

A Guide for the Design of Householder Developments



**North Warwickshire
Borough Council**

September 2003

About this Guide

North Warwickshire is a rural area with distinctive villages, and small towns. There is also a variety of different housing types, ranging from terraced streets, to inter-war estates and more modern higher density residential areas. Each planning application that is submitted for a householder development will have an impact. This will be on the property itself, its neighbours and finally on the overall appearance of the area.

The purpose of this Guide is to show how these impacts can be lessened through good design, so that new development will make a positive contribution to the environment, rather than detracting from its surroundings. In this way the local character and distinctiveness of our communities can be enhanced through good quality development.

It will show:-

- how new household developments can be better integrated into their surrounding area;
- how a good standard of amenity can be achieved;
- how to protect the amenity of existing and neighbouring properties;
- how to encourage good design, and where appropriate
- how particular detailing can respect and reinforce local character.

This Guide is intended for practical use. It offers guidance and advice, by outlining some main principles. The guidance and advice will be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. There may well be circumstances when the advice and guidance here cannot, or should not be followed. In these cases clear reasons will have to be given to justify that particular stance.

Whilst the advice and illustrations in the Guide have been adopted by the Council in September 2003, it has also been endorsed by other groups. Consultations have taken place with all of the Parish and Town Councils in North Warwickshire, as well as the three Civic Societies and a selection of agents and architects that regularly use the service and submit applications to us on behalf of local residents. Alterations to the Guidance have been made as a consequence of representations received.

The planning control service will improve the quality of the built development in North Warwickshire as a consequence of this Guide. Its use on a day to day basis in amending and altering initial proposals will be seen as a measure of the service in adding quality to the built environment.

This Guide will be regularly reviewed.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 When you decide to do some work to your property, then the two most important things that you want from the Council are:
- sound advice as to what is likely to get a planning approval, and
 - a quick decision, so that you can get on with the work.
- 1.2 What your proposals look like and what impact they may have on your neighbourhood will be dealt with by the planning application. It is almost certain too, that you will require a Building Regulation approval for your proposals. The Building Regulations deal with the construction of your works. It makes a lot of sense if they can be dealt with together and the two applications submitted at the same time. It can save time and money to do so.
- 1.3 This Guide will concentrate on the majority of planning applications that are received by the Council. These are for improvements, extensions and alterations to private houses. We call these householder applications. Even though they are often quite small developments, they can affect the appearance of the local area, and they often will have an impact on adjoining property.
- 1.4 We think that this Guide will help improve the overall quality of these developments because we can:
- use it before you submit an application. Often, you will have some idea of what you want to do, which you probably will have discussed with a builder or architect. Ideally, now is the time to talk to us too. Early discussions, before an application is sent in, can iron out many matters or likely problems. The application therefore, when it is submitted should stand a better chance of approval, and be dealt with more quickly.
 - involve our colleagues from the Building Control section. It is a waste of resources if you design a house extension that cannot be constructed safely. Remember too that site drainage conditions and the proximity of trees for example can limit the nature of your proposals. These potential problems can be identified at an early stage if we involve the Building Control officers now.
 - identify particular concerns and potential problems at this early stage. Your neighbours and the Parish or Town Council are automatically notified of your planning application. From experience we can advise as to the likely concerns that might arise. We can perhaps alleviate them before an application comes in.
 - provide different ideas and thoughts as to how a proposal can be put together so that it can be more distinctive. In particular we can address matters of detail that can add to the overall scheme, and thus reflect local characteristics.
 - give you the wider picture so that proposals are more likely to “fit-in” with the local area. Very often, applicants are just concerned with their own proposals and do not see them in relation to their neighbour's viewpoint. We can provide that wider perspective.
 - let you know if particular attention is needed because your premises are a Listed Building, or in a Conservation Area. Proposals in these instances do require particularly detailed attention. Early contact with the Planning Division can explain these matters and assist you.

1.5 This Guide is a starting point, and it should enable us to help you achieve your proposals more quickly, and to provide a quality development when it is finished that is in keeping with the area.

1.6 Please remember:-

- Discuss your proposals with us before you submit your application;
- Always try and use a qualified architect or technician to draw up your plans for you;
- Check with us to ensure that you actually need to submit a planning application in the first place, and to see what other permissions you may need – particularly under the Building Regulations.
- Submit Planning Applications and Building Regulation Applications together.

2 House Extensions

a) Introduction

2.1 When considering planning applications for extensions, the Council will look at three main issues:-

- The design in relation to your existing house,
- The effect on the character or appearance of the area, and
- The impact on the amenities of your neighbours.

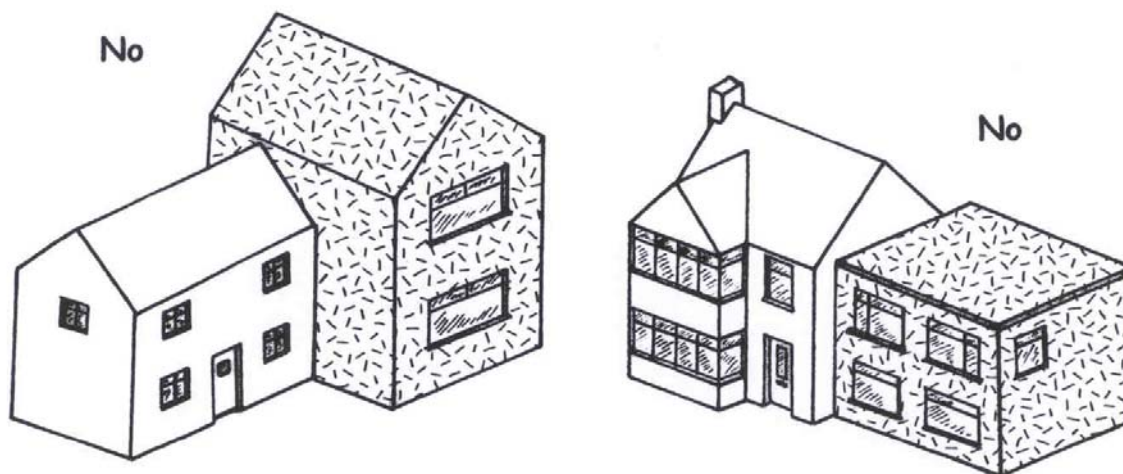
2.2 So, when you are drawing up proposals for your extension you should think about the following:-

- Look at the character of your existing house. Is it a Victorian terrace, an inter war semi, a cottage or a modern house? Whatever type it is, what materials have been used, what is the shape of the roof, its size, the proportion of windows and doors, and are there any particular design details such as decorative brickwork or use of different materials? All of this should be taken into account when you begin to think about how you are to design your extension.
- Look at the appearance of the area where you live. What is the setting? Is it a modern estate, or is there just a scatter of other cottages? Is there a lot of space between the houses? Are they the same type and of the same appearance, or very different? Try to imagine what your extension might look like from your back garden, from across the road, and approaching the house from along the access road. How will it fit into the surrounding environment? Corner properties in particular need careful consideration because of their prominence.
- Look at the position of your house in relation to your neighbours, and consider how an extension might affect their outlook and privacy. The position of windows, the size of the extension, and how far it extends from the house will be important. Are there differences in levels that might worsen problems of overlooking? Where are the windows and private areas on your neighbour's property? You should not forget houses that back onto you as well as your neighbour's.

2.3 It is always worthwhile asking yourself, whether you would be happy if your neighbour did what you are proposing to do to his property. Approach your neighbours too if appropriate, and talk to them.

b) The Scale of the Extension

- 2.4 Overlarge extensions can dominate a property, and can have a very harmful impact on the appearance of the original house, those next to it, and the character of the surrounding area. Extensions should be smaller and less apparent than the original building. This has the benefit of ensuring that the extension respects the original house, and does not appear as an unrelated addition. Here are two bad examples.



- 2.5 Much better development can be achieved by:-

- Keeping the height of the extension below that of the original ridgeline.
- Setting the extension back slightly from the main elevation.
- Wrapping extensions around an existing house rather than just extending in one direction.
- Not introducing different roof patterns or shapes on the extension.
- Not introducing completely different detailing on the extension.
- Flat roof extensions are generally unacceptable in all cases.

- 2.6 Extensions on corner plots can be particularly prominent. They should be designed to respect the character of the surrounding area and not become a dominant feature in the street.

2.7 In particular think about:-

- Wrapping the extension around the corner.
- Reducing the impact by looking at the roof design.
- Introducing features such as decorative brickwork onto a blank wall.
- Screening the extension with fences, walls or new hedgerows.

2.8 Large extensions, particularly at the rear of property, can have a noticeable impact on the amenities of neighbours. There can be an overbearing effect, or loss of privacy where main windows face onto extensions, particularly at first floor level, or where the extension itself contains many new openings.

2.9 In particular there is a need to think about:

- the proximity of windows and openings on neighbour's property.
- the aspect of the extension – is it north or south facing?
- the number of openings needed in the extension.

2.10 The smaller the property then the more difficult it becomes to produce an extension that provides the required additional accommodation but which meets the principles outlined here. This is particularly the case with terraces, small cottages and bungalows. It may not be appropriate to extend this type of property by any great degree.

2.11 For smaller properties therefore:

- only smaller extensions may be appropriate
- greater use could be made of the roof space
- internal alterations may result in more useable space.

2.12 Side extensions can be an effective way of providing garage space or more living accommodation. Being visible to the public though, they can have a noticeable effect on the character of a street. Care needs to be taken to ensure that they respect the appearance of the original house.

2.13 Additionally they can result in the loss of car parking or garaging space. This can lead to on-street parking which could cause a danger. Surfacing of the front garden to provide additional or replacement space can spoil the appearance of an area, but may be an inevitable consequence. Space should always be left in front of garages to enable a car to park clear of the highway and pavement.

2.14 Two storey side extensions can greatly change the character of a street by linking together semi-detached or detached houses to create a terracing effect.

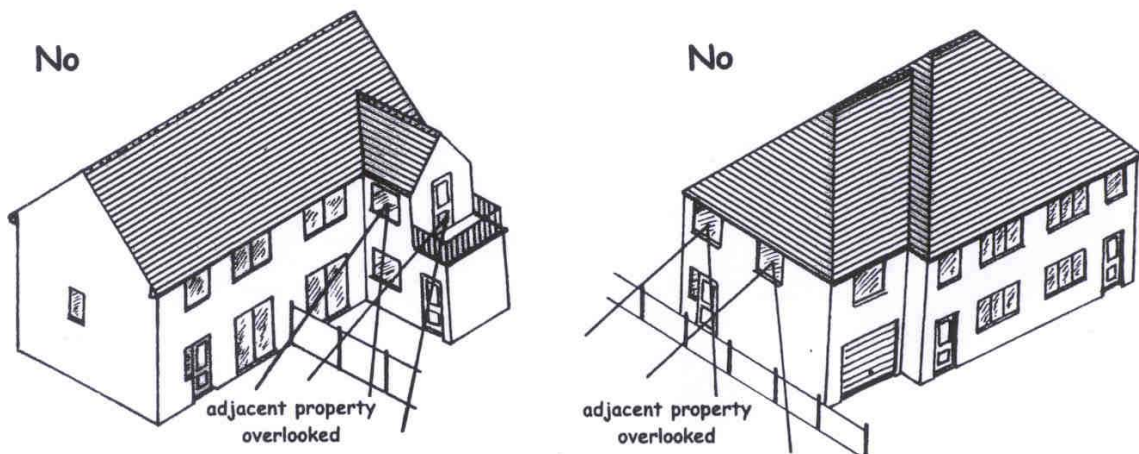
2.15 Particular attention therefore needs to be given to:-

- Side extensions should incorporate pitched roofs to complement the original house. Hipped roofs may be less intrusive in terms of scale.
- They should not result in additional on street parking where that would be a danger.
- As a general guide a maximum of 5.5 metres length of parking space should be provided between any garage and the highway.
- Hardstandings may be needed for additional or replacement car parking to reduce the incidence of on-street parking.
- Two storey extensions, which if repeated on neighbouring houses would create a terracing effect should ideally be sited so as to have a gap between the side boundary with the neighbouring house, should be designed so as to be set back from the main elevation, or so as to have a lower ridgeline.

c) Overlooking and Privacy

2.16 Neighbouring occupiers are entitled to a reasonable level of privacy. House extensions can have the effect of reducing privacy. Special care should be taken with the position of windows, particularly those that face sideways, and those to upper floors. Conservatories close to boundaries can result in poor levels of privacy for both parties. Balconies too can cause severe problems of overlooking especially where they are close to other houses and garden areas.

2.17 Some bad examples are illustrated below:



2.18 Particular attention needs to be given to:-

- Windows to habitable rooms should preferably not allow unrestricted views into a neighbour's property or another house. Alternative locations should be looked at.
- Conservatories sited adjacent to a boundary with a neighbour should have a solid side, or be obscure glazed, or be screened by a wall or fence.
- Balconies should only be included where there is no loss of privacy to neighbours.

d) Daylight and Sunlight

2.19 All house extensions will cast a shadow. The greater the size of the extension and the nearer it is to its neighbour, then the greater that shadowing effect will be. Reduced levels of daylight and sunlight within rooms, gardens, and the associated loss of outlook or overbearing effect, can create a poorer living environment for neighbours. Extensions should be kept to a size which do not cause unacceptable overshadowing of neighbouring property.

2.20 Some form of single storey rear extension will nearly always be acceptable. The length of the extension will however, be limited to the proximity to windows in habitable rooms in a neighbour's house. Basically the shorter the extension, the less the impact on your neighbour's outlook.

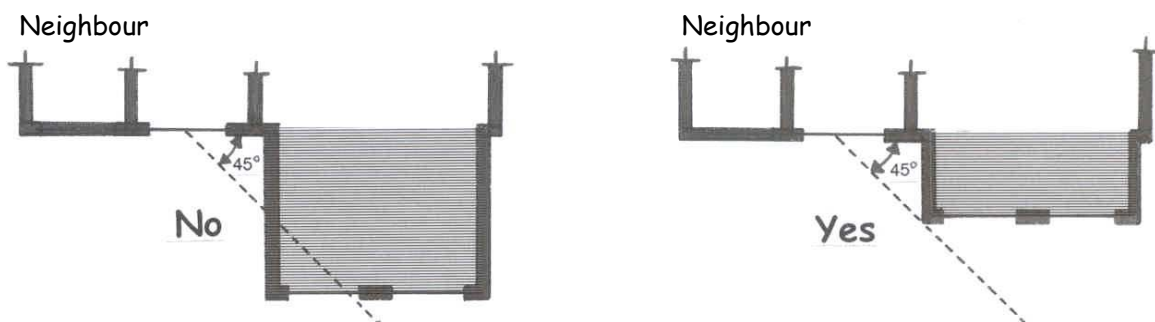
2.21 Two storey rear extensions are more problematic as they are larger, and are more likely to have an overbearing impact. They will be more acceptable if they are set away from the common boundary, or where there are gaps between houses. In addition, the same principle applies as in paragraph 5.20; the shorter the extension the less the impact is likely to be.

2.22 The following guidance should be followed:

- rear extensions, whether single or two storey, should not project beyond a line drawn at 45° from the middle of any ground or first floor rear facing window to a habitable room in the neighbouring house. A habitable room is any room except for toilets/bathrooms, en suites, landings, hallways, stair wells and storerooms.

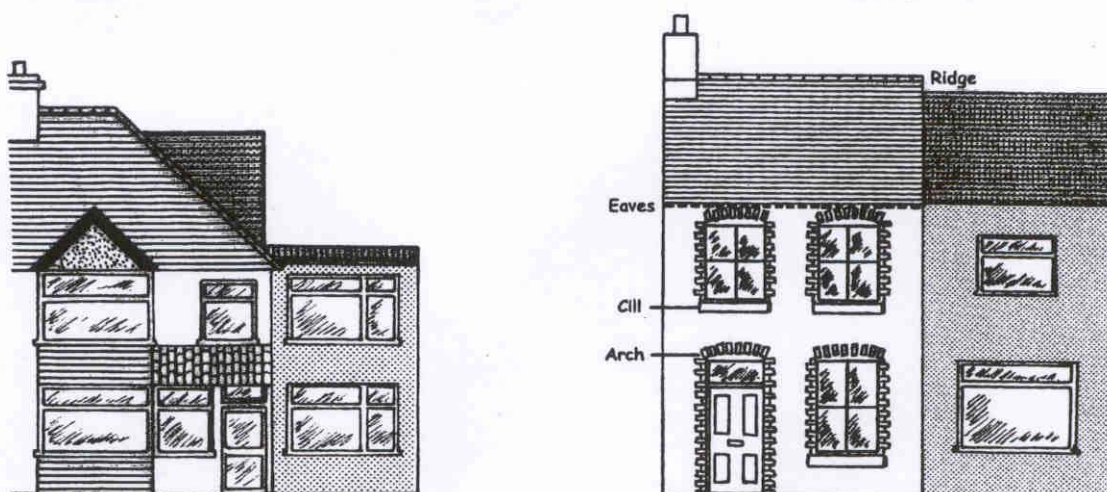
2.23 This guidance is perhaps better illustrated than described in writing.

For rear extensions:



d) Design Features

2.24 Poorly designed extensions will always look out of place with the original house, and spoil the appearance of the surrounding area. Extensions that are well designed will respect the main design features of the house – its overall shape, its elevational detail, and the materials used. If the main design features are reflected in the extension then it will be in keeping. In some cases that might only be to match materials or window design. In others it will be to include decorative brickwork or the use of different bricks and the use of eaves detailing. In some cases it may not be possible to obtain matching materials. To avoid an unattractive “join” then the extension should be set back from the main walls of the house so that it does not detract from the overall appearance. Two bad examples are illustrated below.



2.25 Having arrived at a sympathetic form for the extension, it is important that the details of doors, windows and other features blend in with the original house. The level of detail can be very important in providing a quality development, and also in reflecting the local characteristics of the area.

2.26 Attention should be paid to the following where appropriate:-

- The proportion and design of the windows.
- The scale of the glazing bars and the materials used.
- The incorporation of sills and lintels.
- Decorative brick details, ridge tiles on patterned roof tiles.
- Eaves details.
- Chimney and chimney pots.
- Door openings and their design.
- Recessed openings.
- The materials used.

2.27 As indicated earlier in this Guide, North Warwickshire has a variety of different settlement types and housing designs. It is thus important that the distinctive character and appearance of this variety is reflected in all new developments. The attention to the kind of detail mentioned above is well worth that extra effort to produce a quality design that truly reflects the character and setting of the existing house. In some settlements this character will be formally recognised in a Village Design Statement. These can help to give you a clear idea of good quality design.

e) Extensions to Residential Property in Rural Areas

2.28 Not all of North Warwickshire's housing is in recognised settlements, whether towns or villages. There are many isolated and dispersed houses and small hamlets. Special care needs to be taken to protect open countryside, and the rural character and appearance of much of the Borough. Over-large and poorly designed extensions and outbuildings can diminish the openness and attractiveness of the countryside. They can also stand out far more if the house is isolated. Hence particular care and attention needs to be paid to houses outside of recognised settlements. Many of these properties are appropriately sited within a local setting, and may too display individual or traditional detailing which needs to be recognised in any extension proposals. In many cases they need to be treated individually. Too often, small cottages are "improved" or "modernised" such that there is very little left of the original, or its traditional design.

2.29 Large tracts of the Borough are also designated as being within a Special Landscape Area. Here all new development should enhance the quality and character of the landscape. Also almost half of the Borough has Green Belt status. Both of these designations mean that extra care has to be paid to all proposals for extensions to houses in the countryside. The general principles outlined earlier will need particular attention.

2.30 There is a general assumption too that because house densities are lower in rural areas, then overlooking and the loss of privacy is less of an issue. This is not the case. All property should respect its neighbours and all residents should expect to enjoy reasonable standards of privacy. The existing character of these areas is of lower density and there is generally more open space around houses. Hence even a small or minor extension may change that character or existing amenity even if the extension might meet all of the guidance and advice advocated in the Guide. All extensions need to respect the setting of neighbouring property.

2.31 The Government has published strong guidelines on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate development in the Green Belt. This advice also refers to extensions to houses. This states that where extensions to houses within the Green Belt are "disproportionate" over and above the original house, then they will be deemed to be inappropriate development, with the presumption that planning permission will be refused.

2.32 This is a very useful principle and it will be applied to all planning applications for householder extensions in areas outside of settlement boundaries throughout North Warwickshire.

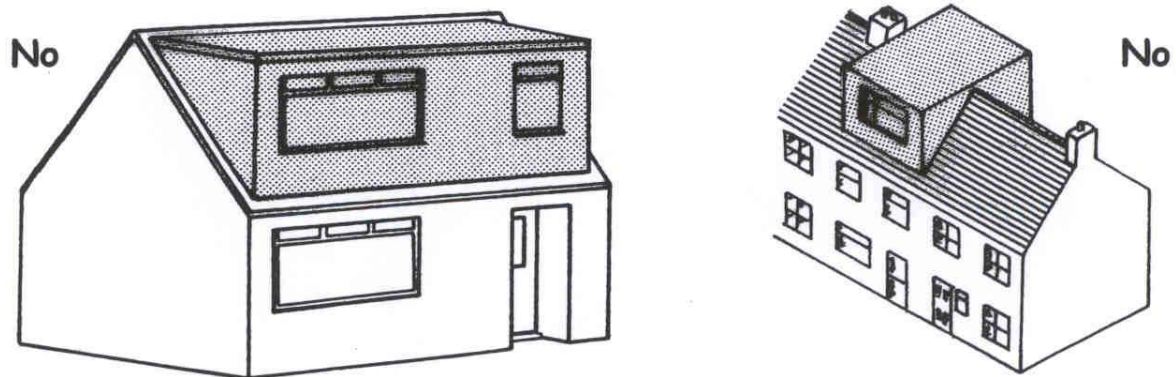
2.33 It is important to determine what may or may not be disproportionate.

2.34 The following will be taken into account:

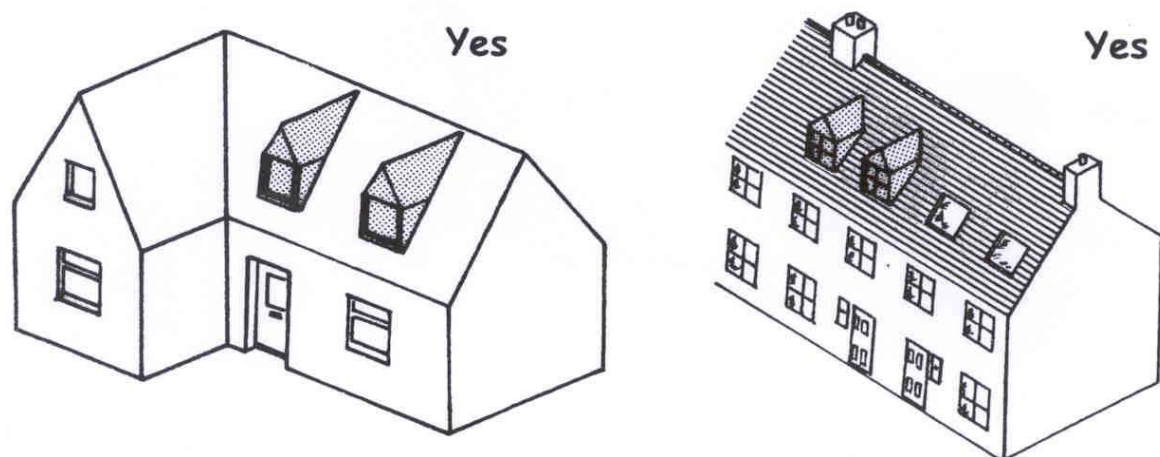
- The size of the original house, not what is there now. The original house in planning terms is that which existed on 1 July 1948, or if more recent, as originally built under a planning permission. It does not include any detached garages or outbuildings and no subsequent extensions.
- As a general rule, the volume of the extension, together with all existing extensions should not exceed 30% of the volume of the original house.
- All extensions should be subordinate to the original house. Extensions therefore should be of a design that wholly reflects that of the existing, without introducing elements that make it appear as a new dwelling.
- The Setting. If a residential property is sited within a group of other houses or buildings, then a larger extension may be permitted if the openness of the area is not adversely affected.

3. Dormers and Roof Alterations

3.1 Dormer windows and roof extensions have a noticeable impact on the appearance of a house and on the street scene because of their prominent position. They are clearly needed in order to provide light and ventilation to roof space so that extra accommodation can be provided. This alternative way of adding accommodation may preclude the need for ground floor extensions. They are particularly popular in terraced areas and for bungalows. However, they do have a problem in that they can make a house look “top-heavy” and completely spoil the scale of the property. It will not normally be acceptable for dormers or roof extensions to exceed the height of the ridge as they will then dominate or overpower the property. Some bad examples are illustrated here.



3.2 Dormers should be designed so as to be subordinate to the original roof of the house, retaining a significant proportion of the original roof intact around it. Ideally they should be located on the rear roof slope where they will be less readily visible to the public at large. However, care should then be taken with potential overlooking. Some front dormers would be appropriate where they are suited to a house type or where they are similar features in the local area. Some good examples are illustrated below.



3.3 In particular therefore:

- Dormers and roof extensions should be subordinate to the existing roof.
- They should not exceed the ridgeline, and
- They should retain a significant proportion of the original roof intact.
- They should preferably be on a rear roof slope.
- They should have roof pitches to match those that are on the existing roof.
- Their sides should be constructed in matching materials.
- Their appearance should reflect the character of the surrounding area, or any particular individual characteristics on existing dormer windows.
- Roof lights should generally be fitted so that they are “flush” with the plane of the roof and do not protrude above that plane.

4 Outbuildings

4.1 Garages, sheds, and other outbuildings can have a similar impact on the amenities of neighbours as other extensions, and thus they need to be treated with care as all other residential works. They are no less important. If they are to be attached to the house then the principles outlined in the extensions section will be appropriate. If not, then they are best sited as inconspicuously as possible, and so as not to have a harmful effect on neighbours. They should not form an over-dominant feature from neighbouring houses or garden areas.

4.2 Particular areas of concern, and pointers for good design would include:-

- When a garage is prominent, think about dividing up a large double frontage with two vertical doors, or place a pillar between two doors.
- Summer houses, garden sheds, gazebos and patios and barbecue areas can be heavily used at times. They can cause disturbance and loss of amenity and privacy. Their location is important and particularly their orientation.
- Hard surfacing such as wooden decking and gravel areas can be noisy if used heavily. Think about their location and proximity to the more private areas of adjacent property.

4.3 In all rural areas, new outbuildings need careful consideration. They can be far more prominent, and taken together they can alter the appearance and setting of a particular location gaining it far more of an urban character. If this happens, then planning permission may not be forthcoming.

5. Boundary Treatments

- 5.1 Most walls and fences at the rear of residential property will not require the submission of a planning application. However, they can have an overshadowing impact over a considerable area of the neighbour's garden. They can also look very intrusive. Consideration should be given to breaking up a long length of a boundary with different materials, different heights, the tallest being where most privacy is needed, or with a combination of lower walls and taller planting.
- 5.2 Care needs to be taken with the setting. In rural areas then wooden fences and planting are more appropriate than the more solid brick walls usually associated with towns. Even in towns and villages, combinations of walls, with different heights, interspersed with railings and fences, together with good shrub planting can have a far more pleasing impact.
- 5.3 Frontage boundary treatments can lead to difficulties. Where a residential area essentially has open front gardens, then it is unlikely that new walls and fences would be permitted in order to retain that character. Walls and fences can reduce visibility for drivers too, so alternatives need to be considered. Good planting schemes can look better and enhance the property as a whole.
- 5.4 When frontage treatments are appropriate then often a cue can be taken from local characteristics or designs already in existence – eg low brick walls; combinations of walls, railings and planting, or wooden treatments such as paling fences and ranch type fences. If replacements are being considered, the impact on the appearance of the area is a factor that needs to be balanced against any increased security that might be obtained. Design and appearance should be given more weight in particular areas where they dominate the character of that area.
- 5.6 Particular problems can arise on more modern estates where the original development allowed for open frontages. As part of the overall layout, often fences were constructed behind frontage amenity planted areas in order to retain a sense of openness. This is particularly common on corner properties. Although the amenity land is in the private ownership of the householder, it is outside of their garden which is usually marked by the fence. In general, it is unlikely that permission will be granted in order to move these fences or walls forward so as to incorporate this land within the garden. This reduces the overall openness of the estates and lessens the amount of green and planted space that is publicly visible as the amenity of that estate.

6. Minor Works

- 6.1 Quite a lot of development can be undertaken to your property without the need to submit a planning application. Some of the more common developments would include security lighting, some garden works, new pergolas and installing double-glazing. However, do not forget that the Building Regulations may still apply. It is always advisable to seek guidance before undertaking such works if you have any doubts, and perhaps too, letting your neighbours know of your proposals.
- 6.2 The most common developments which do require planning applications, but which may be considered to be minor works in comparison to new extensions, are new accesses as onto classified roads, and the installation of satellite dishes.
- 6.3 There are permitted development rights associated with the construction of a new access. This is taken in this context to be the dropping of the kerb at the roadside to create access for a vehicle onto your property. If the road is a “classified” or a “Trunk” road then you do need a planning application. If not, then you do not. Once you have established the category of the road from either the Borough Council or the County Council, then you need to discuss your proposals with the County Council not the Borough Council. It is the Highway Authority. You should contact the County Divisional Office in Coleshill Heath Road, Coleshill, B46 3HL Tel: 01675 463833. Once you have established that you need a planning application and that the County agrees to your scheme, you can submit that application to the Borough Council. If you do not require a planning application, because the road is unclassified, you will still need the agreement of the County Council to undertake works in the highway. Always contact the County Council for any proposals to works including the highway first, before contacting the Borough Council.

6.4 If a planning application is needed for your new access, then the main issues will be:-

- the visibility available at the access
- whether you can park a car on your land without it overhanging the highway
- whether you can enter the highway in a forward direction.

Much will depend upon:-

- the nature of the road – eg a cul-de-sac or a main distributor
- the speed limits
- the amount of traffic on that road
- what type of area it is – eg rural or residential.

- 6.5 When satellite installations came onto the market, the planning regulations had to be amended to take account of their introduction. As the technology has advanced, then the regulations too have had to change. The majority of satellite installations do not require planning applications. The key areas as to whether they do will often depend on the size of their diameter, whether there are existing installations on the property, and whether it is to be at front or the rear. It is unusual nowadays for a new dish or installation to require a planning application. It is however worthwhile checking.

7. Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

- 7.1 Some parts of North Warwickshire are designated Conservation Areas. Likewise, some houses have special architectural features or historic associations such that they have Listed Building status. In all such cases, stricter controls apply in order to preserve, protect or enhance their setting and their special character.
- 7.2 This Guide does not attempt to offer specific guidance for new householder proposals in Conservation Areas or for Listed Buildings. Needless to say the same general principles outlined in the Guide will apply, but more weight is given to the controls over these proposals, and the detail becomes more specific and important. If your house is a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area, you are strongly advised to discuss any proposals whether internal or external with the Council's planning staff before making any planning applications.
- 7.3 The Council employs a Conservation Architect and appointments can be made in order to discuss new proposals. A complete list of our Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings can be viewed in the Planning Division or directly on the website.

8. What Else Do I Need to Know?

The Building Regulations

- 8.1 As indicated in the Introduction, most building works need to comply with the Building Regulations, whether or not a planning application is necessary. The Regulations are there to ensure that your house will be constructed safely, and fit to live in. Very often your proposals may have to be amended to meet some of the Regulations and thus it is important that when you set out on this path to improve your home, you contact this section. You can then deal with everything in one go, and submit all the applications needed together. For advice and help on the Building Regulations, and inspections whilst work is in progress you should contact the Council's Building Control section on:

01827 719493 ('phone); 01827 719363 (fax)
buildingcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk (e-mail)
www.buildingcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk (website)

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 8.2 Even if you require a planning permission for works, you will also need a separate Listed Building Consent, and perhaps also a separate Conservation Area Consent if your home is a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area. Even if the proposed works might not require a planning application you almost certainly will require a Listed Building Consent. You should contact us at a very early stage. The Council's Planning Control Section can be found on:

01827 719434 ('phone); 01827 719363 (fax)
planningcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk (e-mail)
www.planningcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk (website)

Ownership (and the Party Wall Act)

- 8.3 When you submit a planning application you will be asked to complete a Certificate about ownership. Please check your Deeds. The Certificate is not a proof of ownership but it is important to give correct information.
- 8.4 If any part of your proposals, however small (eg a gutter overhanging a neighbour's property, or a foundation strip) will be on, over or under your neighbour's land, then you will need their consent. This will also apply to the erection of scaffolding.
- 8.5 The Party Wall Act requires you to give adjoining owners up to 2 months advance notice of works to a party wall; the building of a wall up to the boundary line, and certain excavation and foundation works within 6 metres of a neighbour's building. An explanatory booklet is available from the Planning Control section.
- 8.6 Covenants or other restrictions in your Title Deeds, or the lease of your house may require you to get someone else's agreement before carrying out certain work. You can check this yourself, or by contacting your solicitor. These restrictions may apply to keeping frontages open, or to rights of access, or rights of maintenance. These are private matters which you need to deal with.

- 8.7 Ownership problems or disputes will not lead to the refusal of your application. The Council will only look at the planning merits of your case. It may be that you gain a planning permission, but find that you cannot implement it due to ownership difficulties or because of Covenants and restrictions. All problems and disputes about ownership or boundary lines are private concerns to be dealt with privately and not via the Council.

Sewers and Services

- 8.8 If your extension will be over or near to any sewer or underground services, you need to obtain a "Building Over Agreement", or other consents from the service operator. In the case of public sewers, you can seek advice from the Building Control section of the Council or from Severn Trent Water Ltd. For other services you will need to go directly to the operator. Also beware of private drainage that can run under your property. This is often the case in the older residential areas.
- 8.9 Foul water drainage in rural areas where there is no public sewer available should be discussed with the Building Control section prior to the drawing up of proposals.
- 8.10 It is generally not acceptable for foul water to drain to a combined foul and surface water sewer in order to reduce the risks of pollution and flooding.

Building Control Section – as above in paragraph 8.1
Severn Trent Water Ltd
Leicester Water Centre
Gorse Hill
Leicester
LE7 7GU
0116 234 3382 ('phone) 0116 234 3035 (fax)

Public Highways

- 8.11 The Warwickshire County Council is the Highway Authority for North Warwickshire. All information required on what is a public highway or not, the classification of highways and the specifications needed for works within the highway and the agreement of the Highway Authority to those works, should be addressed to the Warwickshire County Council (County Highways):-

01926 412515 (Customer Service Centre 'phone)
CountyHighways@warwickshire.gov.uk (e-mail)
www.warwickshire.gov.uk (website)

A Guide for Shop Front Design



**North Warwickshire
Borough Council**

September 2003

About this Guide

North Warwickshire is a rural area with distinctive villages, and small market towns. Fortunately there has not been the wholesale redevelopment of our town centres which has damaged other towns. They still have many fine properties, preserving their individual identity, whilst retaining a retail base. It is no coincidence that the centres of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth are designated as Conservation Areas.

By providing street markets and convenience goods and services to their own local catchment areas, they perform an important economic and social function. However, in times of economic downturn their continued trading base has sometimes been marginal, and the upkeep of the fabric has not always been maintained, and the option of more modern materials and cheaper solutions is evident.

The Council has to balance these interests, so as to retain a viable retail base whilst preserving the historic and traditional appearance of our town centres. This Guide offers some simple design solutions and principles as to how the upkeep and design of shop frontages can retain the quality of the existing built environment in our centres. When opportunities arise to refurbish property then these should be taken, so that our attractive centres can be retained whilst ensuring a continued retail presence. Government too recognises the importance of good design as a material planning consideration. The Council will not support proposals which have ignored guidance in this publication.

It will show:-

- how new or modified shop-fronts can be better integrated into their surrounding areas;;
- how a good standard of design can be achieved;
- how particular detailing can respect and reinforce local character and distinctiveness;
- how advertisements should be seen as an integral part of shop-front design, and
- how the issue of security can be dealt with.

The guide offers advice for those concerned with the design, alteration and installation and repair of shop-fronts. It establishes a basic framework within which there is scope for imaginative and sensitive design. It applies to all retail shops, and uses such as banks, building societies, estate agents, restaurants, pubs and betting offices. It is relevant throughout North Warwickshire but emphasises the special needs of the town centres.

Whilst the advice and illustrations in the Guide have been adopted by the Council in September 2003, it has also been endorsed by other groups. Consultations have taken place with all of the Parish and Town Councils in North Warwickshire, as well as the three Civic Societies and Chambers of Trade. Alterations to the Guide have been made as a consequence of representations received.

The planning control service will improve the quality of the built development in North Warwickshire as a consequence of this Guide. Its use on a day to day basis in amending and altering initial proposals will be seen as a measure of the service in adding quality to the built environment.

This Guide will be regularly reviewed.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The idea of a shop-front, or a shopping street is a fairly recent occurrence. Goods were formerly sold from properties which would have had no recognisable shop-front, or in an open market. It was only from the eighteenth century onwards that high street buildings exhibited shop-fronts as an integral part of the building, and when display windows were introduced to advertise goods. Traders congregate together and we have the traditional shopping high streets and market squares in North Warwickshire. The Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian eras all introduced their own particular styles and recognisable designs.
- 1.2 More recently the quality and craftsmanship of shop-fronts has declined. They have become increasingly standardised and utilitarian in appearance, particularly when redevelopment has taken place. Many outlets adopt “house styles”, and corporate logos of modern trading activity. When combined with the use of modern materials and exuberant advertising, these often lead to insensitive adaptations of buildings. The loss in terms of character and proportions of older buildings can lead to the complete removal of quality within the street itself.
- 1.3 In North Warwickshire the three main market towns of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth are essentially single street shopping towns. With no major redevelopment they still retain traditional and historic built forms and layouts. In Atherstone there is a linear retail street with mostly Victorian additions to older buildings, with narrow frontages and three storey buildings. There has been some modern infill, mainly with two storey buildings but this is relatively minor in scale. Similarly in Coleshill there is a single main shopping street, but this is marked by a Georgian backdrop with later Victorian and modern additions. The main retail area is much more concentrated and limited. Polesworth, the smallest centre, is mainly a two storey environment with a mixture of more modern designs and buildings. There is much left of the traditional retail street scenes in all three centres, and this guide is very largely designed to retain, preserve and enhance this heritage.
- 1.4 There are of course many other styles of retail outlet in the Borough – single village shops, corner shops in terraced areas, and parades of shops that can be found in residential areas. The basic design principles outlined in this guide will apply to all of these premises. However, recognition will be given to the existing setting of the building and its overall content.

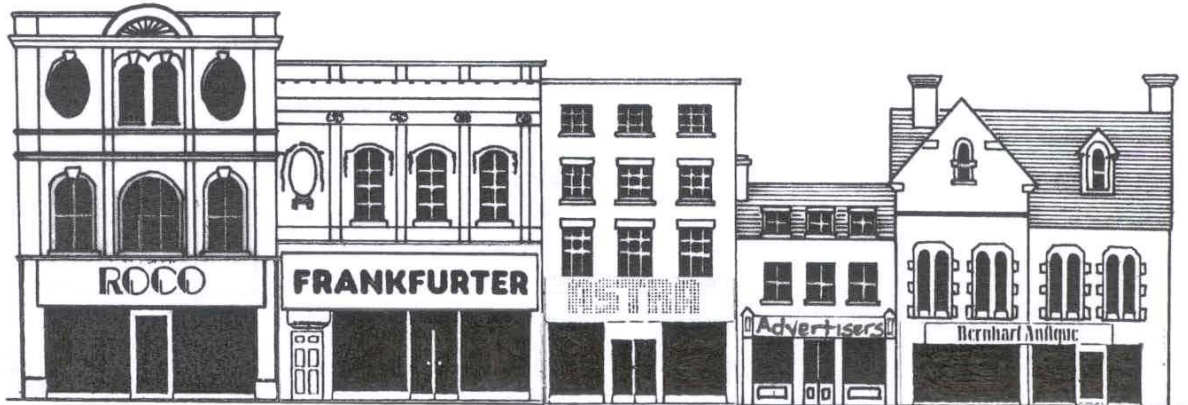
2 Shop Front Design

Good Design

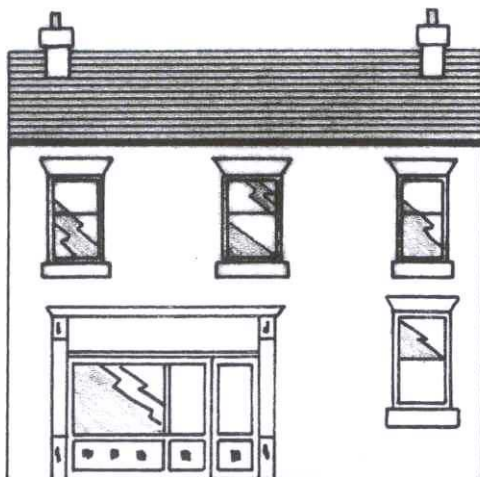
- 2.1 The principle purpose of a shop-front is the advertisement and display of goods and services provided inside the building. Good design will reinforce the shop's identity and its location in the street, but by reflecting the style of the whole building above street level, and that of its neighbours. A good design will treat the shop-front as an integral part of the whole building and street frontage without focussing exclusively on the retail outlet alone.
- 2.2 In particular:-
- the proportions of the shop-front should harmonise with the main building;
 - materials should reflect the existing range on the original building;
 - the shop-front should not be treated separately from the upper levels;
 - it should add interest and attract custom;
 - it should avoid standardisation, reflecting the diversity of a street scene.
- 2.3 The illustration below shows a series of shop-fronts in a street scene which harmonises in scale and style with the original buildings and their neighbours.



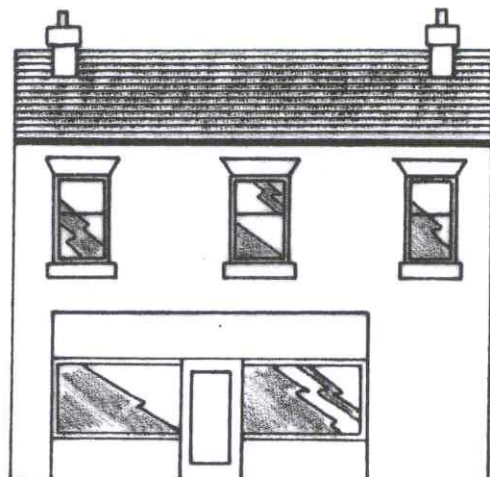
2.4 In the example below, the same street has been affected by poor insensitive design. The poor design elements will be explained in subsequent paragraphs.



2.5 In the case of the example below, then the same design principles are illustrated in relation to single properties.



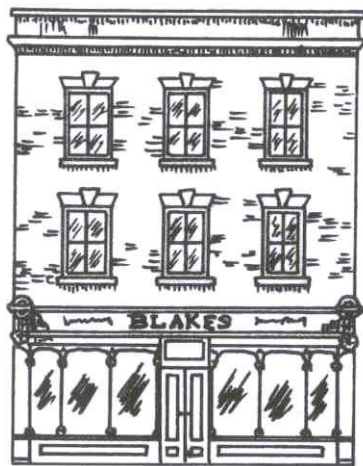
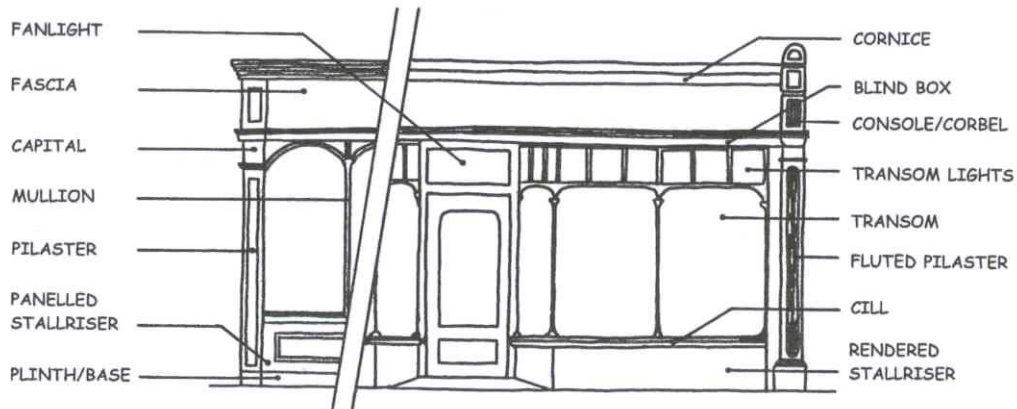
existing



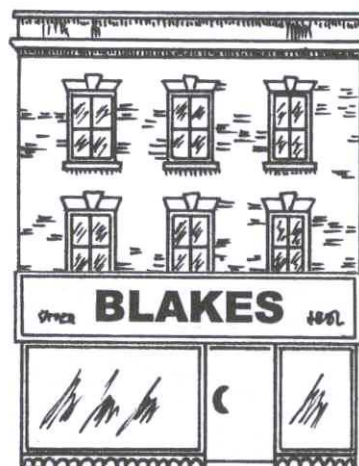
proposed

Elements of the Shop Front

- 2.6 Although shop-front design should be seen as a whole, it is made up of component parts, each of which has its own visual and practical function. These features define the style, and help integrate it into the rest of the building. These elements effectively enclose the shop window and entrance in the manner of a picture frame. They direct the eye to the entrance and provide a solid “base” for the building above. The pilaster identifies the vertical division between shop-fronts; the fascia provides advertising space and the stall riser gives protection.



“old”



“modern”

- 2.7 In contrast, a modern shop-front as illustrated above, tends to incorporate materials, colouring and a character that is at odds to the main façade above. A large window has little impact on framing the opening, and a deep fascia and the use of glossy materials are out of place against a traditional façade. It fails to hold interest.

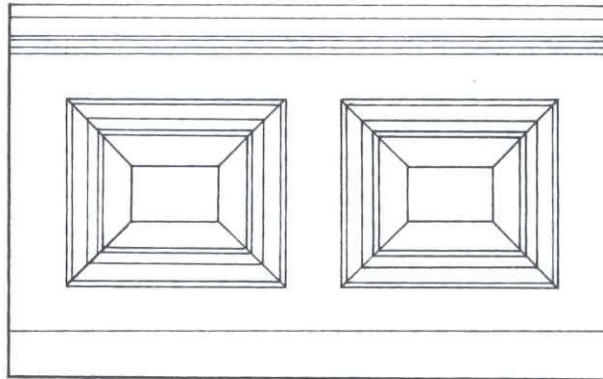


Fascias

- 2.8 The fascia is probably the most important and noticeable element of a shop-front. It is the area where the name of the shop is displayed and as such has the potential to have a major impact on the quality of the street scene. It should be seen as an integral part of the shop-front, and not just as a form of advertisement. It needs to be appropriate in character, style and proportion to the building.
- 2.9 It should usually be separated from adjacent fascias by pilasters, or some other form of vertical division. It should not extend, uninterrupted across a number of buildings, even if they are in the same ownership. Nor should they obscure other architectural details such as cornices, or upper storey windows.
- 2.10 Oversized or deep fascias can have a heavy clumsy appearance. As a rule they should be no more than $\frac{1}{5}$ th of the depth of the shop-front, and kept well below first floor windowsills. If a deep fascia has been installed in the past, an opportunity should always be taken to improve the situation.
- 2.11 Modern boxed fascias which project forward of the face of the building are often bulky and detract from the appearance of the shop-front. They have become heavily standardised and use aluminium frames and bright acrylic panels. They need to be discouraged in traditional shopping frontages and always so in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings.
- 2.12 Where a false ceiling is proposed inside a shop, it will not be acceptable to increase the depth of the fascia in line with this. The change in level can be dealt with through careful detailing of the shop window itself – eg transom lights with opaque glass or setting the false ceiling back within the shop.
- 2.13 The fascia should generally be made in timber with hand painted lettering advertising the name and nature of the shop.

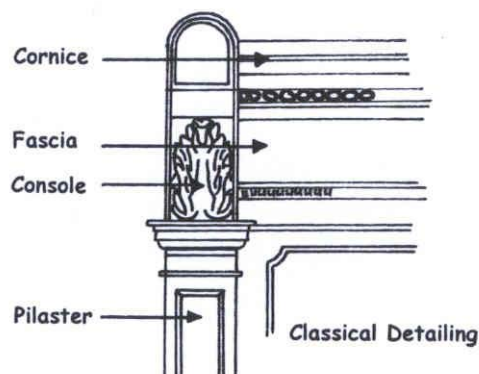
Stallriser

- 2.14 The stallriser is the area of the shop-front below the display window. It gives a solid visual base to the building and provides a protective area between the shop window and the street level. It also adds a sense of security.
- 2.15 Where stallrisers exist, they should be retained, and where they have been removed they should be replaced.
- 2.16 Stallrisers should be constructed of substantial and hardwearing materials. Preferred materials include painted timber, panelling, rendering or other non-reflective materials. Appropriate heights will usually be between 450mm and 700mm.



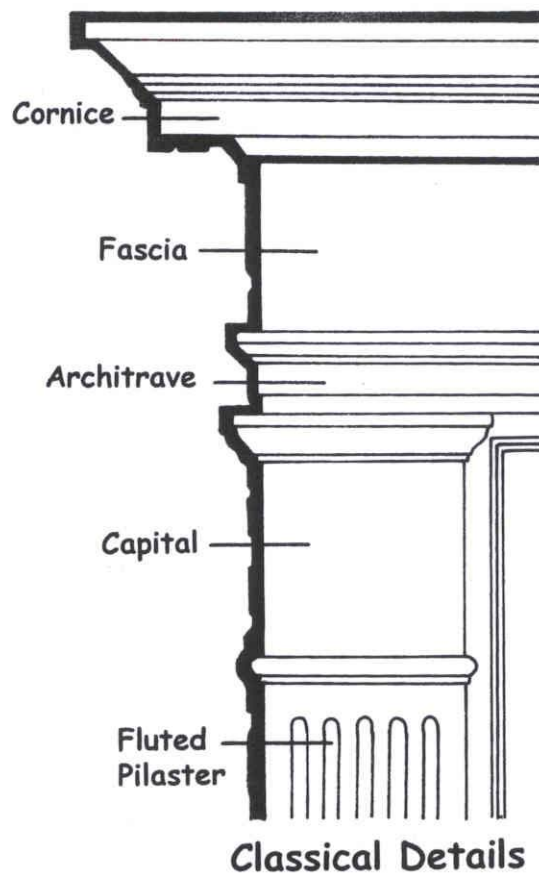
Pilasters and Consoles

- 2.17 Pilasters are shallow piers or columns that project slightly from the wall on each side of the shop-front. Above the pilasters are projecting heads known as consoles. Together they provide visual and physical support to the fascia to form a type of picture frame.
- 2.18 Pilasters and consoles vary from being very elaborate and highly decorated to being relatively plain but they usually have some moulding or surface decoration. Where traditional pilasters and console details exist they should be retained. If new ones are introduced they should be designed to reflect the level of detail in other elements of the shop-front and constructed of an appropriate material.



Cornices

- 2.19 The cornice defines the top of a shop-front and helps to distinguish the shop from the rest of the building. It also throws rainwater clear of the shop-front and prevents decay. A structural or applied cornice projection is required as part of nearly every shop-front design.



Blinds and Canopies

- 2.20 Blinds and canopies protect goods from damage by sunlight and give shoppers somewhere to shelter in bad weather. They also provide colour and interest. However, it is important that they are appropriate to the period of the building and the character of the locality so that they do not adversely affect the appearance of the street scene. For this reason, Dutch blinds or balloon canopies will be discouraged.
- 2.21 Blinds should be of a traditional design in a canvas or similar non-reflective material rather than plastic or stretch fabrics. They should be retractable and clear the pavement by at least 2.4 metres when open. When not in use they should be stored in a blind box which is flush with the fascia. Blinds should integrate well with the overall shop-front design and not obscure any architectural features. They should therefore fit between the pilasters.

Typical Dutch-blind



BAD EXAMPLE

Are fixed open

Intrude into the street

Usually made of unsympathetic materials such as shiny plastic

May obscure shopfront detailing

Typical flat roller-blind



GOOD EXAMPLE

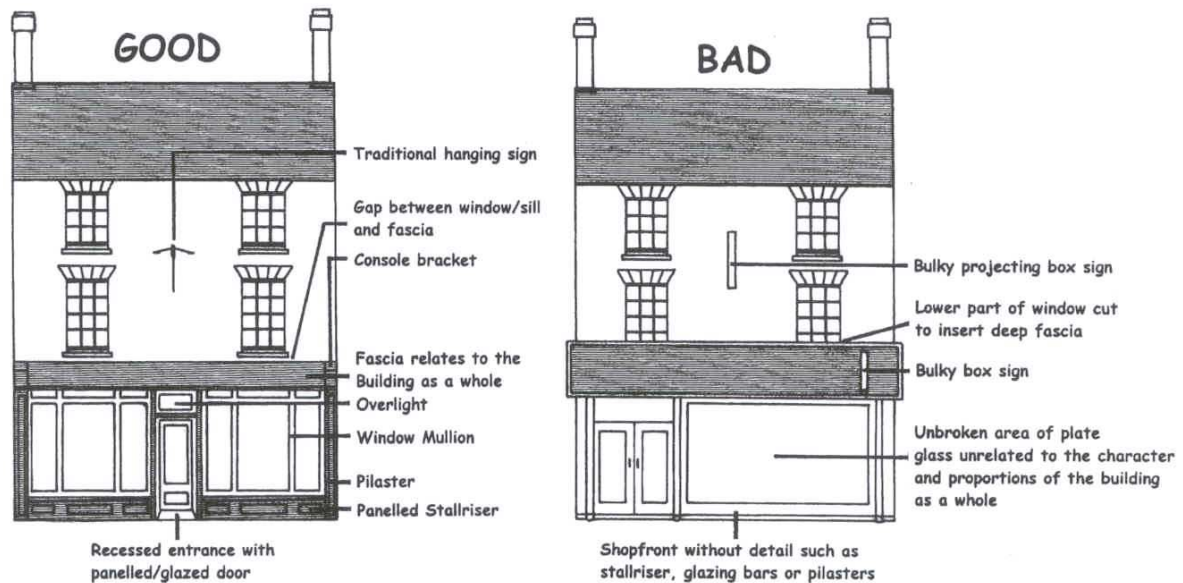
Can be open or closed

Retract into fascia when closed

Made of canvas

Windows

- 2.22 Windows form a large visual element in the shop frontage and are used to display goods and attract customers. Their design should be dictated by the building's style. Large areas of undivided plate glass should be avoided as they give a blank aspect to the street and are expensive to replace. To overcome this the window should be subdivided with vertical glazing bars known as mullions. Windows should not be obscured by the proliferation of stickers or coloured film. Consideration must also be given to the display in windows.



Doors

- 2.23 Doors give an important first impression and can have a significant impact on the appearance of the building. Where the door is recessed extra interest is created.
- 2.24 The design of the door should reflect a co-ordinated approach. The colour and materials of the door should match that of the window and be appropriate to the age of the shop-front. All doors should have a kick plate or bottom panel whose height matches the stallriser.
- 2.25 Particular care should be taken to ensure that there is adequate provision for the access of the disabled in so far as it is practical and reasonable. This is a requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Details on how this can be achieved without detriment to the design of the shop-front is discussed in more detail in a separate Guide on accessibility. As a general principle steps should be avoided and an entrance ramp and handrails should be provided.

Materials

- 2.26 The materials selected for shop-fronts should be a high quality, durable and selected to complement the building. Traditionally shop-fronts were constructed of timber. Timber is durable, versatile and inexpensive. It is also easy to maintain by painting. Timber along with other traditional materials such as brick and stone are the preferred choice of material especially for Listed Buildings and buildings in Conservation areas.
- 2.27 Non-traditional materials such as plastic, aluminium, acrylic sheeting and UPVC should be avoided. Where it is demonstrated that they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and are not detrimental to the character of the building on which they are proposed, they can be considered.

Colour

- 2.28 When considering the colour of new or replacement shop-fronts it is important that the colour scheme complements the character and appearance of the building rather than conflicting with it.
- 2.29 The range of colours used should be kept to a minimum. Dark rich colours are most appropriate, colours such as navy blue, black, dark red and dark green. These muted colours allow liveliness to be expressed in the window display. Harsh gaudy colours such as fluorescent colours should be avoided as they are over dominant in the street scene. They are especially inappropriate in a historic context. The change of colour of a shop-front which is part of a listed building, will require listed building consent. It will be useful if colour samples are provided when an application is submitted.

Security

- 2.30 Security measures are an integral part of the shop-front. They should be considered at the design stage and not 'added on' as an afterthought. A balance must be struck between ensuring that shops are safe and secure while considering their impact on the appearance of the street. Careful forethought should be given to the siting, appearance and colour of security measures.

Laminated glass

- 2.31 Laminated glass offers protection without adversely affecting the appearance of the shop-front as no additional or fixings are required. Laminated glass should therefore be the first solution to be considered.

Internal grilles and shutters

- 2.32 These consist of light mesh grille or lattice roller shutters and are placed immediately behind the shop window. They are easy to keep clean and in working order because they are not exposed to the weather. They allow the window to retain an 'open' appearance but maintain a high degree of security for the goods.

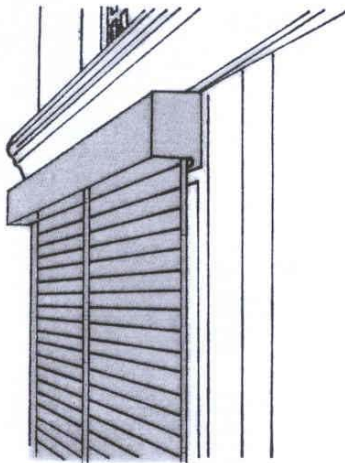
External removable grilles

- 2.33 Grilles are fixed to the outside of windows and doors on runners or on hooks and padlocked to the window frame. They also give security while maintaining an open appearance. Their physical impact is minimal because they do not require any box housings or side rails. The grilles should be removed during hours of business and stored internally. They should be lightweight and not damage any architectural features.

External roller grilles and shutters

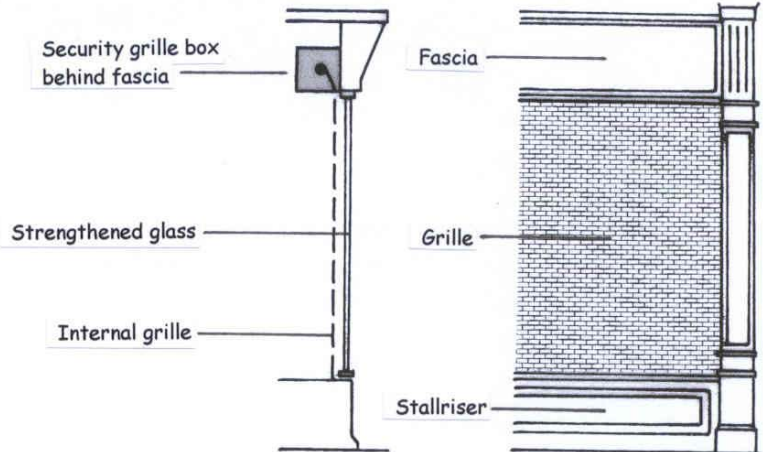
- 2.34 Solid external roller shutters can create an unwelcoming and hostile environment. They are vulnerable to graffiti and encourage illegal fly posting. The need for shutter box housings and side runners also means that they can give the shop-front a bulky unattractive appearance. They are therefore the least acceptable form of security. They are unlikely to be supported in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings.
- 2.35 Where external shutters are used, roller grilles or open weaved shutters are the preferred solution. The box housings that store them must be concealed behind the fascia or incorporated flush beneath it. The guidance channels should be concealed or painted to match the shop frame or be removable during the day. The architectural details of the shop-front must not be obscured or harmed by the fixtures. When the shutters are pulled down the pilasters should not be covered.

BAD



Bulky roller grille box visually harmful to the character of the building

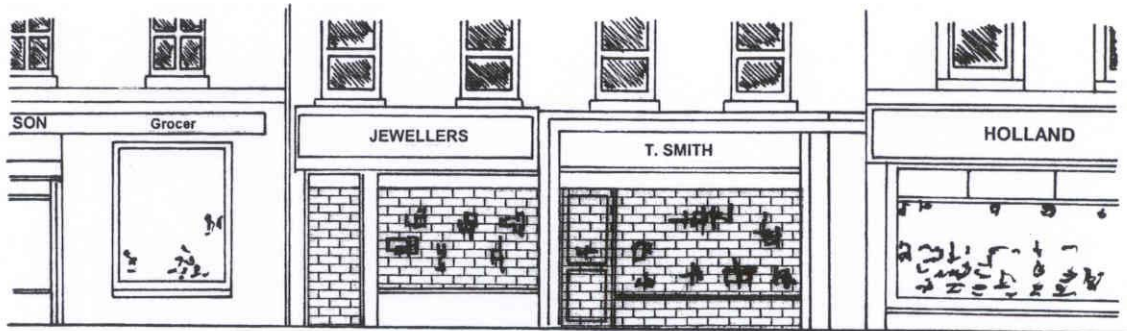
GOOD



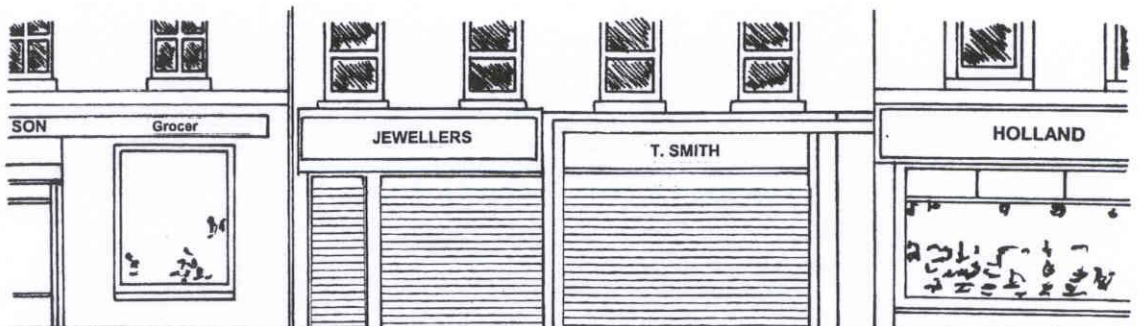
The preferred means of securing shop premises

Appropriately fitted roller grille in position

GOOD



BAD



3 Signs and Advertisements

The Street Scene

- 3.1 External advertising is important for commercial activity and comes in a range of forms. Its impact can be significant. This may be negative if it is poorly sited, overlarge, over-bright or badly designed. There is therefore a need to create a careful balance between satisfying commercial needs of advertising and protecting amenity and character of shopping areas.

Fascia Signs

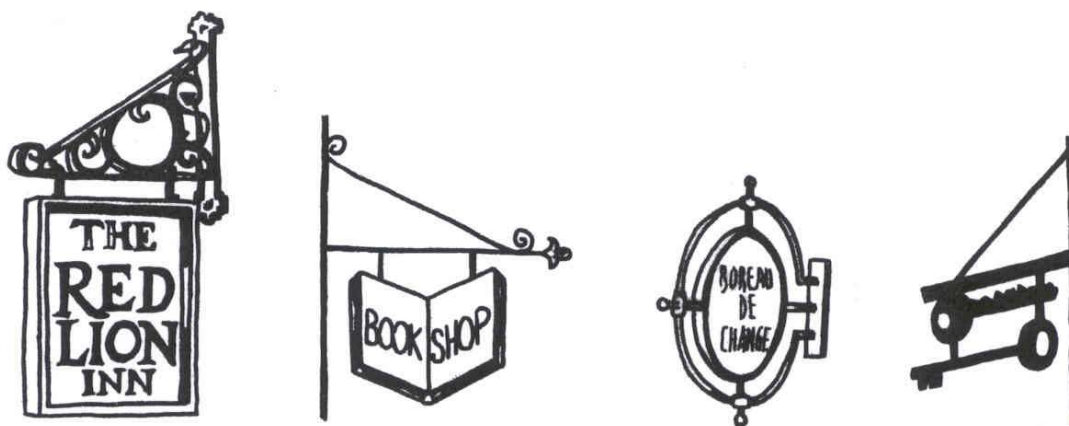
- 3.2 Well-designed fascia signs can add decorative interest and project an image of quality, confidence and permanence. However, if poorly designed they generate visual clutter and present an unattractive appearance.
- 3.3 Traditional fascia signs have a timber background and are hand-painted or have letters individually applied. This is considered the most appropriate form of sign. Reflective glossy or brightly coloured plastic signs are generally considered inappropriate and will not normally be acceptable.
- 3.4 The contents of fascia signs should normally be limited to the name of the shop with a simple graphic motif or minimal information such as the type of trade and the telephone number.
- 3.5 The lettering and graphics on the sign should relate well to the nature of the business and the architectural style of the building. They should be moderately sized and in proportion to the dimensions of the fascia. The text should be clear, simple and readable and therefore styles should not be mixed.
- 3.6 Colour is also important. Gilding or strong tones on a dark background reflect the light. Rich effects can be achieved by shading and blacking letters.
- 3.7 Firms with corporate images and standard house styles should be prepared to modify their house style where it fails to relate to the building or the surrounding area.



Projecting and Hanging Signs

- 3.8 Hanging signs are a traditional feature of shops and if well designed can add interest and originality to a building and to the street scene. To ensure these signs should be carefully designed, relate to the size and scale of the building and be positioned to ensure that they do not damage or conceal architectural detailing. Signs are best placed in line with the level of the fascia and should not be above the level of the first floor sills. To avoid clutter only one sign will be allowed per shop.
- 3.9 Projecting signs tend to be bulky and constructed of inappropriate modern materials. Hanging signs on metal brackets are aesthetically more pleasing and are therefore preferred to projecting signs. Hanging signs should be largely pictorial rather than written and artistry and imagination is encouraged where it makes a positive contribution to the street.

GOOD



BAD



Illumination

- 3.10 Modest and subtle lighting can be the key to a lively and safe night time environment. However, too often illuminated signs are bulky or poorly designed and sited so adding unwelcome clutter to shop-fronts. Careful forethought with regards to the design and location of the fittings is therefore required especially in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Shop-front lighting should not adversely affect the character of a building or its surroundings.
- 3.11 There are two basic ways of illuminating fascias; either internally through box signs or externally by means of spotlighting or strip-lighting. Full internal illumination of signs is considered inappropriate as it is out of character with traditional shop-fronts and historic buildings. More subtle forms of lighting include backlit lettering, individual halo letters and cold cathode tubes where only the lettering and not the background is illuminated.
- 3.12 The preferred choice of lighting is external lighting. They should be concealed as much as possible and carefully directed to avoid glare. Only the fascia should be highlighted. "Swan neck" lighting should be avoided.
- 3.13 In the interests of minimising obtrusive light, illuminated projecting signs and flashing/neon signs in the interior of shop windows is unacceptable.

4 Do I Need Permission?

Planning Consent

- 4.1 Under Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), planning permission is required for all new shop-fronts or alterations to existing shop-fronts that materially affect the external appearance of a building. This includes alterations to the fascia, the windows or the doorway, changes to the materials used or the installation of blinds or security shutters.

Advertisement Consent

- 4.2 Signs and advertisements are controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 1992. Under certain circumstances Advertisement Consent will be required. As the regulations are complex it is advisable to seek advice from the planning officers who will be pleased to help you.

Listed Building Consent

- 4.3 Any alterations to a Listed Building require Listed Building Consent if the works affect the character of appearance of the building. This can include small changes to features such as window frames and decorative details, as well as interior details. Owners or traders are therefore strongly advised to consult the planning division before carrying out any alterations to a building that is or might be listed. Demolition work too may require consent. An application for listed building consent will need to be accompanied by a justification of the proposals.

Conservation Area Consent

- 4.4 Parts of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth town centres are designated as Conservation Areas whose character and appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Demolition of all or substantially all of a building in a Conservation Area needs Conservation Area Consent. This includes demolition or removal of a shop-front or any features which give character to a building.

Building Regulations

- 4.5 In addition to planning and advertisement consent certain works on shop-fronts may also need to comply with Building Regulations legislation for example if work involves structural alterations, if the means of fire escape is affected, and where accessibility matters are raised.

Pre-Application Discussions

- 4.6 In light of all the various matters raised above, it is very worthwhile to contact the Planning Division **BEFORE** an application is submitted. We can help with all of the different consents together. This will save you time.

Submitting an Application

- 4.7 When submitting a planning application, 4 copies of the following scaled drawings in addition to the form and an Ordnance Survey location plan will be required.
- i) Front elevation of existing shop-front and building
 - ii) Elevational drawing of proposed shop-front and building
 - iii) Horizontal and sectional drawings to a scale of at least 1:10
 - iv) An indication of materials and colours to be used.

5 Getting Advice

5.1 The Council's Planning Control Officers are always willing to discuss your proposals and offer advice on this Guide. Applicants are recommended to consult with the planning division at an early stage of the design process.

5.2 If you are contemplating alterations to your shop-front please write to:-

The Planning Department
North Warwickshire Borough Council
PO Box 6
The Council House
South Street
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 1BG

or if telephoning:-

01827 719434.

or if you use a fax:-

01827 719363

or if you e-mail then:-

planningcontrol@northwarks.gov.uk

or if you call into the office then:-

- please make an appointment first, or please
- call into the office in the afternoons only.