

# BUILDING CHARACTER

The character of Wimbledon Village is influenced by its buildings, a significant number of which are included in the Statutory List of buildings of Architectural or Historical importance. It is the Council's policy to enhance this character through the encouragement of the restoration of original architectural features. Planning policies relating to the enhancement of buildings are contained within the Borough's Unitary Development Plan. The policies reproduced below are of particular importance.

Policy EB.5 relates specifically to the enhancement of buildings in conservation areas:

**EB.5 EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO IMPLEMENT ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES AND SECURE THE RESTORATION OF ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS.**

Where the property is a Listed Building, then policy EB.9 is also relevant:

**EB.9 WHEN CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS FOR ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS AND OTHER BUILDINGS OF IMPORTANCE, PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF THE BUILDINGS, THE FEATURES OF ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL INTEREST AND TO THEIR RESTORATION OF ORIGINAL DETAILS, SUCH AS SASH WINDOWS, PANEL DOORS AND RAILINGS.**

Policy EB.30 relates to the design of shop fronts:

**EB.30 NEW SHOPFRONTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO REFLECT THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER OF THEIR SHOPPING FACADE. ORIGINAL FEATURES SHOULD BE PRESERVED WHERE THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE SHOPPING FRONTAGE. FULL ACCESS FOR WHEELCHAIRS AND PUSHCHAIRS SHOULD BE PROVIDED.**



- 1 TYPICAL SHOP FACADE
- 1 Entrance door
- 2 Frame
- 3 Sill/rails
- 4 Shop door

The illustration above shows a typical elevation in Wimbledon Village, as it should appear, and identifies the particular features, the restoration of which the Council is seeking to encourage.

## UPPER LEVELS

The upper levels of Victorian and Georgian shop buildings are vertical in character and, by their repetition over each bay, provide the unifying quality to each terrace and therefore the street as a whole.

Typically two or three storeys high, with a pitched roof concealed behind a parapet, the upper facades are predominantly of brick and often featured brick or stone

window surrounds, string courses, cornices and expressed party walls. The stone elements are often decorated or moulded to give prominence and character to the feature and enhance the facade generally.

## 2 THE SHOPFRONT SURROUND

- 1 pilaster
- 2 fascia
- 3 cornice

Windows are usually recessed timber vertical sliding sashes, frequently divided into four or more panes and often with semi-circular heads to the top floor.

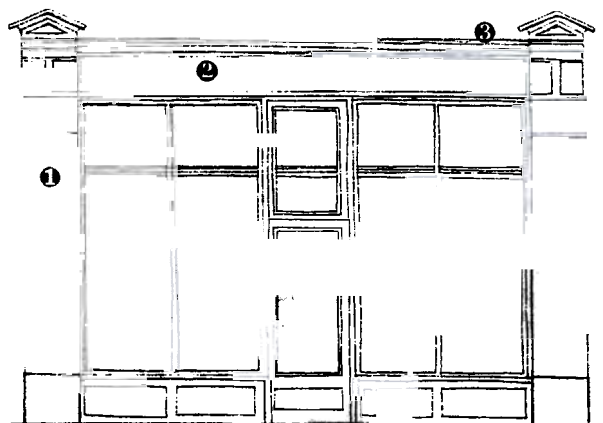
Brick features are expressed in raised brickwork, contrasting colour bricks or block bonding.

## SHOPFRONT DESIGN

The main purpose of the shopfront is to display goods for sale. It also has an important role in projecting the image of the shop. It follows that a shopfront that is tawdry in construction and materials or discordant in its colour scheme will not project a good image or enhance the display of items for sale. The same can be true of the whole of the shopping street.

A good shopfront will harmonise with the character of a building, and it should not be replaced by one which looks out of place or which detracts from the neighbouring units. It should reflect the architectural features and the proportions of the building and, in the case of a terrace of shop units, the rhythm of the terrace. Original frontage features should not be concealed or destroyed. Where a shopfront spans more than one unit, the vertical divisions which provide the rhythm of the terrace should be retained or restored.

18th and 19th century shopfront design was based on a set of principles which was noticeably successful in achieving a satisfactory relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole. These principles still hold good. Various elements can be used to enclose the shop window and entrance rather in the manner of a picture frame which sets off a painting. These include the pilasters, fascia, cornice and stallriser. Each has its own visual and practical function. The pilasters identify the vertical division between the shopfronts; the fascia provides the space for advertising; the cornice gives a strong line at the top of the shopfront and protection from the weather; the stallriser gives protection at ground level and provides a solid base; and all of these



elements form a frame which suggests, visually, a method of support for the building facade above.

In Conservation Areas, or in the case of Listed Buildings, traditional shopfronts, where they exist, should be retained, or if they are missing should be reinstated. Examples of original shopfronts in the vicinity will need to be sought to provide a basis for the design. Proposals for alterations will be expected to reveal original details where they have been concealed, or restore original detailing which has been lost.

The shopfront is surrounded by a frame which is made up of a number of elements. Each of these elements has a practical purpose, and contributes to the character of the building. The elements are as follows.

- I The pilasters which distinguish each shop from its neighbour and provide much of the rhythm to a terrace of shop units. The base, or plinth, and the top, or corbel, of the pilaster frequently reflects the height and dimensions of the stallriser and fascia of the shopfront itself and the corbel, which projects forward from the face of the building, allows the fascia to be angled downwards slightly, in order to permit better visibility from the street;
- II The fascia provides the space to display the name of the shop;
- III The projecting cornice defines the top of the shopfront, distinguishes the shop from the rest of the

building above, and directs rainwater away from the shopfront.

Cornices should always be retained or reinstated in the appropriate position related to the height of the corbels and cornices on neighbouring properties. Pilasters should also be retained or reinstated in the correct position, which relates to the original width of the building. Pilasters and cornices should not be clad, or concealed by fascia boards, and should not be treated or painted separately on each side of the party line. They should not be cluttered with fixtures, such as signs, alarm boxes or blind fittings.

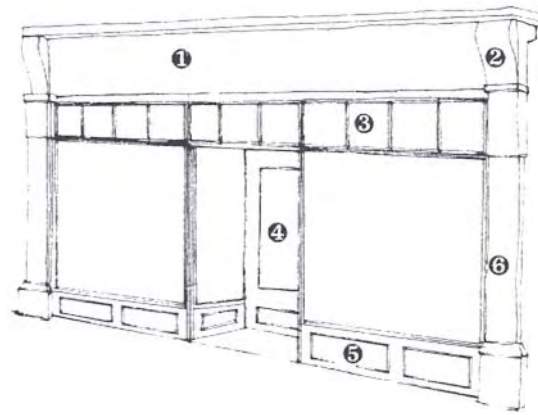
In Conservation Areas proposals for shopfronts and surrounds will be expected to retain these features, or if they are missing, to reinstate them using the original design and detailing. Decorative mouldings should be copied from nearby buildings or from a historical pattern book.

Corporate styles adopted by some businesses may clash with the style or character of individual premises and their surroundings. While the Council recognises the importance of the "house style" to some businesses, nevertheless in some areas, particularly in Conservation Areas, corporate styles may need to be modified.

## THE SHOPFRONT

The shopfront itself occupies the space defined within the shopfront surround, as referred to above. It too is composed of several elements, such as the windows, the doors and the stallriser. In some cases the original shopfront has been retained and, in these cases, a repair or refurbishment of the original will often produce a better finished result than a replacement with a new shopfront.

In Conservation Areas, and in the case of Listed Buildings, proposals for shopfronts will be expected to retain original features or to reinstate them with original



- 3 SHOPFRONT FEATURES
- 1 Fascia
  - 2 Corbel
  - 3 Clerestory window
  - 4 Recessed doorway
  - 5 Stallriser
  - 6 Pilaster

design and detailing, if they are missing. The following basic rules of design should be followed:

I When copying historic styles they should be appropriate to the period of the building, for example, avoid using neo-Georgian styles in a Victorian or inter-War building. It is important to get minor details right, for example, the profile and shape of window frames, glazing bars and doors;

II Large expanses of glass are usually out of scale with the proportions of the building and should, therefore, be avoided. Glazing bars should be used to sub-divide both vertically and horizontally large areas of glazing. Clerestory windows should be aligned correctly with fanlight windows and stallriser cills to door panels. Opaque, frosted, mirrored or tinted glass is normally not acceptable, unless it has a functional use and is in small areas. Stained glass within the clerestory window is, however, a design feature in some traditional shopfronts;

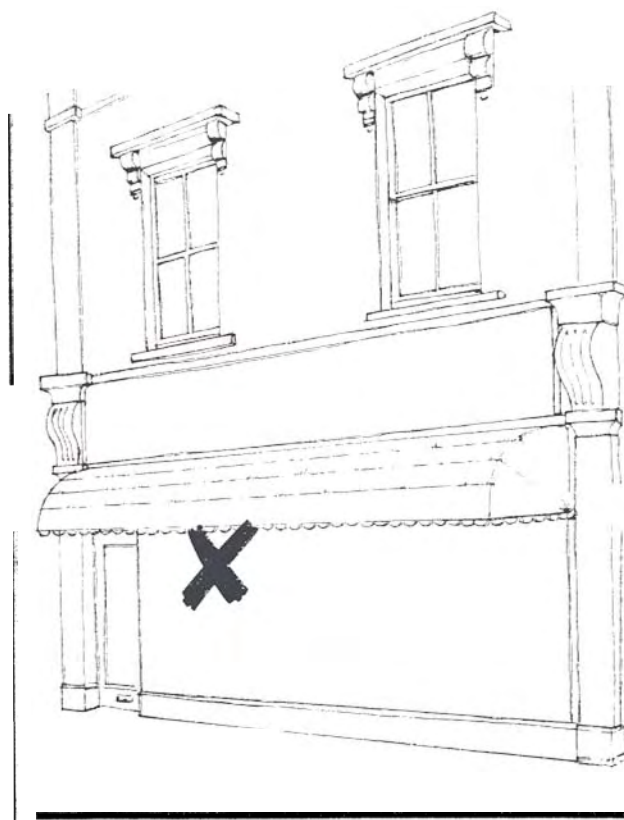
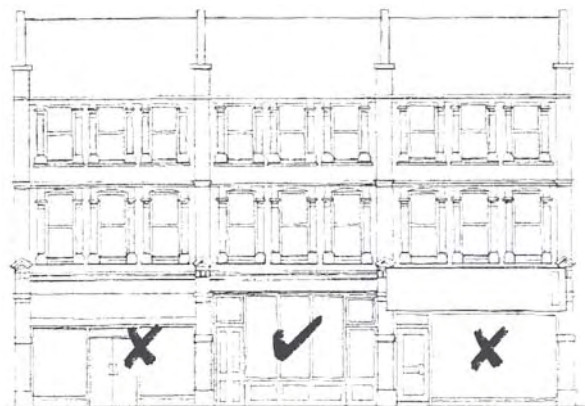
III The design of doors should be in keeping with that of the other elements of the shopfront. Separate access to the upper floors should be retained to allow continued independent usage of the upper parts of the building. In some cases where a separate access to the upper floors has been lost, a reinstatement of a separate access will be sought. The positioning of this second door can be used to achieve a balanced effect in the shopfront elevation. Traditionally the entrance doorways are often recessed behind the main facade and a decorative floor provided in the recess. Such

recessed entrances can enhance the character of the traditional shopfront design, and can provide shelter for shoppers. Recesses should, however, be well illuminated. Access for people with special needs should be considered in the design of doorways. This is dealt with in Section 13 below.

IV Stallrisers are the solid panels below the shop window. They perform the function of providing a visual base for the shop window, display, and they can screen unattractive floor areas behind. They also protect shop windows from damage. Generally the height of the stallriser should relate to that of the base of the pilaster, or to the height of any traditional existing stallrisers on neighbouring properties. In Conservation Areas, and in the case of Listed Buildings, a traditional stallriser of suitable design and proportions will be required in any new shopfront proposal.

V Shop window displays should be maintained at all times to lend interest to the shopping frontage. Solid or partially infilled frontages are generally not acceptable, and where the use requires a visual break from the street, this should be provided by means of an internal screen behind a shop window display.

Outside Conservations Areas different designs for shopfronts, within the shopfront surround, can usually be accommodated satisfactorily, although consideration should be given to the design guidance set out above.



## FASCIAS & PROJECTING SIGNS

EB.30 NEW SHOPFRONTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO REFLECT THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER OF THEIR SHOPPING FACADE. ORIGINAL FEATURES SHOULD BE PRESERVED WHERE THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE SHOPPING FRONTAGE. FULL ACCESS FOR WHEELCHAIRS AND PUSHCHAIRS SHOULD BE PROVIDED.

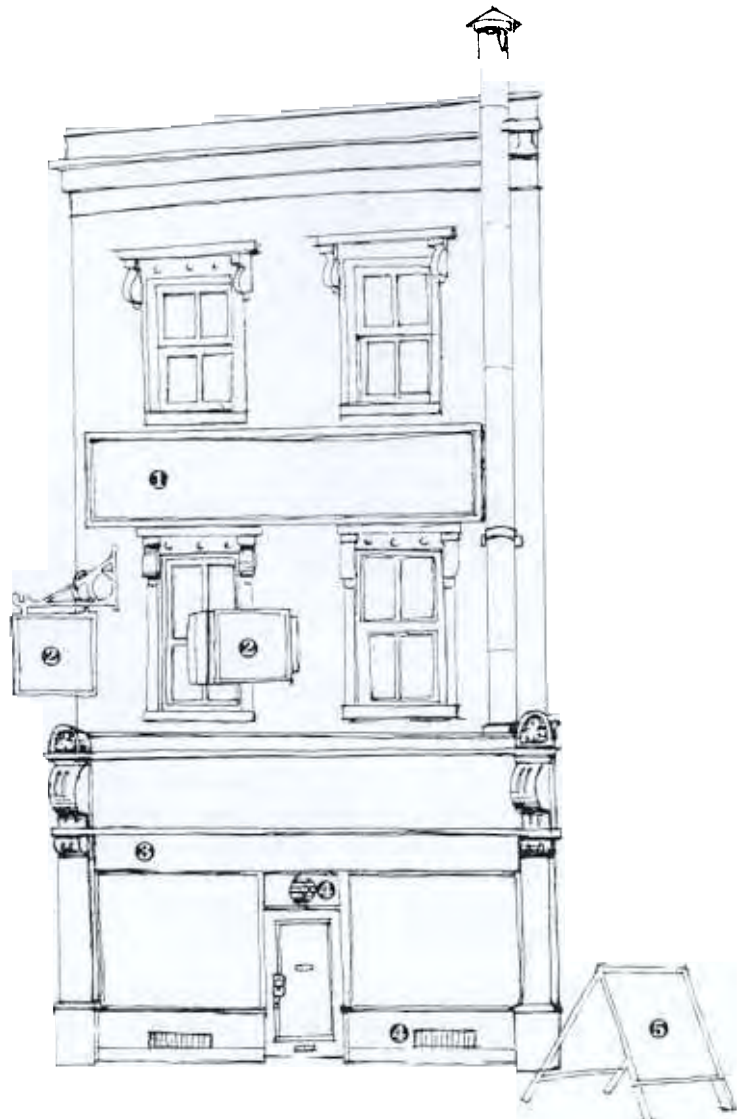
EB.29 WHERE CONSENT TO DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS IS REQUIRED, PARTICULAR REGARD WILL BE PAID TO THE PROPRTIIONS, MATERIALS AND COLOURS OF THE DISPLAY. THE COUNCIL WILL EXPECT THE DESIGN OF

ADVERTISEMENT DISPLAYS ON SHOP PREMISES TO BE RELATED TO THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING. APPROVAL WILL NOT NORMALLY BE GIVEN FOR PROJECTING ILLUMINATED SIGNS IN CONSERVATION AREAS.

Variations in the width and length of the fascia have a significant effect on the appearance of the building as do the extent of forward projection of the fascia board and the materials used. Fascias should be contained within the original shopfront surround and they should not extend without interruption across a number of buildings across the face of the corbels. Over-sized fascias, which are out of scale with the building, are not suitable either within Conservation Areas or elsewhere.

The dimensions of the fascia are usually related to that of the corbels, and if there are no corbel features then the fascia should not exceed one-fifth of the distance between the pavement and the cornice. The fascias of adjacent properties may sometimes be used as a guide for alignment, but will not necessarily always be appropriate. Over-deep fascias will need to be reduced when a new shopfront is proposed. Reflective materials or lurid colours on fascias should be avoided.

Where a suspended ceiling exists, or is to be provided, there can be a problem of obtaining a satisfactory junction between the ceiling and the shopfront. In such cases, suspended ceilings should be cut back to at least one metre away from the shopfront. Suspended ceilings should not result in a downward extension of the fascia.



6 TYPICAL FASCIA DETAIL

- 1 Preserve the shopfront surround
- 2 Maximum fascia depth of 1 metre
- Use coloured edge trim to blend with the background of the sign or the shop frame

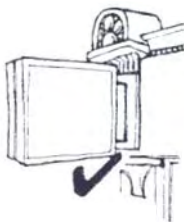
ADVERTISEMENTS & SIGNS

- Too many signs are confusing and appear cluttered.
- Do not place signs above the fascia level, apart from hanging signs which may be allowed
- 2 Only one sign projecting or hanging for each business
- 3 Do not place signs below the fascia
- 4 Do not place ventilation ducts on the front elevations
- 5 Do not obstruct the pavement

Fascia signs should be contained within the fascia panels, and should not conceal architectural features. Backlit fascia panels should not project noticeably forward of the corbels or the shopfront surround. Lettering should be kept simple and bold.

In Conservation Areas the materials to be used for the fascia panels and lettering should be appropriate to the architectural style and age of the building. Unacceptable materials include large panels of acrylic, perspex or other shiny or reflective material.

Illumination for fascia signs should also be carefully considered. In Conservation Areas wholly backlit fascia panel or built-up fascia boxes are not normally acceptable. Illumination of fascia signs in these areas is best achieved by means of external illumination using swan-neck lamps, uplighters, downlighters, or tubes in trough housings with carefully controlled lighting to avoid undue spread of light. Alternatively, internally illuminated individual letters, with an opaque face and solid sides, may be considered.



Fix projecting box signs at fascia level and do not damage mouldings

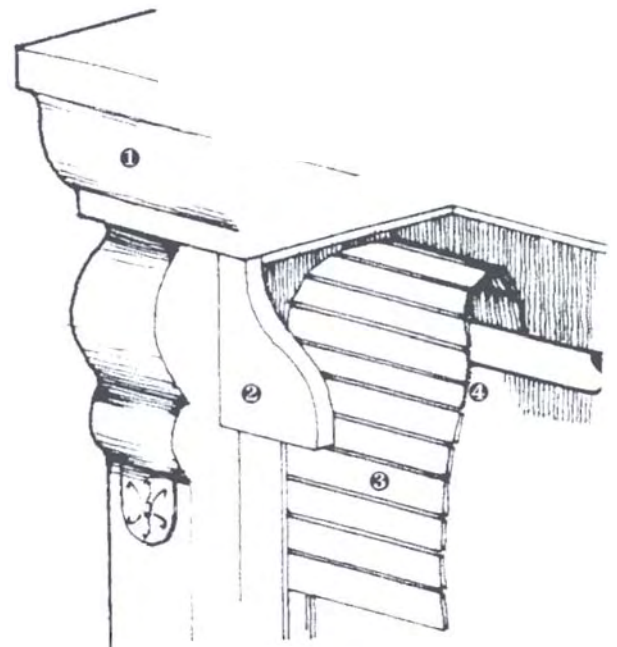
Projecting signs should be carefully positioned in relation to the features of the shopfront and shopfront surround. They should not obscure corbels or other detailing, and should normally be fixed at fascia level. There should not normally be more than one projecting sign on any shop or business unit. The height of the projecting sign should be less than the depth of the fascia panel and should, in any event, be less than 600mm in depth or width.

In Conservation Areas projecting signs should normally be non-illuminated and should be of a traditional hanging or bracketed design, as appropriate to the architecture and age of the building. In areas where projecting signs are absent, proposals for new ones will not be acceptable.

## SECURITY : SHUTTERS & GRILLES

Excessive security measures, created by blocking out windows with steel shuttering, produces a bleak and hostile environment for the pedestrian which, to some extent, may deter the innocent passers-by. Streets which encourage out-of-hours window shopping are more friendly and, by attracting people, help to create informal surveillance for the area.

Timber shutters are traditional for certain types of shop. Solid metal roller shutters should only be used where there is a continuing problem of vandalism and damage. In these situations, shutter-box housings should either be integrated within the shopfront, behind the fascia, or recessed and flush within the shopfront. Guides should be either removable or integrated within the shopfront design. Metal shutters should be colour-coated to match the shopfront surround.



- 9 SHUTTERS & GRILLES  
the component parts of an  
externally fixed roller grille
- 1 Cornice
  - 2 Cutaway fascia panel
  - 3 Roller shutter
  - 4 Concealed shutter housing



Alternatives to solid metal shutters are, however, available and should be considered, examples include:

I Internal security grilles which can be fitted behind the shop windows and that permit a view into the interior of the shop. This solution is considered to be the most acceptable;

II Security glass which is laminated and incorporates a plastic layer. This will remain intact even when broken. Other alternatives are toughened glass or architectural perspex.

III External lattice grilles, placed manually over the shop window and doors, which also permit a view into the shop.

Security alarms should not adversely affect the architectural features of the building. Alarm boxes should be carefully positioned in relation to the shopfront and shop frame elements, and are usually best positioned

above the cornice level. The positioning of satellite dishes will require special consideration, and wherever possible locations on the front facade of the building should be avoided.

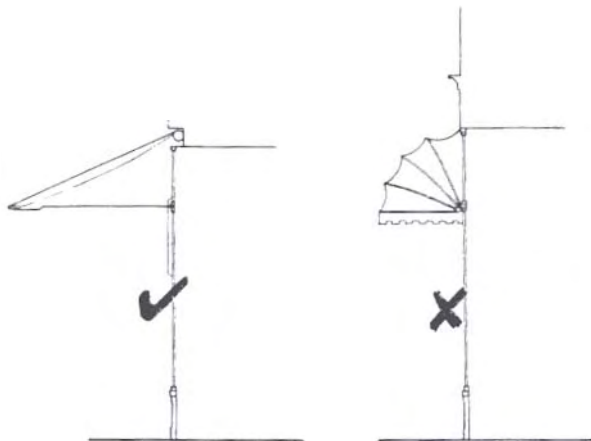
In Conservation Areas, and in the case of Listed Buildings, all security measures should be designed and positioned so as to have the minimum effect on the character of the building.

Where a shop is vulnerable to 'ram raids', alternatives to shutters may have to be considered. It may be possible, in certain locations and in consultation with the Council, for bollards to be introduced outside shops to act as a deterrent. Alternatively a substantial looking planter can be physically incorporated into the shop front design which can also effectively deter such raids. When considering such proposals attention should be paid to the effect of the proposal on the overall shop front design.

## BLINDS & CANOPIES

Blinds and canopies can, if suitably designed, add to the interest and attractiveness of shops. They should fit in with the style of the shopfront and character and age of the building. In Victorian and Edwardian buildings, the typical blind used would generally be of the 'roller' or 'apron' types. These would retract into the shopfront surround.

In Conservation Areas, and in the case of Listed Buildings, consideration will be given to the introduction of suitably designed blinds, having regard to the character and age of the building. Generally pre-Victorian buildings would not be expected to have blinds. Rigid Dutch-style canopies are not appropriate and would not be accepted in these situations.



## DECORATION & SPECIAL FEATURES

Small-scale features of decoration have a major effect on the buildings individual character. Such features include ornate tiling, curved glazing, patterned coloured glazing especially at clerestory levels, ornate glazing bar patterns, detailing on pilasters and corbels, and the use of special materials, such as terracotta, stone and ironwork. In Conservation Areas such features should be retained and carefully repaired, where necessary.

### MATERIALS

There are a wide range of materials available which vary considerably in their cost and quality, and it is important that materials are selected which suit the character of the building concerned. Self-coloured aluminium, galvanised metal, laminates and plastics will be resisted in favour of colour-finished aluminium, hardwood timber, through-quality brick and semi-matt tiles.

Self-coloured metal is not found on the upper elevations of older buildings and it is not considered suitable for shopfront frames where the objective is to harmonise with the existing building. Furthermore, insubstantial materials or harsh finishes detract from the appearance of individual buildings and shopping centres.

### RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL ENTRANCES

Where separate dwellings/offices are created above shops, care should be taken to ensure that the new doors to the street are of a suitable design and respect the character of the building. A glazed panel above the door will help to illuminate the entrance lobby. Recessed entrances should be avoided for reasons security and surveillance and all should be well lit.





*Dog & Fox public house, Wimbledon Village*

## DOUBLE SHOP UNITS

Wide shopfronts need special consideration because most streets have a strong vertical emphasis. A large shopfront, where two units have been thrown into one, will disrupt this rhythm. It will therefore be necessary to retain the intervening pilaster and break the fascia, as for two separate units.

## FORECOURTS

Private forecourts should be well maintained, and paved in such a way as to complement the paving in the public street. Forecourts can be used to create an attractive display which can significantly add to the appearance of shopfronts and the vitality of the street scene generally.

Forecourt displays within the public highway (the public pavement areas) may in some circumstances be provided subject to obtaining a street trading licence from the Local Authority.

In all cases it is important to ensure that the public footpath is not obstructed, that there is easy access to the shops and that the needs of people with visual disabilities are considered.

# ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Shops should be accessible to all sections of the community and this is an established objective of the Council. The Borough's Unitary Development Plan incorporates a number of policies requiring that the access and mobility requirements of people with physical and sensory disabilities be accommodated. Of particular relevance is policy EB.24

EB.24 THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE ALL DEVELOPMENTS TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAVE ACCESS, TO ACCOMMODATE THE ACCESS AND MOBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF PEOPLE

WITH PHYSICAL AND SENSORY DISABILITIES, AND PEOPLE WITH PRAMS AND PUSHCHAIRS, THROUGH THE CO-ORDINATION OF THE VARIOUS RESOURCES AVAILABLE INCLUDING LIAISON WITH BUILDING CONTROL.

New shopfronts should take into account the needs of, for example, people in wheelchairs, those who have difficulty with walking, blind or partially-sighted people children and people with pushchairs, prams or trolleys

Entrance doors should provide a minimum clear opening of 830mm (preferably 900mm) or, where double-doors are provided, one door should provide not less than 800mm. 300mm space should be provided beside the leading edge of the door to allow easier manoeuvrability for wheelchairs. Self-closers on doors should be adjusted so as to require minimum opening pressure. Where doors are recessed, the pavement entrance should be a minimum of 1200mm wide. Fully glazed doors should be clearly marked with vision bands in contrasting colour. These should be set at an optimum height of 1575mm.

Thresholds at the shop entrance should be level, and ramps should be no steeper than 1:12 - and preferably 1:20 - and a minimum of 1200mm wide. They should have non-slip surfaces. If a door-mat is needed, it should be recessed in a mat well. Ramps should not extend onto public highway.

Entrance doors should provide a kicking plate. Door handles, bell pushes and letter-boxes should be set at an optimum height of 1040mm above ground level, and door handles should be of a lever design, and should be easily visible against the background of the door.

