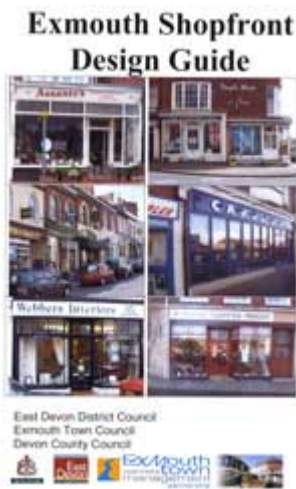


Exmouth Shopfront Design Guide

1. Introduction to Shopfronts



The design of shopfronts, and their associated signing and advertising, can have a major impact in a particular locality. The impact can be positive or negative depending upon how the shop is presented. Each shopfront has a vital role in attracting the attention of visitors and residents alike, and this is most acutely felt in the town centres.

The main purpose of the shopfront is, undoubtedly, for the display of goods but it also has an important secondary role in projecting the image of the shop. Poor design, materials, workmanship, colour schemes, lighting, signing and advertising will do little to enhance a shop's image or aid in the display of its goods. This holds true for the whole street, where each shop contributes to the street's overall character and quality, and ultimately to the town as a whole.

Exmouth Town Management aims to establish a basis for promoting good shopfront and advertisement design. This will be achieved through the twin tools of good advice for developers and through Development Control policy that will be used as a reference point in the determination of planning applications. Both aspects will reduce the time spent by parties negotiating away poor design proposals. Shop owners/ tenants can make a major contribution to securing a more attractive shopping environment in the town by retaining and repairing traditional shopfronts and through careful design of new shopfronts. This focus on shopfronts forms part of the wider Exmouth Town Management strategy, which seeks the wholesale improvement in all sectors of town life.



The town centre has retained much of its historic architectural character derived from Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Together, these periods have provided us with a rich array of building styles, which we enjoy and seek to retain. The Local Planning Authority does not wish to stifle retail innovation and vitality. However, without care shopfronts, signs and advertising can substantially alter the character of any street if they do not respect the individual buildings and its setting in the context of the whole street. Where the shop is in a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area alterations to the shopfront will be expected to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the building and for the area.

2. The Towns Aims

To preserve and enhance traditional shop fronts and other shopfronts of quality, improve on poor designs through restoration or alteration, and secure high standards, based on traditional principles, in new shopfronts.

Quality modern designs will also be appropriate in some situations, even if they are not traditional in origin.

3. Planning & Shopfronts

Alterations to shopfronts will normally require an application for planning permission. Planning permission is required for any material change in the external appearance of a shop; e.g. altering the glazing, changing materials, installing blinds and shutters or enlarging the fascia.

Many signs require express advertisement consent from the Council but some do not. The Advertisement Regulations are complex and the Local Planning Authority's advice should be sought. In addition, any alteration affecting the historic or architectural character of a listed building requires listed building consent. This can also include installing a security system, shutters, blinds and advertisements. Alteration to a shop's interior in a listed building will require listed building consent as well as to its exterior, where this would affect the character of the building.

Potential applicants are therefore encouraged to consult with the Local Planning Authority prior to submission, especially in the case of listed buildings so that time can be saved during the processing of the application.

Local Plan Policies - East Devon Local Plan, First Deposit 1995-2011

The Local Plan sets out policies, which are used to guide planning decisions, as well as proposals for development and land use in the District until 2011. The following policies are specifically used when making decisions for application to alter shopfronts.

Shopfronts

Shop fronts are an important element in the street scene and should be of a high standard of design and respect the architecture of the original building and of the surrounding area. Whilst the District Council recognises the value of the non-retail uses, they can result in dead frontages, which detract from the vitality of shopping streets. Where shop windows exist in ground floor retail and non-retail premises in shopping centres, the maintenance of a shop window display will be required by condition. For Shop front policy , E7 see next board. In Conservation Areas, Policy EN16 will also apply.



POLICY EN16 (Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

Proposals for development (including alterations, extensions and changes of use) located within a Conservation Area as shown on the proposals maps, or outside the area, but would affect its setting or views in or out of the area, will only be permitted where it would preserve or enhance the area's character and appearance.

4. Conservation Areas

There are three conservation areas in Exmouth:

- The Beacon / Louisa Terrace
- Bicton Street

- Albion Street / Windsor Square

Most shopfronts can be found within the Albion Street/ Windsor Square conservation area.

5. History of the Town Centre

High Street

The present facade of High Street dates back to 1875, when major rebuilding of the street took place. It was previously named Chapel Street, when it formed part of a continuous route from Chapel Hill to Exeter Road. Rolle Street then bisected this route in 1866, resulting in the creation of High Street.



Much of the character remains from the original shopfronts and other sympathetic features found in the streetscape, and of which need to be preserved. There is a pair of curved glass windows fronting the solicitors' offices, (No. 16-17 High Street) which are some of the last remaining windows of this style in Exmouth. Other shopfronts of interest include Webbers Interiors (No.9a High Street) and Adrian's the hairstylist (No. 9 High Street). Both of these shops have sections of stained glass windows adding to the character of the area and their fascia signs complement each other thereby enhancing the general appearance of the street scene.

Particular attention should be given to the Indian restaurant (No.8 High Street) with its frontage. The way in which the window has been divided with the top sections being curved has led to the shopfront harmonising with the rest of the building and with the surrounding shops, whilst maintaining its individuality.

There is sufficient character remaining to warrant a sensitive approach to conservation in this street.

The Strand

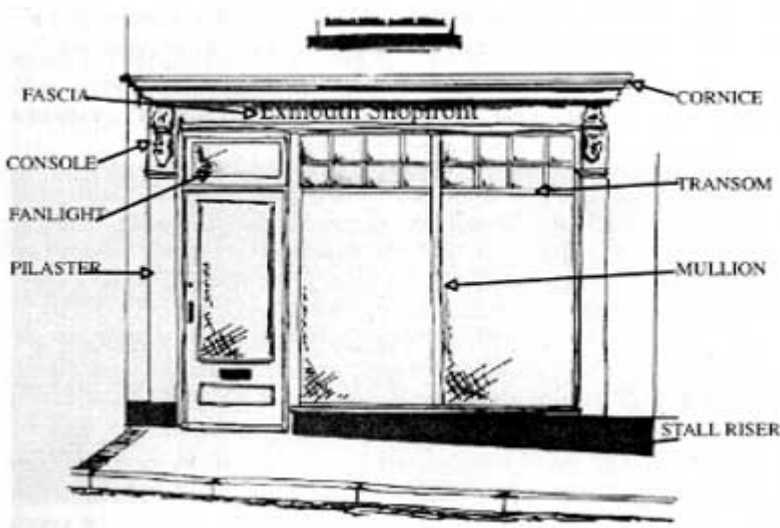
Originally the Strand was a sandy shore, which the tide once washed. In 1790 a new square was created attracting prosperous merchants and gentry forming the town's commercial centre.

The gardens or enclosure as they were originally known, were laid out in 1871, within an area consisting of the town's former cattle market and the gardens of the now demolished Globe hotel.



Many character buildings remain around the Strand, most notably "Thomas Tuckers" which dates back to 1801. F. Arthur Jones, (located next to Thomas Tuckers) and Molloy's public house also adds to the character of the area. In particular, the Chinese restaurant "The Bamboo", has a symbolic style which greatly enhances the area whilst maintaining individuality. There are a number of shops within the vicinity of the Chinese restaurant that could benefit greatly from improved signage better related to the character of the surrounding area. The row of shops on this side of the Strand ends with Garners' Hardware Store, a shop which retains its original character. Opposite Thomas Tuckers there are three buildings of significant design interest, Remedies, Johnstons.

6. Principles of Good Design



Traditional shopfront design (18th & 19th C.) was based around successful principles that still hold good today. A satisfactory relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole was struck using various elements to enclose the shop window and entrance like a picture

frame around a painting. With timber as a standard material, features such as pilasters, fascias, cornices, and stall risers were common to the traditional shopfront.

These features were considered to contribute to a well proportioned shopfront which was sympathetic with the overall building itself. The traditional shopfront elements are indicated in the diagram opposite.

Canopies and Blinds

Canopies and blinds can be a lively element in the street if they are designed correctly. Many traditional shopfronts have retracting roller blinds, which provide shade for the shop window and shelter for shoppers.

In the past, roller blinds have not been used for advertisement purposes; however dutch blinds, fan blinds and balloon canopies are now installed with the added purpose of increasing advertising space. In many cases

blinds obscure the fascia and introduce a dominant element which is out of keeping with the traditional character of the towns' streets. The use of these non traditional blinds, and of plastics, wet look or stretchy fabrics will be resisted. Therefore where blinds and canopies are needed a more traditional roller design is preferred.

Stall Risers



These provide a building with a visual anchor to the ground as well as giving protection to the shopfront. Traditional examples were mostly of panelled timber, tile, brick, stone or render. More recently brick, marble or granite have been used with varying degrees of success; plastic laminates should always be avoided. The materials chosen must relate to both the building and shop front. The height of each stall riser will vary according to the overall proportions of the building, together with other examples from the street.

Consoles and Brackets



These provide a strong visual stop to both the horizontal and vertical elements of the shopfront. Late Victorian shopfronts used consoles to contain the fascia at either end, often with elaborate designs. Where found these features give a good indication of shopfront history and as such should always be preserved.

Cornices

These provide a visual stop to the top of the shopfront. Traditional examples were moulded to shield the fascia from the weather. In new buildings this feature may not appear in a traditional form but some account may need to be taken of its role. Cornices can also be adapted or designed to house fascia lighting systems successfully.

Colour Schemes and Materials

The sensitive use of colour offers enormous scope for improving the street scene but the choice of colour scheme must take account of the building and its setting. Rich dark colours are often the most suitable as they do not distract from the window display. Many national chain stores have corporate colour schemes, which can sometimes be inappropriate within the wider street scene. Within the historic street scenes of the town, these stores should consider modifying their corporate designs so that they complement and enhance the surrounding buildings and shopfronts. There is a general presumption in favour of schemes that are constructed of matt finished, non-reflective materials, which reflect the majority of the town's buildings.

Timber is used in traditional shopfronts because it is easily machined and can be worked to any profile. Properly maintained timber can also have a long life and will not date as quickly as more modern materials. Stained hardwoods are rarely appropriate as most traditional shopfronts are painted timber. There are also good environmental grounds to discourage the use of non-sustainable hardwoods. Glazing materials should not be mirror, glass or glass with highly reflective coatings as these are features, which visually damage traditional townscapes.

Doors, Doorways and Ironmongery



Traditional timber doors were usually set back from the shopfront and designed to complement the shopfront, therefore recessed doors will be encouraged as they have practical and visual advantages.

Door furniture such as handles and letter plates, etc. are important details in the pursuit of good design. Their retention or introduction will be encouraged.

Pilasters

These frame the side of a shopfront; they emphasise the subdivision of the street frontage into separate buildings or units of traditional plot width. Visually they provide the means of supporting the beam behind the fascia. Original pilasters should always be retained, repaired if necessary but never covered, as covering destroys the character of the original design. Again encouragement will be given to reinstate, uncover or repair pilasters when the next change in shopfront design is proposed.

Fascia



The design of a fascia should be appropriate to the character and period of the building in which the shopfront is located, as it is the link between the ground and upper floors.

The Georgian and early Victorian shopfronts had upright fascia contained by consoles which had either plain or decorated ends. Later styles were contained within console boxes and were often inclined outwards, towards the pedestrian, so that they could be read more easily. The depth of these fascias often did not exceed 380mm.

Excessively deep fascias can damage the important balance of proportions that generate the successful relationship between shopfront, the building as a whole and its neighbours in the

street. Small shops or those with a lower storey height, should consider a shallower depth of fascia, while tall shops should consider subdividing the zone between the door head and the underside of the fascia rather than increasing the fascia depth.

The introduction or retention of box fascias and of unsuitable materials such as plastics will be discouraged.

Mullions and Transoms



Mullions, normally made of timber, are vertical elements that subdivide panes of glass.

Transoms, also made of timber, are horizontal elements that subdivide panes of glass and are typically found at/or over door height or sometimes at fanlight level.

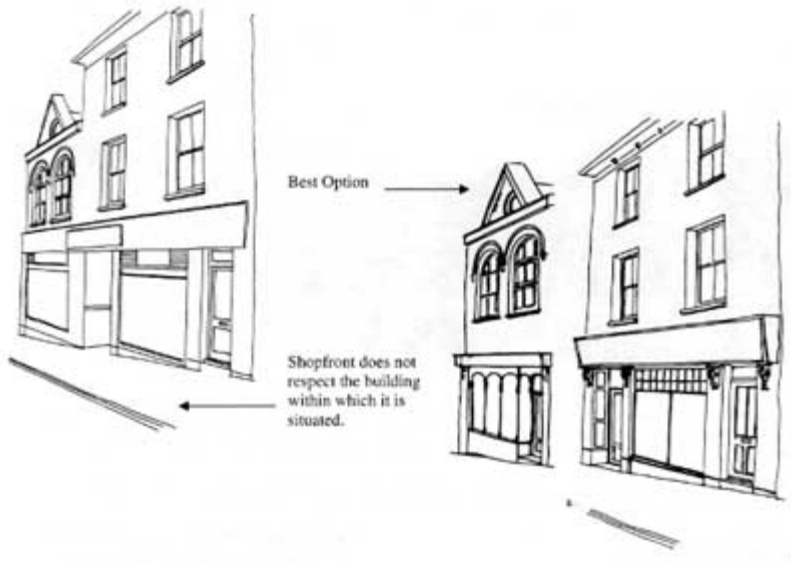
Mullions and Transoms together visually increase the apparent structural strength of the shopfront in supporting the building above. By breaking up large areas of plate and float glass they increase the complexity and interest of reflections whilst helping to preserve the rhythm of the street scene. Breaking up large areas of plate, and introducing extra timber to the shop window also helps to enhance security.

Mullions and transoms are a common feature of the traditional shopfront, and their continued use will be supported in preference to large areas of glass. Similarly, other traditional features such as cornices and consoles should ideally be retained, repaired or if necessary replaced to the original design.

Shops occupying two or more Buildings

There are a number of shops in the town that occupy the ground floor of two or more buildings. It is desirable, in design terms, that the fascia relates to each individual building in which it is set rather than running continuously across the full extent of two or more shop fronts. The cheerful irregularity of an old established shopping street is preferable to an over zealous uniformity.

Townscape Considerations



The photograph below, illustrates a typical street scene. Each building has its own shopfront, with clearly defined vertical proportions, it is important to ensure that shopfronts do not breach these divisions by moving into adjacent buildings. Where the shopfront fills the whole width of a building it is necessary to use the pilasters and mullions to vertically subdivide the panes of glass to preserve the underlying rhythm of the street.



Also as most traditional streets do contain a variety of buildings styles, a series of similar shopfront designs will often be inappropriate. The only exception is where there is a row of shops within terraced buildings as a whole.

7. Signs and Advertisements

Signs and advertisements can make a significant contribution to the character of traditional shopping areas and/or conservation areas, poorly designed incongruous signs can detract from this character. It is preferable that all signs and advertisements are designed to complement the shopfront and building design. Certain signs and advertisements, including some illuminated signs do not require express advertisement consent from the Local Planning Authority.

Fascia Signs



The character of the building must always be pre-eminent with all fascia signs. The fact that a building may be bland or of little architectural interest does not justify garish and over prominent advertising.

On traditional shopfronts, sign written lettering on a painted fascia was used to advertise the shop name. Gold leaf shading, together with the careful mixture of colour tones can improve the visibility of the sign at night, thus minimising the need for illumination.

The fixing of individual letters on the fascia can look pleasing to the eye if suitable materials are chosen, e.g., wood and brass. In contrast, plastic can look out of place within a traditional shopfront. This technique is also useful where there is no fascia and the letters need to be attached to the natural materials of the building. The size of the lettering looks best when it is in proportion with the fascia and does not dominate it, this type of letting will be looked upon favourably.

Window Displays and Internal Advertising



Traditionally, the shopfront has been used for the display of goods for sale. In some cases shopfronts are used for advertising with the display of stickers, posters or internal illuminated signs. This type of advertising can detract from the overall appearance of the shopfront creating a cluttered appearance from the street. In some cases where a building has no display space, tasteful murals, photographs or other techniques could be considered so that the value of the shopfront is not lost.

Businesses on upper floors should only consider painted letters on their windows. Where possible, these should be of a size and scale that will not dominate the appearance of the window or building.

Hanging and Projecting Signs



In appropriate locations, for example narrow streets, hanging signs can provide an element of individual detail to enrich the street. Hanging signs are ideally made from timber and suspended from a wrought iron bracket. A proliferation of hanging signs should be avoided, especially in conservation areas. Projecting signs rigidly fixed from the side are often made of translucent plastic and internally illuminated. These are usually inappropriate for traditional streets and therefore they will be resisted on listed buildings and in conservation areas. Where these signs are acceptable, internal illumination will be discouraged except where the premises are late opening.

Illuminated signs



Within Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings the internal illumination of signs, that are particularly incongruous to the street scene, will be discouraged. Where a business is open regularly in the evening, some illumination of fascia, by halo lighting may be used. Attracting passers-by and improving security should be done by internally lighting the window rather than the fascia. Careful internal lighting will enhance or highlight the detail and intricacy of window displays and interiors.

8. Social Design Aspects

Access for disabled people

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), passed in 1995, requires that people are not treated less favourable because of their disability and that reasonable steps are taken to ensure this.

Legal rights and obligations of this Act will become law in 2004. This means that shops will be required to provide an appropriate means of access for disabled people.

As a general principle, steps should be avoided and doors should be capable of being opened by people in wheelchairs. Handrails are helpful where changes in level occur whilst frameless glass doors should be avoided as they can prove dangerous to the partially sighted. On listed buildings especially, the needs of the disabled should be taken into account as far as possible, commensurate with the need to preserve the character of the building.

For any further information about disabled access please ask to speak to a Building Control Officer at East Devon District Council.

9. Shopfront Security



Security shutters can be very damaging to the appearance of a shopfront unless they are designed sympathetically.

The use of external burglar alarm boxes will normally be discouraged but where they are considered essential they should be fitted within the fascia depth; occasionally they may be better just above the cornice. External alarm boxes will not normally be permitted on listed buildings.

10. Conclusions

The positive planning and architectural advice contained as part of this guide is intended to help enhance the built environment throughout Exmouth Town Centre. The best designs will develop as a result of; an assessment on site, which identifies what currently exists and what would be suitable to the building and streetscape. Applied sensitively to the location this approach should produce designs of lasting quality that will bring credit to both the town and its retailers.

11. East Devon District Council Local Plan Policy

Policy D7 Shop fronts

The Council will consider proposals for changes to shop fronts or for new shop fronts in accordance with the following criteria:

1. Traditional style shop fronts, which have remained unaltered and are worthy of conservation should be retained.
2. Where traditional features such as stall risers, columns, pilasters or cornices exist these should be retained and further alteration should seek to upgrade the shop front in a manner sympathetic to any of the existing traditional features.
3. All parts of a new shop front and fascia should be kept to below the first storey level.
4. Shop fronts including signs and fascias should be designed to complement the character and individuality of the building in which they are set. Signs should advertise only the name and the nature of the business and avoid advertising a range of branded products.
5. Materials used should be sensitive to the character and appearance of the building and surrounding properties. In Conservation Areas only materials which are in keeping with the character or appearance of the area will be permitted.
6. Large expanses of undivided glass will not be permitted where they are alien to the character of the building in which they are set.
7. Where two or more adjoining buildings form part of the same premises they should be treated as individual shop fronts linked by a theme e.g. lettering and colour of paintwork.

Where stall risers make a significant contribution to the character of an area or individual buildings new shop fronts should provide stall risers in order to maintain such character.

12. Statutory Approvals & Consents

Planning Permission

New shopfronts, or alterations to existing ones, and changes in the external appearance of a building require planning permission.

Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent is required for alteration (however minor) which affect the character of a listed building.

Building Regulation Approval

Building Regulation Approval is required where a new shop front, or changes to a shop front, involve a material alteration.

Advertisement Consent

Certain types of non-illuminated and illuminated advertisements are regarded as having deemed consent depending on the type of premises and subject to restrictions of size, position and height above ground level. These may be displayed without reference to the Local Planning. Information on the classes of deemed consent can be obtained from the District Council Environment Directorate.

Food Hygiene Regulations

Where proposals affect any food premises, applicants may wish to consult with Local Environment Health Officer in the District Council Communities Directorate who will advise on the appropriate food hygiene regulations.

Offices and Shops Act

Standards are laid down under this Act for natural lighting and ventilation. The Local Environmental Health Officer in the District Council Communities Directorate will advise on these requirements.

13. Glossary

Column:

An upright shaft, generally rectangular or round in plan and usually slightly tapering.

Console:

Form of bracket, of uniform width on the front, the sides carved in the form of an upright S with the lower curve smaller than the upper.

Corbelling:

Projecting blocks, usually of stone, supporting a beam or other horizontal member.

Cornice:

A projecting ornamental moulding along the top of building, wall, etc. finishing or crowning it,

Fanlight:

Originally, a window above a shopfront door which resembles an open fan design: now any window in that position irrespective of shape or pattern.

Fascia:

The wide board over a shopfront, carrying the shop name.

Pilaster:

A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall and in classical architecture, conforming with one of the orders.

Sash Window:

A window formed with sashes i.e. Sliding glazed frames running in vertical grooves.

Scroll bracket:

An ornament in the form of a scroll of paper partly rolled.

Stall riser:

The vertical surface of polished granite, tile or wood, marble etc. from the pavement to the sill of the glazed portion of the window.

String course:

A continuous projecting horizontal band set in the surface of a wall and usually moulded.