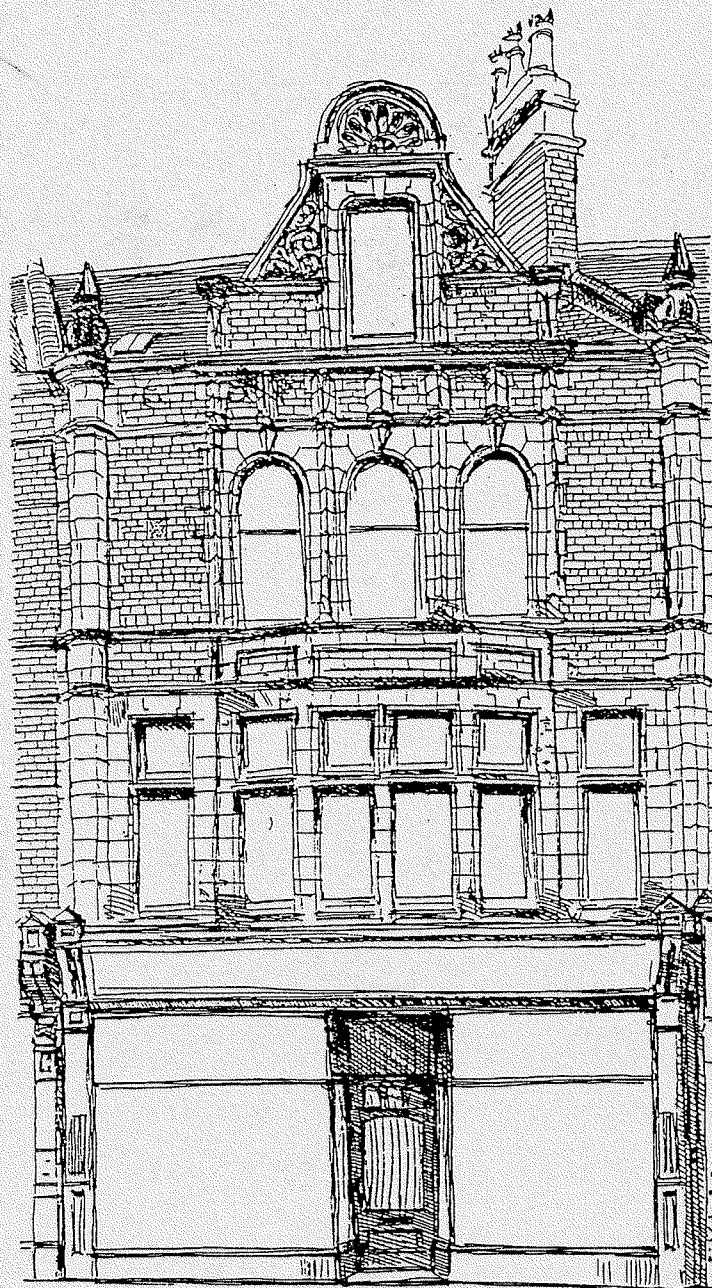
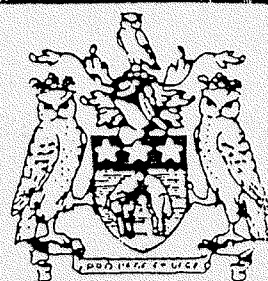


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LEEDS CITY COUNCIL  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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Design Aid

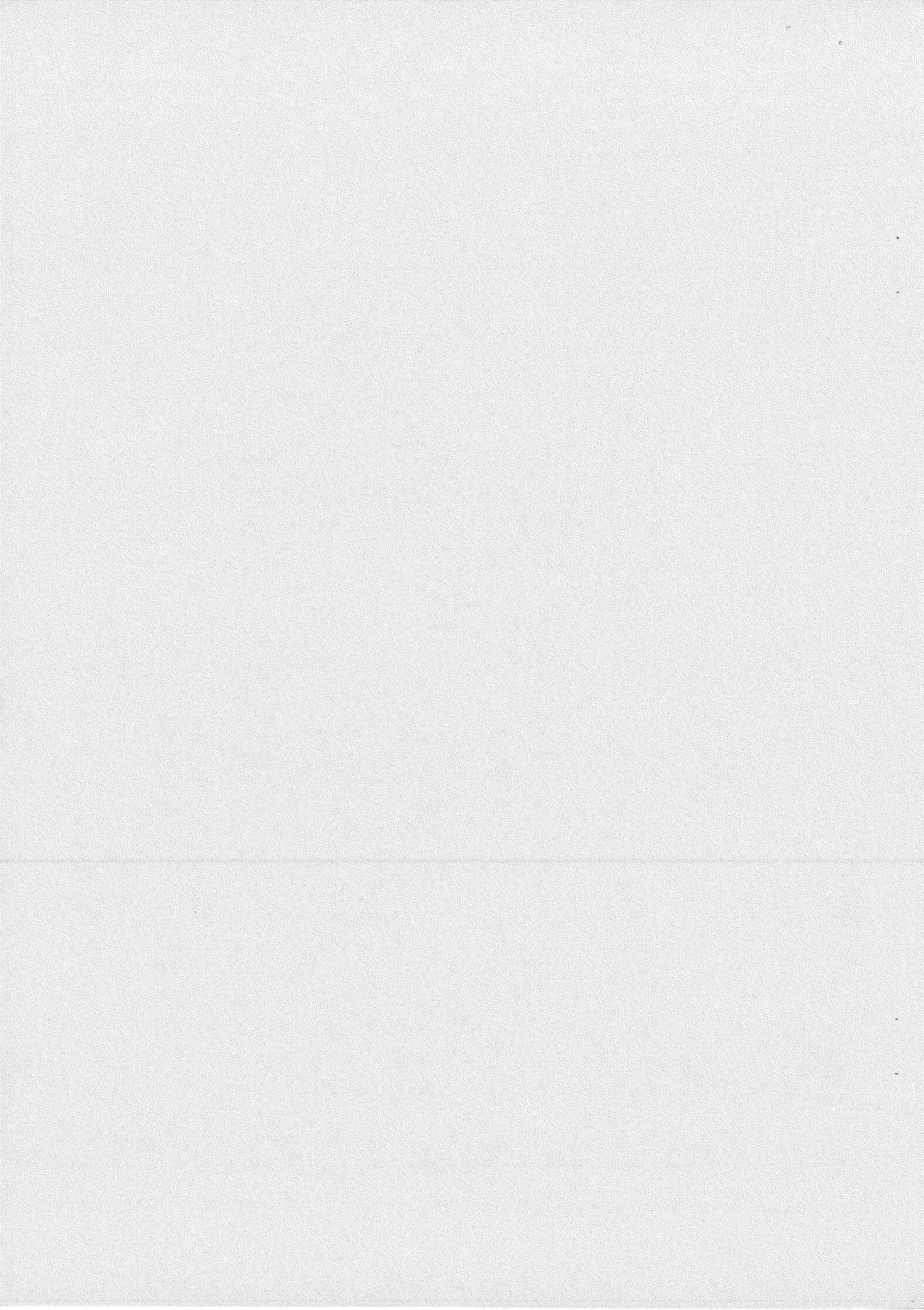
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SHOPS & SHOP FRONTS

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DRAFT

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# SHOP AND SHOP FRONT DESIGN GUIDE - DRAFT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shops and their shop fronts form an important aspect of the present-day town. The design and siting of new shop fronts and signs can markedly affect the visual appearance of buildings and consequently the overall appearance of the street.

Shops compete with each other to provide goods and services and so shopkeepers need to make their whereabouts known and to display their wares. This all helps to create the busy atmosphere that we associate with town centres.

Unfortunately, some shop owners, in their eagerness to be prominent amongst their neighbours and competitors, have paid no regard to the qualities of their existing shop fronts or the design of the rest of the building and street. It is the aim of this guide to explain the relevance of these factors to those who order and design shop fronts. Hopefully this work will then be done in a manner that will not adversely effect the appearance of the building and the overall visual quality of the shopping area. It is particularly important in historic areas that the commercial requirements are correctly balanced with consideration and respect for the historic, architectural and environmental heritage. A standard national approach is therefore not always appropriate, each case needs to be looked at individually and then treated on its merits.

All Listed Buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas are subject to additional Planning Controls and may require Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission prior to any removal, alteration, demolition or change to any part of the building. Advertisements may require the express consent of the City Council and even when they do not, the Planning Authority has the power to serve a Discontinuance Notice requiring the removal of any sign it considers inappropriate.

To avoid unnecessary work, it is recommended that early discussions take place with the Planning Authority on any proposals.

Property owners and shop keepers are advised that in many cases it may be appropriate and desirable to employ professional assistance in formulating their schemes. The local branch of the Royal Institute of British Architects (tel Leeds 456250) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (tel 071-209 1279) will be able to help in suggesting firms who specialise in this work.

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9 December 1992

## 2. EXISTING SHOP FRONTS

### 2.1 TRADITIONAL SHOP FRONTS. Traditionally, a shop front is composed of:

- (a) a surrounding frame made up of pilasters on either side with a fascia across the top between them. The pilasters are set forward of the shop window and each has a slightly projecting base, a central shaft which is often panelled and at the top a capital, possibly ornately detailed and supported on scrolled brackets, standing quite away forward of the main part to provide the end stop for the fascia. The fascia has a narrow name board, leaning forwards to make the sign easier to read, capped by a cornice above which there needs to be an adequate visual gap to the underside of any first floor window sill to avoid the shop front seeming to crowd the upper storey;
- (b) the shop front itself is made up of window, stall riser and doors. The door with a fanlight over would often be set in a recessed entrance, the floor of which may have a decorated tile or mosaic floor. The window, normally sub-divided by glazing bars, is set on a stall riser which raises up the display and provides a more durable surface at low level.

In this way the pilasters delineate each shop front and provide punctuation in the street scene as well as giving vertical emphasis when viewed along the street. Similarly, the recessed entrances add interest and increase the display area as well as providing shelter for people looking at the display.

Whilst older buildings may be basically sound they can require extensive improvements and repairs to bring them back into good order. When improvements are carried out, it is important that they should be done in a manner that is in keeping with the original style of the building and the area. It is always best to carry out repairs and alterations to the outside using traditional materials to match those already there, rather than cheaper less durable substitutes.

Where the building has an existing shop front which is original or a genuine period piece then it would be considered inappropriate to remove it and commence designing the replacement as a completely new shop front. The shop front design should incorporate the original, except for correcting past mistakes. This does not mean that the existing cannot be changed, but modification should be kept to the minimum and should be in the same style as the original. Often in these circumstances the existing shop front is not in such a bad condition that it must be totally replaced; partial replacement and repair may be all that is necessary.

On some buildings, whilst original features still exist, they have been concealed by more recent additions. Therefore, wherever possible, these features should be revealed and, where necessary, repaired.

### 2.2 MODERN SHOP FRONTS. Where the shop front is not traditional in form, and is not of architectural merit in itself or as part of the total building frontage, there is greater freedom to replace what is there and at the same time produce proposals which will enhance the building. In these cases the shop front will be treated as new and looked at in that light.

FASCIA PANEL

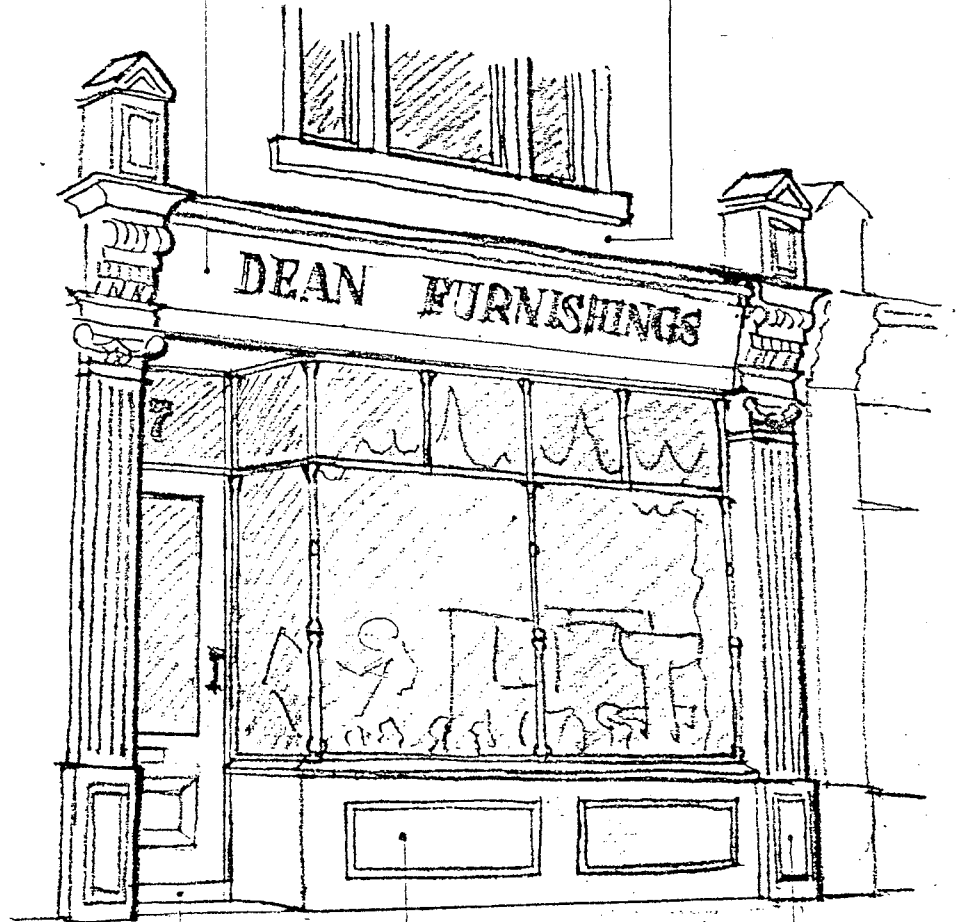
moulded capping over narrow sign board which is angled downwards. Lettering kept simple.

VISUAL GAP

between top of fascia and underside of cill to provide visual division between shop front and upper storeys.

SHOP WINDOW

area of glazing in proportion to shop front and the building within which it is set. Scale reduced by subdividing windows with transoms and mullions.



RECESSED ENTRANCE

with glazed panelled door having fanlight over. Often the entrance is set centrally within shop front.

STALLRISER

forming an important feature in the design of the shop front.

PILASTERS

important in framing the shop front and should extend above top of fascia. The pilasters are made up of three parts, at the top is the capital which should be set in front of the fascia panel. Below this is the shaft which should be proud of the window but set back from the capital. At the bottom is the base which again slightly projects.

Fig.1 Traditional shop front.

### 3. NEW SHOPS AND SHOP FRONTS

Most importantly, look carefully at the whole building into which the shop front is to be inserted, together with the adjoining properties or for a new shop front, the surrounding buildings. Only then can the shop or shop front be designed in keeping with the character, scale and proportion of the original(s). Also don't forget to consider security when designing the shop front, security should not be treated as an afterthought.

Where the building has a distinctive feature running the full height of the building, it would usually be inappropriate to cut out the base to make way for a larger shop front.

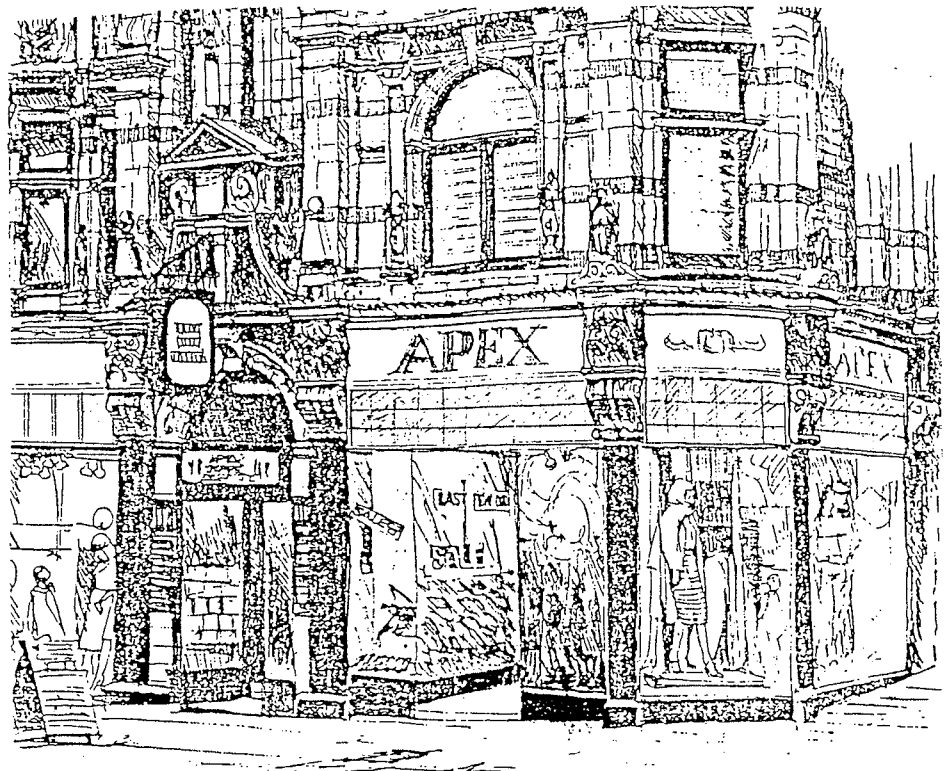


Fig.2 The shop front is part of the total building.



Fig. 3 New shop fronts should be designed to respect the existing building and its distinctive features. It is inappropriate to use a standard shop front which cuts through these as illustrated in the example to the right.

Fig. 4 Shop fronts and signs can be inserted between the features of the building, so keeping the building's integrity.



3.1 SCALE. When a new large shop is to be built in an area which is composed only of small shops then it would be appropriate for the new large shop to be built to the same "scale" as that of the adjoining properties, ie, visually broken down into smaller parts of a similar size to the adjoining shops, keeping the vertical emphasis of the smaller properties. Also it is important that the storey height of any new development broadly matches that of the adjoining buildings ie does not differ by more than one storey.

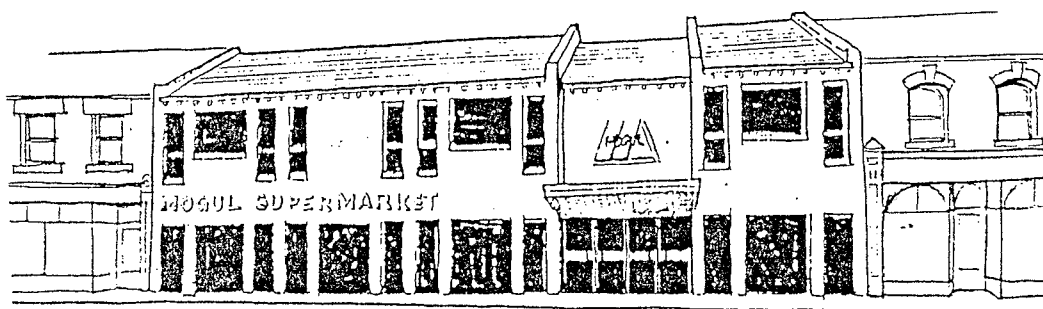


Fig.5 In areas of small shops, new large units should be broken down to the smaller scale of the adjoining properties.



Fig.6 Using several small windows for single shop in a terrace reduces the scale to be more in keeping with the building



FASCIA PANEL  
capping over narrow  
fascia with simple  
lettering.

VISUAL GAP  
between top of fascia  
and underside of cill to  
provide visual separation  
between shop front and  
upper storeys.

SHOP FRONT  
with recessed  
entrance



STALLRISER  
low brick wall with  
splayed brick on  
edge cill.

PILASTERS  
set forward to frame  
shop front and fascia,  
all in brick, with capital  
proud of shaft with its  
splayed corners over a  
plain brick base.

Fig. 7 A modern approach reflecting character,  
scale and proportions of traditional.

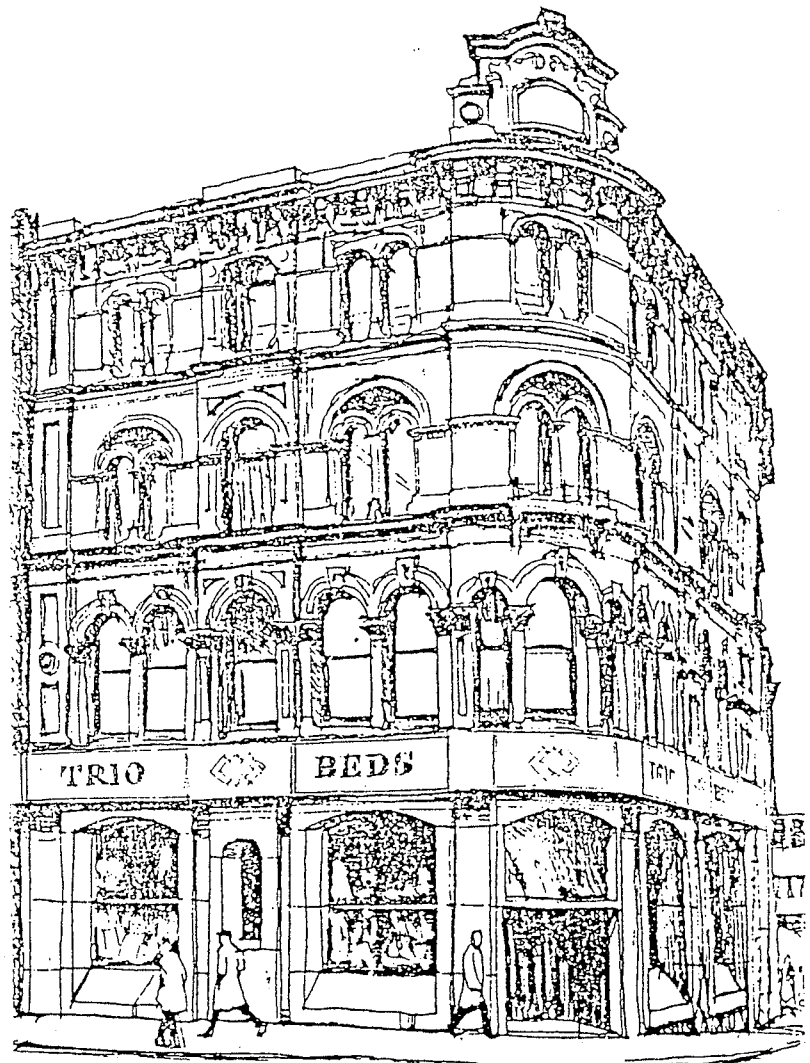


Fig. 8 New shop front  
picking up rhythm  
of building above.

Where the building is made up of several smaller, formerly separate, buildings then the shop front design should reflect this. A deep horizontal fascia board across all the units, with the shop display windows below completely isolated from and out of proportion to the original building, is not appropriate.

Shops are used by people and so new buildings should be designed on the human "scale" at least along shopping streets. This does not preclude large buildings. It is just that their "scale" should be broken down and appropriate detailing used.

- 3.2 DISPLAY WINDOWS. Buildings in shopping streets should present an appearance of activity and interest to the street which shops normally achieve with display windows. This interest should continue even during times when the shop is closed and therefore security needs to be designed accordingly.

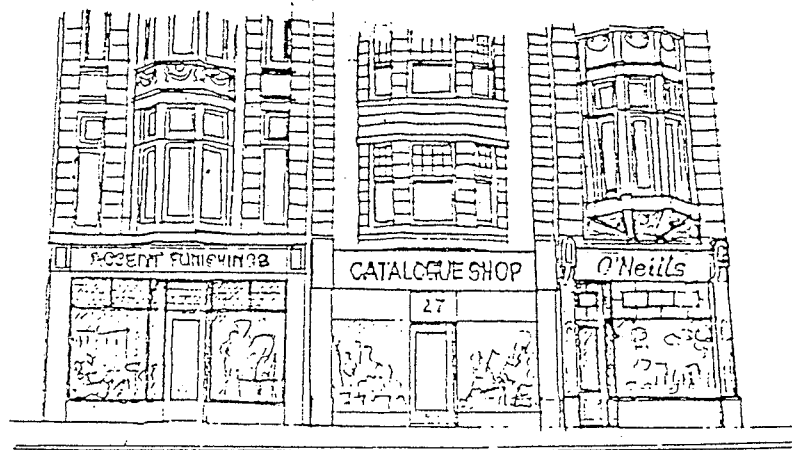
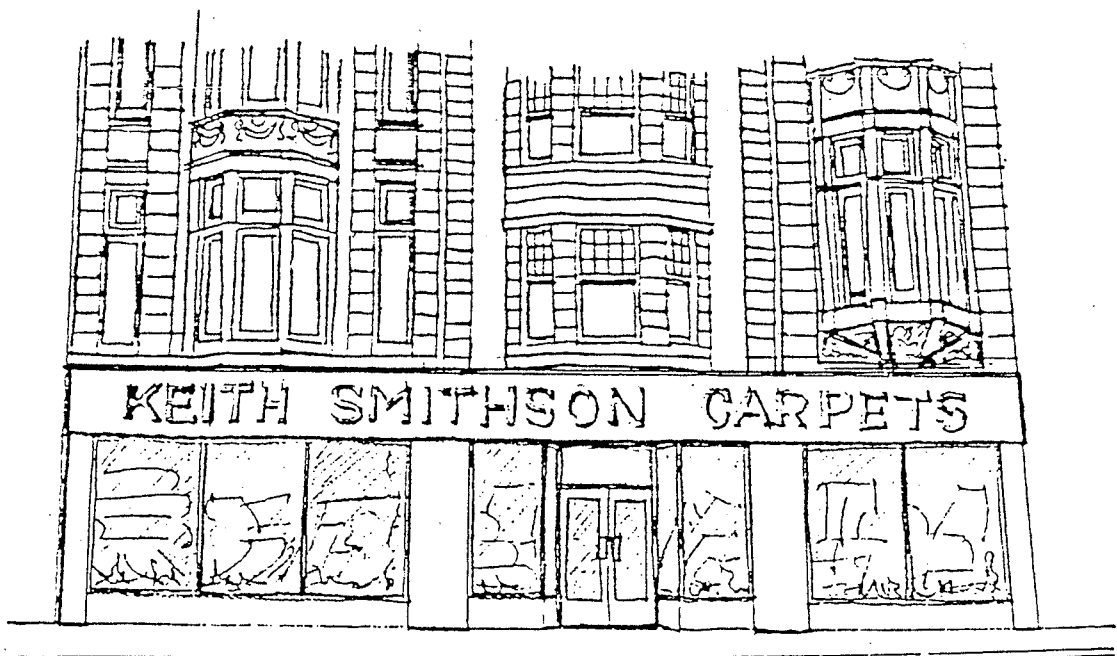


Fig.9 It is inappropriate to apply a single shop front to separate buildings even when in one ownership. Keep the form of the individual shop fronts with separate signs.



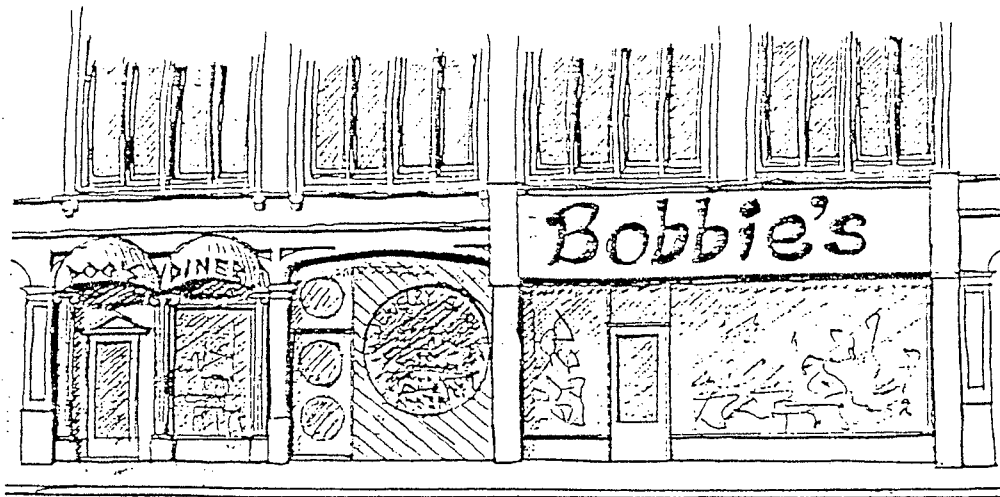
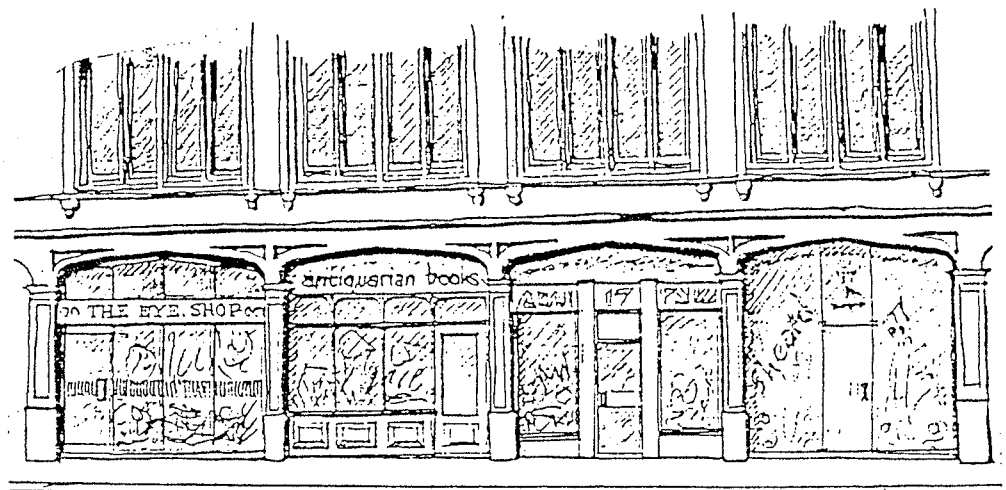


Fig.10 New shop fronts on older buildings should be kept in sympathy with the rest of the elevation as shown in the lower illustration.



- 3.3 **OLDER BUILDINGS.** As a general guide new shop fronts on older buildings should be kept in sympathy with the rest of the elevation and incorporate, where possible, any ground storey details of interest, including keeping the brickwork alongside the main shop windows and retaining any stall riser. Large modern plate-glass shop fronts without any visual support for the upper part of the premises can be structurally deceiving and so visually upsetting. For old buildings, highly glazed tiles and garish modern materials should normally be avoided. This does not preclude a modern interpretation of the traditional shop front provided it picks up the salient features appropriate to the building and the area. If using aluminium to do this it should invariably be coloured rather than left natural.
- 3.4 **MALLS AND ARCADES.** Many of the arcades within the City Centre are listed and make a significant contribution to the historic fabric of Leeds. Recent moves to restore such areas are to be encouraged. In general terms the same approach should be taken as elsewhere but particular attention should be paid to the specific character of the arcade or mall to maintain its overall cohesiveness.

Because vehicular access is not normally required it will usually be possible to prevent vehicular access altogether by the use of bollards at the entrances. The design of these bollards should be appropriate to the arcade or mall they protect. Concrete bollards would NOT be appropriate for the traditional Leeds arcades.

#### 4. SIGNS

The design and location of signs and advertisements can greatly affect the appearance of a shop and the character of a building. If not given careful thought, signs and advertisements can create a great deal of visual mess. Cluttered, unrelated, oversize or brightly lit signs detract from the shop front, building and street. Well designed and suitably located signs can be very attractive and add to the liveliness and interest of the street. One sign - with a clearly stated message - is more effective than a number of different and conflicting signs.

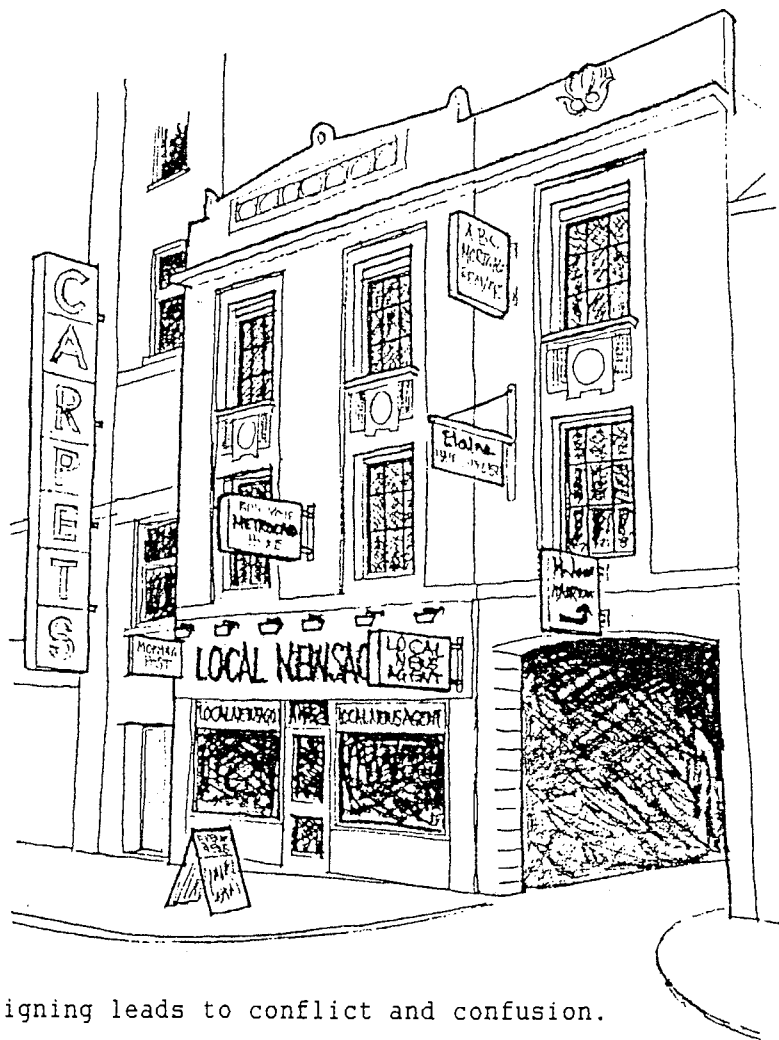


Fig.11 Uncontrolled signing leads to conflict and confusion.

Whilst it is understandable that retailers should wish their premises to be clearly identifiable, one of the most destructive influences on shop front design is the widespread commercial practice of adopting a "corporate image".

Standardised store lettering and logos in set sizes may not always be appropriate as corporate styles may clash with the architecture of a particular building or the character of the area. National and regional companies should therefore be prepared to adapt their corporate "house style" and colours if these are inappropriate to a particular building or area.

- 4.1 FASCIA SIGNS. It is all too common, especially on older buildings, for signs to be installed on deep fascias with garish, large unsympathetic lettering, having a strong horizontal emphasis out of keeping with the traditional verticality of old buildings - this is not acceptable. The signs should be part of the architectural detail of the building and should be harmoniously related to its character, and also to that of the street as a whole. The lettering should be in proportion to the scale of the fascia board and traditionally would have been painted directly on it.



Fig.12 Signs need to be in scale with the building and shop front to which they are attached.

Signs should be kept simple, in proportion to the building, and avoid excessive advertising. The three-dimensional effect of any sign needs considering - the face of the sign should coincide with that of the fascia panel itself, ie, a box sign should not be stuck on to the front of the panel but be set back.

Whilst it is possible to use new materials, as well as the more traditional ones, with success in Conservation Areas, fascia boards should avoid the use of garish or reflective materials and lurid colours or lettering. Consequently, the use of perspex and other forms of acrylic sheet will be discouraged on traditional buildings.

Letters in bronze, brass or wood applied directly to the wall, can add dignity and may be more appropriate for more prestigious buildings.



Fig.13 Individually mounted letters are often best for the more prestigious buildings.

- 4.2 **PROJECTING SIGNS.** Projecting signs are often most successful when arranged as painted hanging signs or designs, provided that they are limited in number (normally one per shop) so that they do not visually conflict with each other. Again, these signs need careful consideration of both their design, size and location so that they relate properly to the building's facade and the adjoining frontages. Whilst as a general guide they should relate to the doorway and be within the shop front fascia area, NOT at first floor level or above, EACH CASE WILL BE CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS.

Internally illuminated projecting box signs will not normally be permitted on Listed Buildings, in Conservation Areas or with traditional shop fronts. Instead of the ubiquitous box sign, carefully designed hanging or projecting signs of painted wood or ironwork will be encouraged in order to add originality and interest to the shop front and the street.

- 4.3 **ILLUMINATION OF SIGNS.** Apart from limited illumination of lettering most signs if illuminated will require the consent of the Planning Authority. Whilst normally some illumination is permissible, the extent and method that can be used will depend upon the location (and whether it is in a Conservation Area), and the design of the building and shop front (and whether it is a Listed Building).

Whilst generally there will be no problem for individual letters and logos to be internally illuminated or have halo background lighting, the background to the sign should not be internally illuminated. In Conservation Areas and with Listed Buildings each case will be treated on its individual merits.

If illuminated externally, care must be taken to ensure that the lights will not become a safety hazard by blinding road users, nor should there be a plethora of brackets supporting projecting lamps. A fluorescent tube fixed along the top of the sign, suitably masked, can often provide a simple, satisfactory solution.

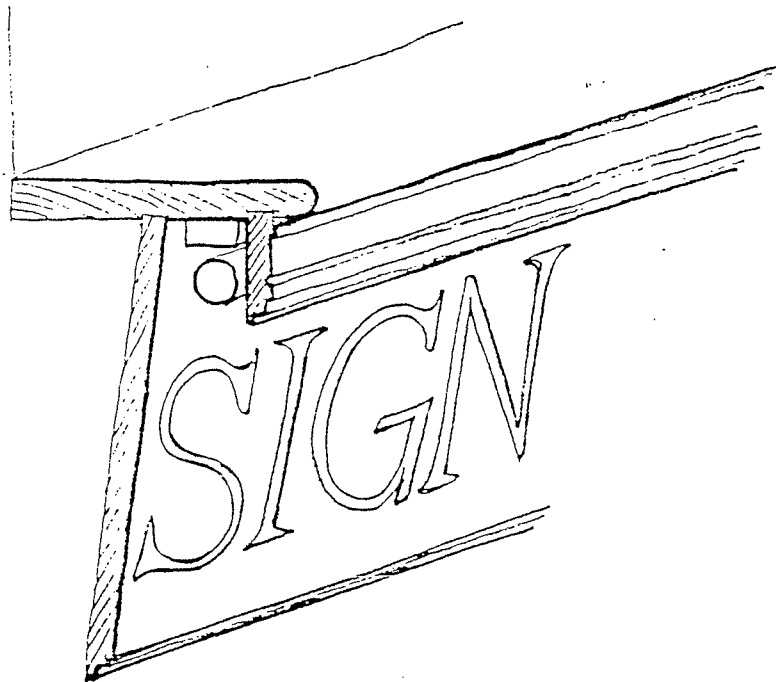


Fig.14 Fluorescent tubes can be fixed above a fascia sign by being incorporated into the capping.

- 4.4 **ADVERTISING UPPER FLOOR PREMISES.** The use of upper floors for business purposes can result in an over-abundance and clutter of signs on building facades to the detriment of their character. To avoid undue clutter, consideration should be given to advertising first floor premises by using glass writing, such as the individual lettering applied directly to the window panes or etched glass.
- 4.5 **HOARDINGS.** Excepting limited advertising on forecourts and temporary advertising on screening around construction works, advertising hoardings require the consent of the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority will be looking for some positive benefit from the proposals if consent is to be given.

## 5.0 SECURITY

- 5.1 **SECURITY GLASS.** Laminated glass has a plastic layer incorporated into its construction and has the capacity to remain intact even when broken. The use of this material will always be acceptable in unlisted buildings and will not need Planning Permission. However, if the building is listed, check with the Planning Department to see if Listed Building Consent is required.



Fig.15 Laminated glass is not normally noticeable.

- 5.2 **INTERNAL GRILLE.** Open mesh roller grilles can be fitted unobtrusively behind the glass shop front with all the housings set into the fabric of the building. They will always be acceptable in unlisted buildings and will not need Planning Permission. However, if the building is listed, Listed Building Consent may be required, check with Planning Department.



Fig.16 Internal open mesh roller grilles can be fitted discreetly behind windows.

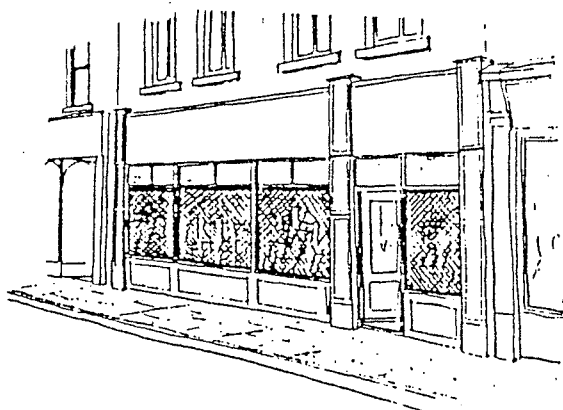


Fig.17 Both rigid demountable mesh panels and external mesh roller grilles are more obtrusive than internal grilles and so are less suited to sensitive locations such as Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings.



- 5.3 **EXTERNAL GRILLE.** External mesh roller grilles and rigid demountable mesh panels are much more obtrusive than internal grilles and are therefore less likely to be acceptable. In conservation areas, prime shopping areas and in cases of listed buildings this type will generally not be acceptable across the entire shop front, although an exception may be made for doorways which are the most vulnerable area. Outside the above areas external mesh roller grilles will be considered. Shutter box housings should always be incorporated into the shop front, usually behind the fascia. All external grilles will require Planning Permission.

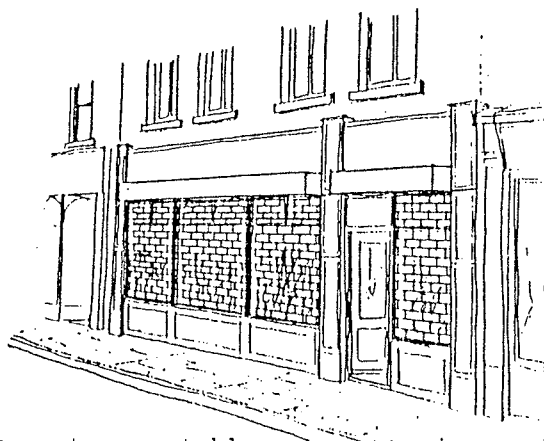


Fig.18 External shutter boxes are not acceptable.

- 5.4 **EXTERNAL ROLLER SHUTTER.** These are usually solid or slightly perforated. They present a blank frontage with minimal visual interest that detract from the general quality of the shopping street. For this reason they will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances eg. for a shop that is an exceptionally high risk and is located on a non sensitive area. They will always require Planning Permission and where this is granted it is likely to be conditional upon details such as suitable colour. External roller shutters will never be acceptable on listed buildings.

- 5.5 **EXTERNAL SOLID DEMOUNTABLE PANELS.** Same comments as for 5.4 above.

Fig.19 External roller shutters, even with vision holes/slots are not acceptable except in exceptional circumstances in non-sensitive locations where shutter boxes must be internal.

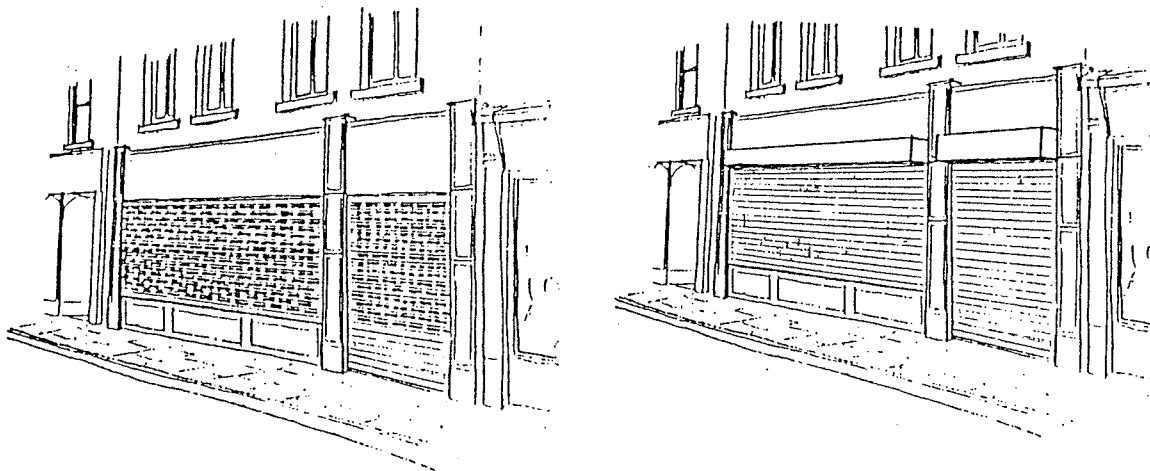




Fig.20 Fully glazed shop fronts can be vulnerable to ram raiding.

- 5.6 **INTRODUCTION OF A STALLRISER.** A stallriser is the solid panel below the shop window that was usual on traditional shop fronts. The modern version could be heavily reinforced behind a decorative panel to resist a ram raid type attack. They will almost always be acceptable but will require Planning Permission and also Listed Building Consent if the building is listed.

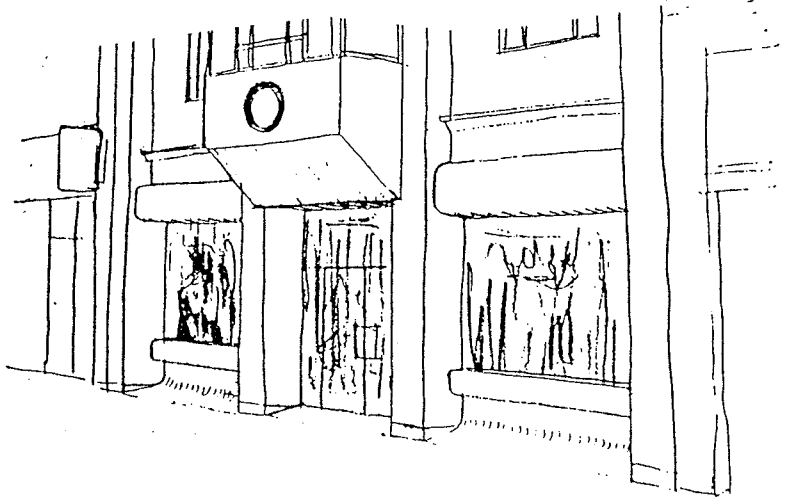


Fig.21 Introducing stallrisers which can be reinforced makes shop fronts less attractive to ram raiders.

- 5.7 **INTRODUCTION OF MULLIONS WITHIN A SHOP FRONT.** Mullions are vertical framing members that sub-divide a shop front. They have the benefit of strengthening the glass by providing additional support and reducing the cost of replacing broken glass by reducing its size. They will almost always be acceptable in unlisted buildings but will require Planning Permission and also Listed Building Consent if the building is listed.

Fig.22 Mullions can be used to reinforce shop fronts.



## 6. CANOPIES

Canopies require planning permission, unless they constitute an advertisement in which case they are treated as fascia signs controlled under the Advertisement Regulations.

Canopies should be in keeping with, and appear as part of the design of the building to which they are attached. They should not obscure the shop front or architectural detail, nor should they be too obtrusive and over-dominant in the street scene. Consequently, the canopy should be located below the fascia and avoid garish colours.

In general, the traditional straight sloping blind which can be retracted into a blind box will meet the above criteria, whilst the plastic quarter sphere or cylinder will not.

The use of retractable straight sloping sun blinds has long been an important feature of some traditional shop fronts and so where they survive they should be retained.

Obviously any canopy needs to meet safety requirements with adequate headroom (2.3 m) and distance (1 m) from the carriageway or other vehicular areas.

It will usually be possible to have some signing on the canopy provided it is not done in too garish a manner.

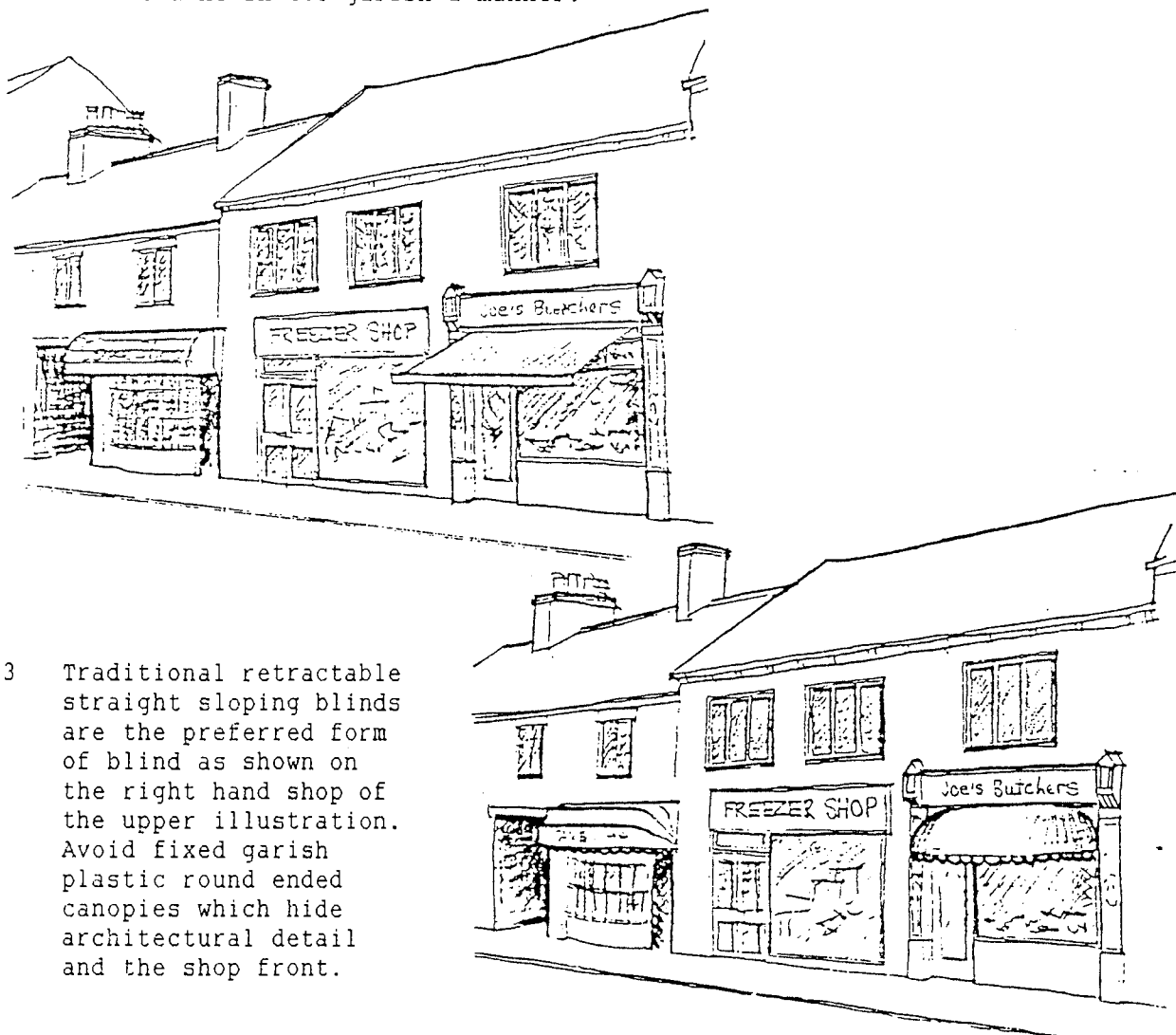


Fig.23 Traditional retractable straight sloping blinds are the preferred form of blind as shown on the right hand shop of the upper illustration. Avoid fixed garish plastic round ended canopies which hide architectural detail and the shop front.

## 7. FORECOURTS

Many premises have extensive forecourts, the appearance of which can have a major effect on the overall street scene, and therefore they should not be forgotten in any improvement proposals. Attractively laid out forecourts will make a positive contribution to the property.

Where shops have a forecourt, this should be well maintained and ideally should be paved in materials that complement the paving materials in the adjacent pavement. Large areas may need visually sub-dividing and delineating by the use of contrasting materials such as brick paviors.

The use of forecourts, particularly with an attractive display, can add significantly to the appearance of the shop front and the visual interest and vitality of the street. Care should be taken to ensure that the public footpath is not obstructed or encroached upon and that there is easy access to the shop.

It is permissible for shopkeepers to display notices, signs or advertisements which conform to certain criteria specified in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations on their forecourts. It is not, however, permissible to display notices, signs or advertisements on footpaths, pavements or pedestrian areas which are part of the public highway. Not only can such signs create visual clutter, but also represent a serious hazard to the physically and visually handicapped.

Shops and business premises, like dwellings, generate rubbish which should be kept at the rear. Unfortunately in some cases there is no rear area where this can be kept out of sight. In such instances it will be necessary to provide an area screened from general view, possibly on the forecourt, within which any unsightly mess can be contained. This might be incorporated into a raised planter.

- 7.1 VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CONTROL. Parking is often a problem on forecourts if left uncontrolled so that it is usually better for it to be at the rear. However, where it can only be at the front it needs to be clearly defined with paving and bollards, and be strongly enough constructed so that it can support the vehicles that will use it without being damaged.

Substantial pieces of street furniture such as planters and bollards also act as a deterrent to would be ram raiders. Their acceptability will depend upon the visual quality of the furniture proposed and how it would relate to its surroundings.

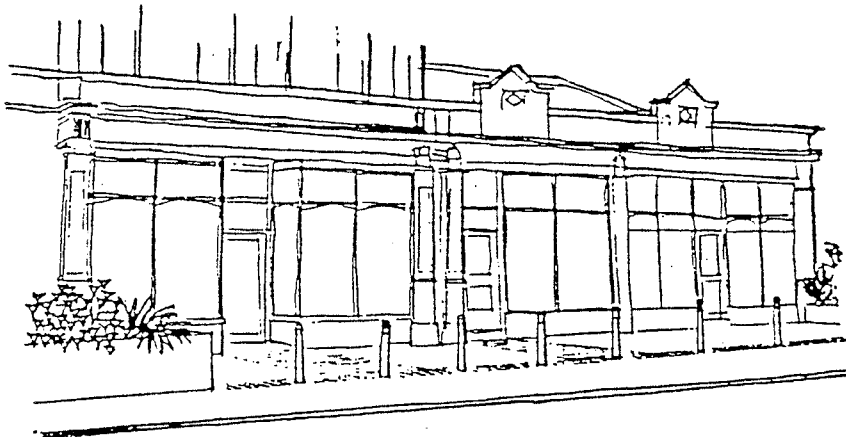


Fig.24  
Bollards and  
planters should be  
co-ordinated between  
adjoining forecourt owners.

A co-ordinated approach to a parade of shops is particularly important. Planning Permission may be required; check with the Planning Department whether your specific proposals will need consent.

- 7.2 BOLLARDS IN THE PUBLIC FOOTPATH. In the absence of a private forecourt, some shopkeepers have sought to have bollards erected in the public footpath immediately in front of their shop window to protect them from ram raiders. This solution, however, can reduce the effective width of the footpath, is another obstacle for the blind and partially sighted and is usually visual clutter. Such proposals require the consent of the City Engineer but will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. It would normally be necessary to demonstrate that the shopkeeper cannot adopt any of the other measures above to solve the problem himself/herself.

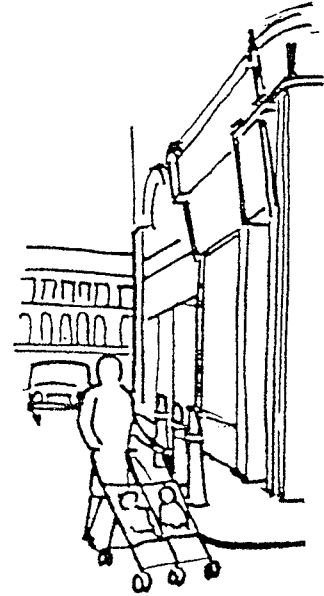


Fig.25 Bollards can cause obstruction to the footway especially if it is narrow.

## 8. ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

When carrying out alterations or constructing new shop fronts it is important that satisfactory access is provided for disabled people.

Steps should be avoided where possible. A level entrance into the shop is preferred and should be taken into account when sighting the door. If steps are unavoidable due to, for example the restricted size of the premises, then these should be provided with a suitable handrail as specified in part M Building Regulations. Where steps are included then step edges should be defined by a contrasting coloured strip.

Ramps are better than steps where differences in levels are unavoidable and should normally be constructed to a gradient of 1 in 12. However a reduction in this gradient down to about 1 in 8 may be acceptable depending on circumstances. The surface of the ramp should be non-slip.

Door openings should provide a clear opening width of 0.8m. Automatic doors are obviously most suitable for those with mobility problems, however this is not always economically viable. Doors should be light weight and self closers should be adjusted so as they are easy to open as well as providing draft exclusion. Where a door is fully glazed then it should be defined by a motif or other visible indicator.

All door furniture such as, bell pushes handles and letter boxes should be no higher than one meter above floor level. Lever door handles are preferred to knob handles. Where possible they should be in a contrasting colour to the door. Kick plates provide protection for the door.

Surfaces should be smooth and non-slip. Mat wells should provide a surface which is flush and non-trip. Thresholds should be level where ever possible. Other types of weather protection such as weather bars should be used.

