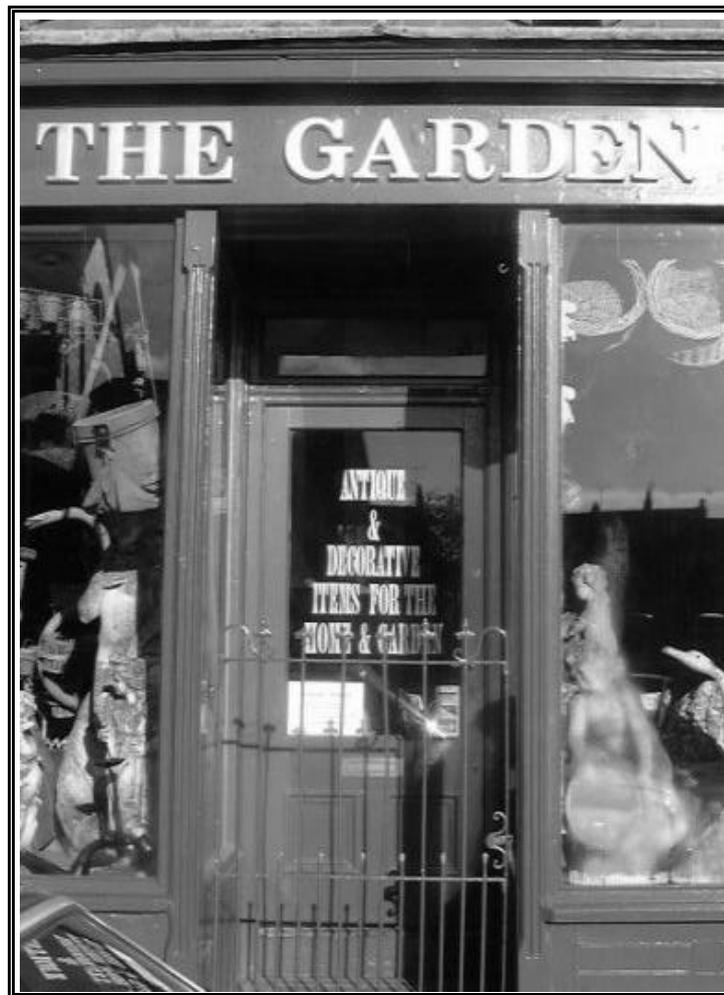
Applied fascia boards which project forward of, or are fixed to the face of the original will not be permitted.

## **Fascia Lettering**

Fascia lettering should convey the essential message of the retailer. The shop name alone will normally have most effect, and additional advertising is generally only confusing and serves to detract from the shopfront.

The character, location and extent of script on a building or a shopfront can play a major part in the overall appearance of a scheme. Hand painted lettering on timber fascias is the preferred form. Individual cast metal letters can be appropriate on certain types of building. Wherever possible, script style and scale should compliment the period of the building and the scale of space available. As an alternative, vinyl lettering stuck onto the fascia may be acceptable.

The council will expect multiple traders wishing to incorporate a corporate image to use sensitivity and modify their standards where this would be desirable.



*The shop above successfully uses, gilded, protruding letters*

### **Pilasters**

Pilasters are primarily structural elements to the building. They frame the side of a shop front and emphasise the sub-division of a street frontage into separate units.

When a single shop unit covers the width of two or more separate buildings, the shop front should respect the individual identity of each building. The shop front should be framed with the use of pilasters, which helps to emphasise the subdivision of buildings.

Pilasters usually have a wider base or plinth at the bottom and a decorative capital or corbel/console at the top.

Applications for new or restored shopfronts should usually contain pilasters and corbels appropriate to the building. Where they exist, in whole or part, original traditional pilasters and corbels must be uncovered or restored and should not be removed.

New pilasters should be visually strong and executed in the prevailing material, usually painted timber.

## **Cornice**

The cornice runs along the top of the fascia and provides a full stop to it. It is one of the classical elements of a traditional shop front. A cornice should usually be provided above the fascia to provide a visual break between the shop front and the upper floors.

## **Window**

Windows need to be proportioned to relate to the elevations above. Large expanses of plate glass are generally unsuitable alongside traditional shop fronts or in a conservation area. Windows should be sub-divided by means of mullions (upright posts), transoms (horizontal members) or a centrally located door. Individual windows should not be so large as to have a dominating and disruptive effect within the street scene. Windows should normally be set in the same plane as the front of the building. Window and door frames, mullions and transoms should be painted wood. Gold and silver aluminium frames are generally not acceptable. Shopfronts which include windows which are too large in relation to the frontage of the building will not normally be permitted.

## **Stall Riser**

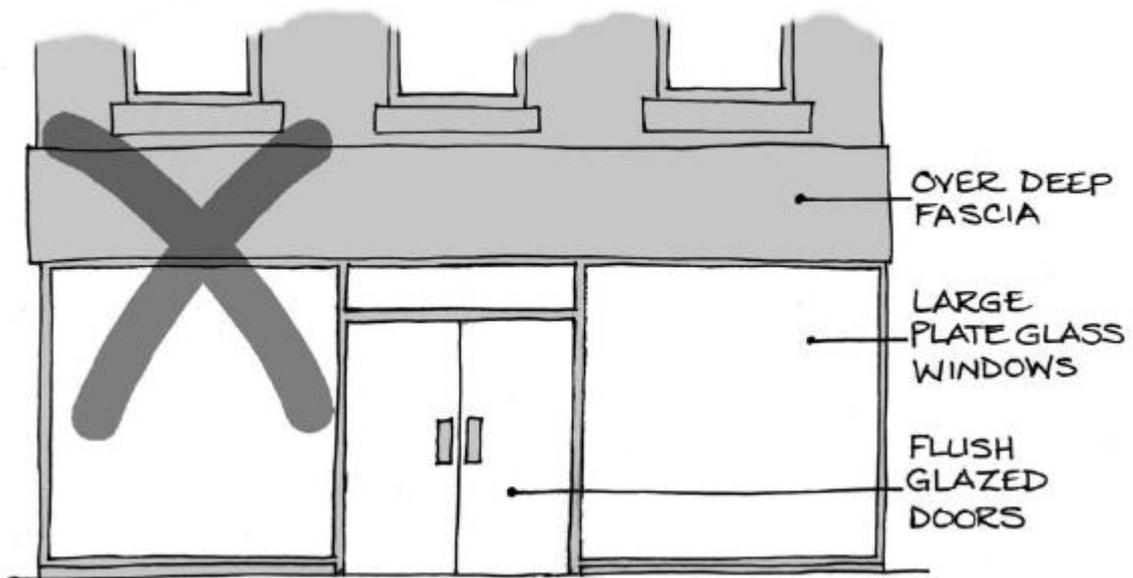
Stall-risers consist of solid panels below shop windows and provide a solid visual base for the shop front. Traditionally stall-risers were often made of timber. Where the restoration of a period shop is being considered, traditional timber stall risers should usually be used. These should be at least 500mm deep. Plastic panelling and textured paints are generally not appropriate. If brick is being used, it must match existing brickwork.

Timber stallrisers should be recessed panelling with bolection mouldings or raised and fielded panels. Skimpy planted or nailed-on mouldings are not acceptable. Stallrisers should have a strong projected moulded cill.

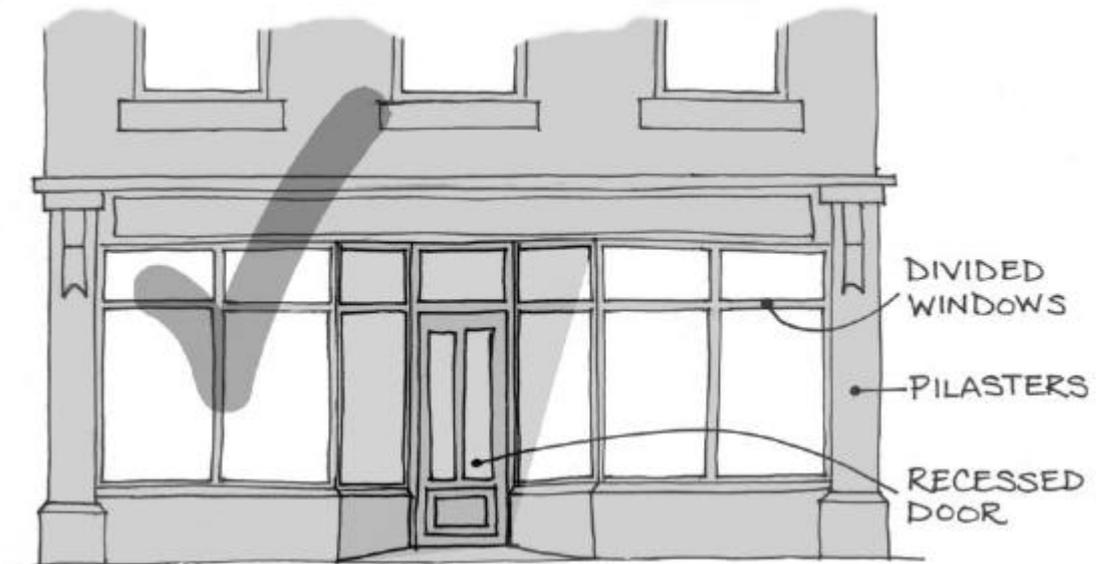
## **Doors**

In traditional shop fronts, doorways are an important element and are often recessed. If the entrance door is brought flush with the shop front it can make the shop less interesting. Doors should be of a style and in materials which match the rest of the shop front and the building as a whole. This means they are usually part glazed with a timber panel to reflect the height of the stall riser. Door furniture should normally be brass. If there is a separate door to upper floors it should be retained to allow independent and separate use of these floors.

If these architectural elements are incorporated into the design for a new shopfront then a 'frame' will have been created around the window. The sketches opposite illustrate two treatments of the same building. The impression of a heavy upper structure poised on a flimsy sheet of glass is invariably unsuccessful as it appears to have no visual means of support. The sketch that incorporates the traditional elements frames the window and gives the impression of support to the upper part of the building.



*These sketches illustrate two treatments of the same building. The impression of a heavy upper structure poised on a flimsy sheet of glass is invariably unsuccessful, as it appears to have no visual means of support. The sketch that incorporates the traditional elements frames the window and gives the impression of support to the upper part of the building.*





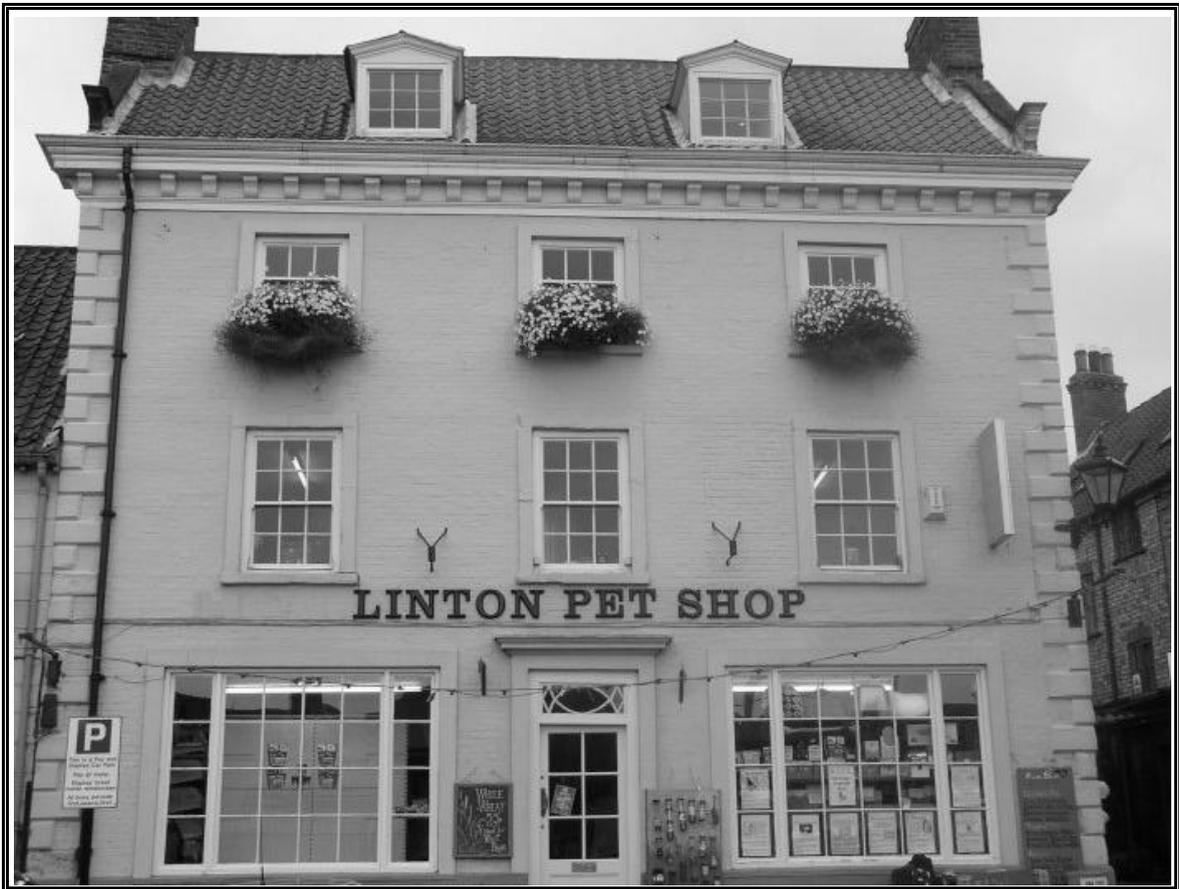
*These relatively modern shopfronts are good examples that have followed many of the principles of traditional design*

*They are well proportioned, well detailed and constructed from good quality traditional materials*



## Adverts on shop windows

Where retail premises have no fascia or where there is no conventional display window, the best solution is usually to signwrite on the window e.g. “gold leaf”. Frosted lettering can also be successful. Individually applied lettering directly onto the walls can also be appropriate and is often more successful than a flat board sign.



*The applied lettering respects the character of the building and is not intrusive*

## Colours

Paint colours should not jar with the character of the building and tones should be selected to appear neighbourly. Lurid colour schemes should be avoided. Gilding or strong tones on a dark background reflect light and are clearly visible at night.

Many prime colours can look more elegant if given an element of black pigment in the content as this avoids a garish appearance.

Painted timber is usually preferred to stained or varnished hardwoods. Bright white and high gloss finishes will not look as effective as softer finishes on historic buildings—traditional oil based paints and pigments should be considered.

Many high quality schemes revolve around minimalist and monotone paint combinations. Such simple decorations teamed with stylish script can provide a very successful result.

## **Materials**

The use of traditional materials is to be encouraged in historic areas. The majority of traditional shopfronts were constructed in painted softwood. Shiny surfaces like aluminium, perspex or acrylic sheeting should be avoided. It is unlikely that plywood will be acceptable on a listed building or for general use in a conservation area but where it is used it must be suitable for external use e.g. marine quality ply.

Good quality detailing from an experienced joiner is still important for reliable results. Consideration should be given to sourcing timber from certified sources such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system.

## **Lighting**

Proposals for lighting will only be considered where it is shown to be absolutely necessary. The use of large spotlights and brass 'swan neck' lamps or internally illuminated box signs where the background of the whole fascia is illuminated is not acceptable.

The most appropriate means of external illumination is by a narrow section of strip light discreetly sited under the cornice or there may be space behind a traditional wooden fascia for electrical gear to provide back lighting for halo or individual letters.

When a projecting sign needs to be illuminated, a purpose designed light should be fitted into the top. To ensure that illumination does not appear excessive, spotlights should focus light on the script only.

Flood lighting should be very carefully considered as it can sometimes enhance the appearance of a building but it can also appear out of place and garish.

## **Blinds**

Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene if they are appropriate to the period and character of the conservation area.

Existing traditional canvas blinds and blind boxes are valuable features which should be repaired and retained.

Where new blinds are considered necessary, they should form an integral part of the shopfront design and be fully retractable. Traditional canvas roller blinds with a matt finish are usually better suited to older buildings. They should be constructed from traditional materials with wood frames and battens with a matt material for the blind itself. These have the advantage of being concealed from view when fully retracted within the blind box.

Permanently fixed round edged 'Dutch' blinds are unsuitable in historic areas.

## **Shopfront Security**

Where original or traditional wooden shutters survive, they should be retained. It may be appropriate to consider installing new traditional-style well detailed shutters into a historic property.

Mullions and transoms are vertical and horizontal timber supports used to sub-divide the window of some shopfronts. They help reinforce glass and reduce the cost of replacing one large single pane. Discreet steel sections may be hidden behind them. Details of this should accompany any necessary application for alteration.

A timber stallriser (solid panel below the shop window) should help to resist would-be ram raiders. These can be strengthened from behind by solid masonry.

Traditional shopfronts incorporate doors of a more robust form than many modern lightweight doors. These included a solid panel at their base with a robust frame.

The application of a clear security film to vulnerable windows could be appropriate.

## Shopfront Security



*Traditional shutters are still used to provide security*



*This property is shown before grant-aided renovation, including full restoration of the shutters*

Laminated glass may provide security without affecting the appearance of the property. If necessary, additional security could be provided by wiring the glass with an alarm system. Historic windows and glass should however, be retained wherever possible.

Internal metal grilles may be acceptable – it depends on the design. A simple open design with a gauge of 3 inches or more may be acceptable.

Roller shutters are generally unacceptable in historically sensitive areas.

Removable or demountable external grilles may be acceptable. This depends on the circumstances, design and materials.

*This external grille on a shop in York is a beautiful example and complements the shop window shape*



### Hanging Signs

Hanging or projecting signs can also be used to good effect when a building does not have a shopfront. They can also add interest to the street scene and impart a historic atmosphere. The traditional projecting or hanging sign was often painted and hung from a decorative bracket. Wherever these brackets exist, they should be retained.

New brackets and signs should be of a sympathetic scale, and complement the scale of the building. Generally, projecting signs at fascia level should be a maximum of 0.2 sq. metres, e.g. 500mm x 400mm.

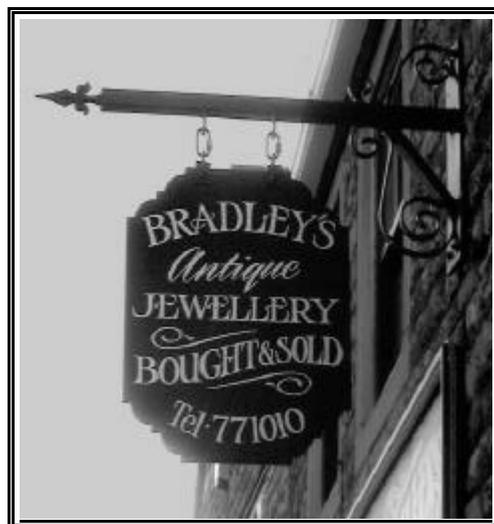
As a general rule hanging signs above the fascia level, should not exceed 600mm wide by 800 high. The content of the sign should be kept simple and visible on both sides. Such signs should not come below 2.5m over pavement level, or project over the carriageway or conceal traffic signs. If lit, projecting signs should have discreet purpose built lights on top.

Projecting box signs will not normally be acceptable in historic areas especially if they are constructed from plastic or perspex and internally illuminated.

*The use of good quality, preferably cast iron, brackets is encouraged*



*Hanging signs can add interest to the streetscene*



## Upper Floor Signs

Where a business exists in upper floors or is occupying another part of a building, signs should take the form of lettering applied directly to window panes. Brass plaques at ground floor level can be acceptable, but should be in scale with the building and generally no bigger than 300mm x 225mm.



*A combination of applied window lettering and a discreet brass plaque are successfully used to identify one of the offices in this 18<sup>th</sup> century listed building*

## **Modern Shopfronts**

In new commercial buildings, or ones which were erected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may not be appropriate to design a replacement shop front based on traditional details. Here, the following principles should be considered:

- Whatever the choice of design is adopted, the project should not be considered in isolation.
- The proportion, scale materials and design of the existing building and any relevant adjacent buildings should normally provide the inspiration.
- A good contemporary design using high quality craftsmanship and materials will be encouraged in appropriate circumstances.

As far as possible all designs should make provision for advertisements, security, canopies, access for the disabled so that shop fronts are not subject to subsequent alterations which invariably detract from the original concept.

*This new building in York successfully incorporates a modern shopfront*



*This early 20<sup>th</sup> Century building in Malton would benefit from alteration but would look in-appropriate with a heavily 'Victorian' influenced shopfront*



## ***THINGS TO AVOID***

Single advertisements by themselves may not be unduly harmful but the cumulative impact of a number of displays can have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area.

The Council will resist applications which would create an image of clutter and confusion.

Where consent is given for a new sign, it will normally only be for a period of

five years, after which further approval will be necessary if the sign is to be retained.

Where a number of businesses share a building, the Council will encourage a co-ordinated display of signs to avoid a proliferation of signage. This also applies to shops situated down snickets or within arcades.

## **Access Issues**

Shops and commercial premises need to take into account the needs of disabled people. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 service providers will, from 2004, have to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible, or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use their service.

On listed buildings and in historic areas, the needs of disabled people should be taken into account as far as possible as commensurate with the needs to preserve the character of a building or area. Below are some basic principles that allow easier access for customers with varied access issues.

### ***Try to provide:***

- ✓ Flush thresholds, dropped kerbs
- ✓ Ramped access where necessary or steps of appropriate dimensions
- ✓ Non-slip well lit surfaces
- ✓ Doors with easy operation, preferably wide enough for wheelchair access (900mm minimum)
- ✓ Grab handles and door pulls
- ✓ Satisfactory space for manoeuvring in lobbied areas
- ✓ Space to place wheelchairs alongside circulation routes

### ***Try to Avoid***

- × Loosely gravelled surfaces
- × Access only via steps
- × Open drainage grilles that can catch walking sticks
- × Heavy doors

# CONCLUSION

The preceding text and illustrations have outlined the fundamental principles, the use of which is considered essential if a significant improvement in the standard of shopfront design is to be achieved.

Ryedale District Council will continue to determine each application on its individual merits, these will be considered within the framework of this supplementary Planning Guidance and the existing policies in the Ryedale Local Plan.

# EXISTING LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

When local authority consent for an alteration is required the proposal will be judged in line with the guidance within this leaflet and the existing relevant policies within the Ryedale Local Plan seen below.

<b>Policy C1 – New development and changes of use within Conservation Areas</b>	<b>Policy C11 – Advertisements on Listed Buildings</b>
<p>Within Conservation Areas, the District Council will require new development to be of a high standard of design and to respect and maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) New development, including alterations to buildings, will be expected to respect its historic context in terms of scale, form, materials and quality;</li><li>(ii) Development will not be permitted if it would generate levels of traffic, parking, noise or environmental problems which would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the area;</li><li>(iii) Consideration may be given to relaxing approved policies or standards if, by doing so, a Listed Building or a building of particular townscape merit in a Conservation Area under serious threat can be retained.</li></ul>	<p>Consent for the display of advertisements on Listed Buildings will be permitted only where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) The advertisement is appropriate in terms of its scale, design and materials and would not detract from the character or appearance of the buildings;</li><li>(ii) The advertisement is not internally illuminated;</li><li>(iii) If it is proposed that the advertisement be externally illuminated, the design of the method of illumination would not detract from the character or appearance of the building.</li></ul> <p>Plastic fascia signs, whether illuminated or not, will not be granted consent on a Listed Building.</p>

**Policy C7 – Alterations or extensions to Listed Buildings**

Listed Building Consent for the alteration or extension of a Listed Building will only be granted if it can be demonstrated that the proposal:

- (i) Would not have any significant adverse effect upon either the external or internal character of the building;
- (ii) Is appropriate in terms of design, scale, detailing and materials;
- (iv) Would not result in the significant loss of historic fabric of the building

**Policy R9 – Shopfronts**

Where an existing shopfront contributes to the character of a building or area, it should normally be retained and restored rather than being replaced. New shopfronts or alterations and additions to existing frontages will generally be approved, where they:

- (i) Respect the period and style of the building in which they are fitted and display a unity with its architecture,
- (ii) Consist of historically accurate elements of traditional shopfront design,
- (iii) Are constructed of traditional materials,
- (iv) Reflect the scale and proportions of traditional shopfronts in the streetscene,
- (v) Reflect traditional frontage widths of the area and relate to individual property units,
- (vi) Enhance the visual amenities of the area,
- (vii) Within Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings the proposals do not include external security shutters.

**Policy R10 – Shop advertisements**

The District Council will reject poorly designed and sited advertisements which would adversely affect amenity or highway safety. Applications for advertisements will only be approved where they satisfy the following criteria:

- (i) The size of the advertisement should relate to the form and character of the particular building, its location and the streetscene,
- (ii) Other than for appropriately designed hanging signs consent will not normally be granted for any sign above the level of an existing shop fascia,
- (iii) All lettering should be of good quality materials, simple in style and appropriate to the architectural character of the building involved,
- (iv) The number of advertisements or external lights displayed on a building should be kept to a minimum,
- (v) The signs would be in keeping with the character of the locality when located in a residential or countryside location,
- (vi) If it is proposed that the advertisement be illuminated, the scale, colour, design and intensity of illumination would not detract from the character or appearance of the area,
- (vii) Where the proposal is located within a Conservation Area or would affect the setting of a Listed Building, it would comply with Policies C5 and C11 respectively.

Discontinuance action will be taken to secure the removal of existing advertisements which have a serious adverse effect upon the character or appearance of an area.

# LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTROLS

This guidance should not be seen as a substitute for professional help. The issues can be complicated and it is suggested that you contact the Planning Department at Ryedale District Council before undertaking any alterations. Below is a summary of the legislative controls that can apply.

## **Planning Permission**

Normally, if you want to alter or extend your shopfront, planning permission will be required. Only when you are repairing an existing shopfront, or carrying out minor alterations (i.e. those which do not ‘materially’ affect the appearance of the building) will this not be necessary. You can also alter the inside of the building without having to make a planning application.

## **Non-‘Listed’ Buildings in Conservation Areas**

In a conservation area the council has a duty to ensure that changes to the area either preserve or enhance the special character of the area. This means the design of the shopfront could be more closely monitored to determine whether it was achieving this aim.

## **Listed Building Consent**

Where a shop premises is a Listed Building, a separate Listed Building Consent may be required. Such buildings are listed so the council can ensure that the historic or architectural character of the building is not being eroded. This includes minor changes, including advertisements and signs, and changes to interiors.

## **Advertisement Consent**

The control of signs and advertising is set out in separate legislation- the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992. These regulations say when formal consent is needed but the criteria it uses are complex. Most fascia and projecting signs on the front of shops do not need consent as long as they are below first floor windows. Subject to the method used this could include some illumination. However, it is always appropriate to check with the Local Planning Authority first.

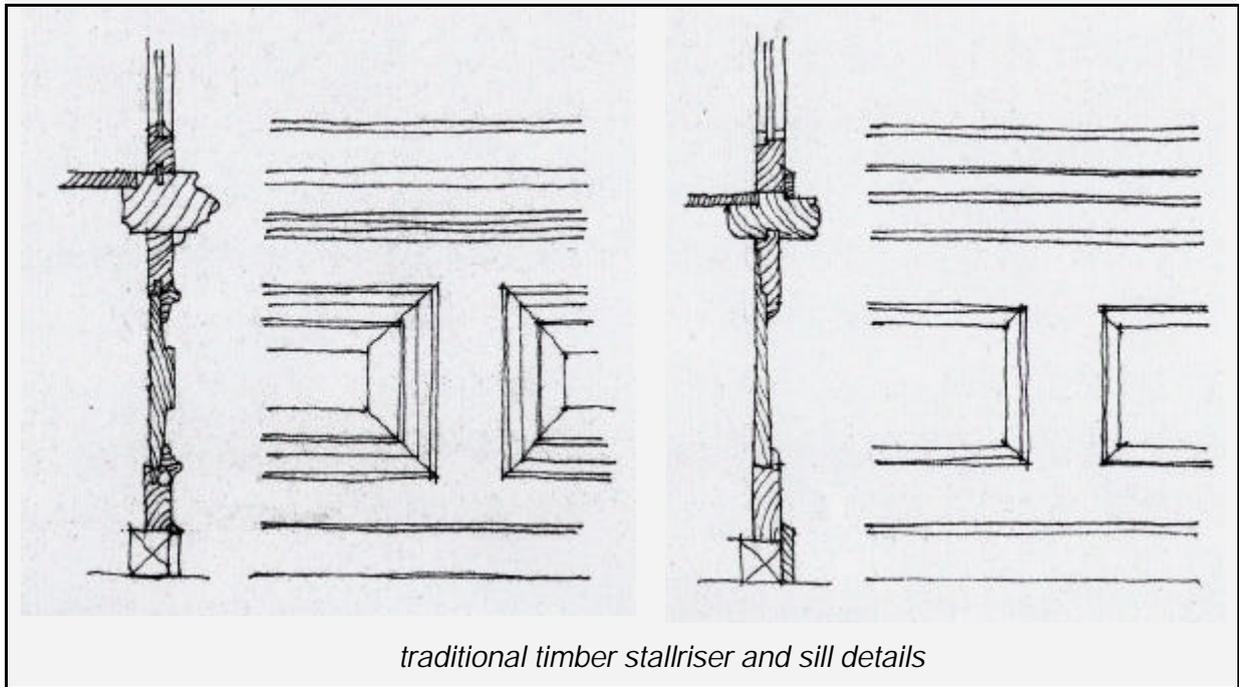
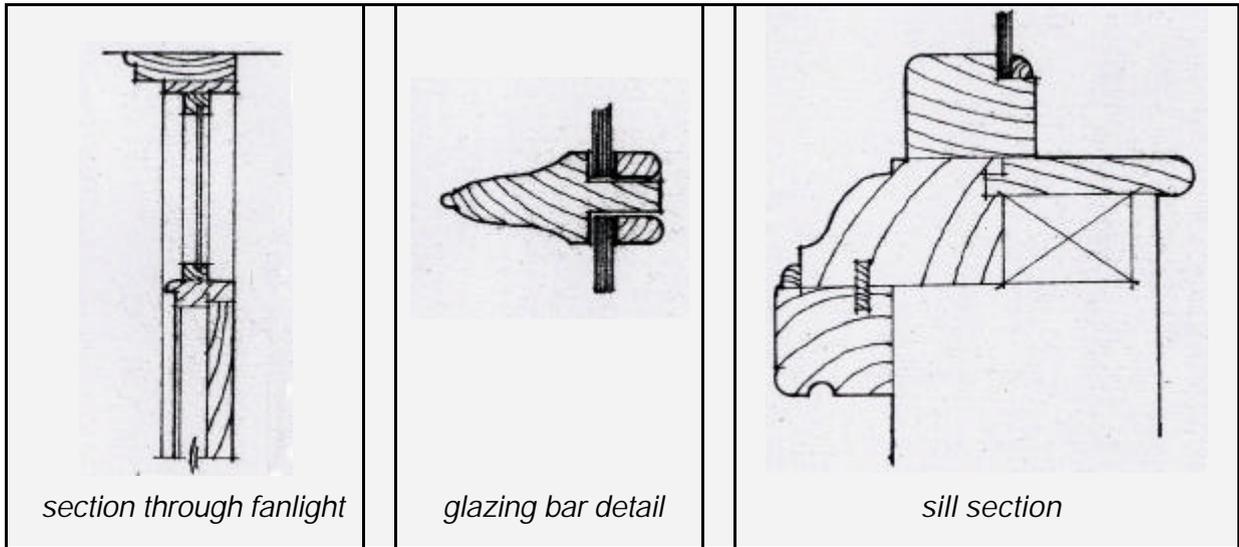
Canopies or blinds will normally require planning permission or advertisement consent depending on their design and whether or not they are used for advertising the shop.

## **Application Plans**

When making an application for Planning Permission or Listed Building Consent you should supply enough information with your proposal so that the planning officers can easily judge your proposal. Where planning permission or listed building consent is required, the use of professional agents is strongly advised. You should include fully detailed plans at 1:50 scale and should include the elevation of the building concerned and adjoining buildings. Details of vertical sections should be provided at 1:20 including joinery details at 1:5. Information must be comprehensive and include information such as materials, colours proposed, lighting and security details.

# Typical large scale details

Applications must be accompanied by details of this standard



## Application Checklist

- Completed application form
- Location Plan at either 1:1250 or 1: 2500 scale
- Plan at 1:50 Scale
- Elevation at 1:50 Scale of entire main building and adjoining buildings
- Vertical Sections at 1:20 Scale
- Horizontal Sections at 1:20 Scale
- Joinery Details at 1:5 Scale
- Schedule of Materials of Individual Components

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