



*FRINTON*  
shopfront design guide



*This guidance has been prepared on behalf of Tendring District Council and the Frinton & Walton Town Council by:*

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THE  
**CONSERVATION  
STUDIO**

PLANNING AND  
ARCHITECTURE FOR  
THE HISTORIC BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT

*The authors particularly thank the shopfront working group of the Frinton and Walton Town Council and the Heritage & Conservation Manager of Tendring District Council for their helpful input to the production of this document*

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# FRINTON CRAFT SHOP

tel. 01255 674126



*Complete survival of an Edwardian shopfront*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### **The importance of shopfronts**

- 1.1 Retail uses in the high street are constantly changing because they reflect wider changes in society as a whole. Shopping has evolved from meeting immediate needs into a recreational activity. Over the last 50 years, increasing choice and mobility have had a major affect on shopping habits and the internet can only add to that.
- 1.2 Shopfronts have also evolved in response to improvements in lighting, hygiene, security and fashion as well as retailing methods. However, while there is little evidence of shop interiors of the past, a significant number of shopfronts still survive in substantially their original form.
- 1.3 These survivals evoke a strong sense of tradition and continuity in a changing world and, when cherished and maintained, they can enliven high streets with the message that quality sells. Good shopfronts reinforce the historic character of towns.
- 1.4 Just as high street shopping has shown signs of decline in the face of other forms of retail outlet, so it can also be the agent of regeneration. Retailing is the lifeblood of historic towns and there is evidence of a return to locally-based shopping with a renewed emphasis on speciality shops and niche markets. Research shows that a strong historic environment can give a competitive edge to trading.
- 1.5 Vital to any regeneration, however, is the need to maintain the qualities that attract shoppers. These may include parking and access or enhancements to paving and street furniture, but a primary factor is the shopfront because it provides the welcome and frames the display of goods and services.

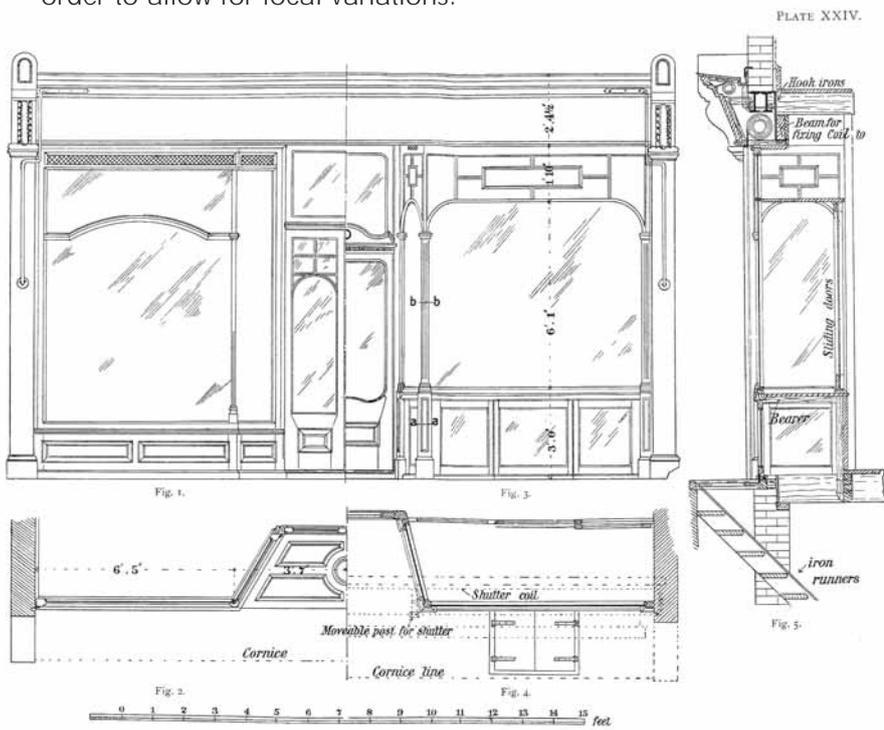
### **The purpose of the guidance**

The Town and District Councils believe that raising the standard of shopfronts will enhance the conservation area and contribute significantly to the vitality of Frinton's retail core and to the prosperity of individual businesses. This guidance is, therefore, provided to set out expectations for the maintenance and repair of historic shopfronts, and for the detailing of new designs.

- 1.6 The guide explains national and local planning policies, the need for planning permission and other consents, and the level of information required for applications to be properly considered. It also provides a set of principles to assist the design process. Although the guidance is intended primarily for Connaught Avenue and Old Road at Frinton, much of it will be relevant to other historic centres.
- 1.7 Applicants are strongly recommended to employ professional designers as they are aware of the expectations and can often save time and expense by applying their experience.

## 2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SHOPFRONTS

- 2.1 Until the 18th century, shops were generally open fronted with arches in the masonry or timber framing. They would typically have shutters that folded down to form the stall supported by the infilling of the lower part of the arch, which is still known as the stall riser.
- 2.2 For most people, shops served to meet basic needs. However, social changes during the 17th century saw an emerging middle class and, for these new consumers, shopping became a past-time as well as a necessity.
- 2.3 Shopfronts that would be recognised today were first introduced in the 1750s when glazing became more affordable. Houses were often adapted by opening up the ground floor and applying a screen of detail. In 1762, a London by-law forbidding hanging signs gave rise to fascia signage.
- 2.4 The 1830s saw the introduction of retractable blinds and gas lighting. Improved glass-making allowed larger windows and, by the mid-19th century, only fresh food shops had open fronts.
- 2.5 In the late 19th century, styles became more eclectic – gothic, Queen Anne revival, Art Nouveau – introducing new materials, such as terracotta and tiling. Signage became more flamboyant with cut-out letters, gilding and colourful signwriting. The Edwardian fashion for transom lights allowed for ventilation grilles and coloured glass to conceal gas light fittings. Entrances were recessed to increase window display areas.
- 2.6 As shopfronts became an everyday part of the high street in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a range of pattern books were published to provide advice for joiners on their design, construction and installation. However, they tended to avoid standardised detail in order to allow for local variations.



1, 2. PART ELEVATION AND PLAN OF A MODERN SHOP FRONT. 3, 4, 5. PART ELEVATION, PLAN, AND SECTION OF A SHOP FRONT, WITH LIGHTED BASEMENT.

[To face page 235.]

Pattern book design from George Ellis' *Modern Practical Joinery*, 1902



# arksons



- 2.7 Shops became a more integral part of new buildings in the 20th century. In the 1920s, the use of bronze allowed the structural elements to become elegantly more slender often accompanied by the sophistication of polished granite or marble. Art deco style in the 1930s introduced features, such as sunbursts and stepped fascias, and new materials, such as chrome and vitrolite.
- 2.8 Since the mid-20th century, modern architecture has minimised the impact of shopfronts. Float glass became available in large sheets from 1959 and frameless jointing techniques have made most of the structural elements unnecessary. In the 1970s air curtain technology imported from America enabled some shops to operate without a shopfront other than folding doors for the night-time. However, there are signs that sustainability issues and rising fuel cost are forcing a return to more traditional forms.

### 3. CONNAUGHT AVENUE AND OLD ROAD

#### Character

3.1 Although there is a 16th century church, nothing else survives of old Frinton, other than remnants of the early street pattern, such as Old Road. The population was only 55 in 1881.

3.2 The planned development, which saw the old pattern overlaid by the now familiar grid of streets, was set out in the 1890s. Station Road, soon to become Connaught Avenue, provided the direct link between the railway station and the seafront. It also became the commercial focus of the town and, in its inter-war heyday, was known for the sophistication of its shops. It was commonly referred to as 'the Bond Street of East Anglia' but this title has proved difficult to sustain.

3.3 Building plots on Connaught Avenue were sold individually and in blocks. A sales plan of 1899 shows that the first to be built were the two blocks at the southern end of the south side together with the terrace at 5-15 Old Road. Rapid development followed in the early years of the 20th century and in the 1920s.

3.4 The haste to complete the retail frontages of Connaught Avenue is evident in the cases where single-storey shops were built without the upper floors. Accommodation above the shops provided independent flats and occasionally offices, necessitating separate doorways at street level. However, living accommodation was often integral with the practice of shop-keeping. Sales particulars in 1950, for No.51 (now the Cake Kitchen), offer 'an

arcade front and spacious display windows with accommodation over', but also 'a living room, scullery, coalplace and larder included on the ground floor.'

3.5 The piecemeal development of Connaught Avenue has left a lively townscape of varied styles united by use of brick or render and a general height of 2 ½ - 3 storeys. The skyline is constantly punctuated by gables or gabled dormers.

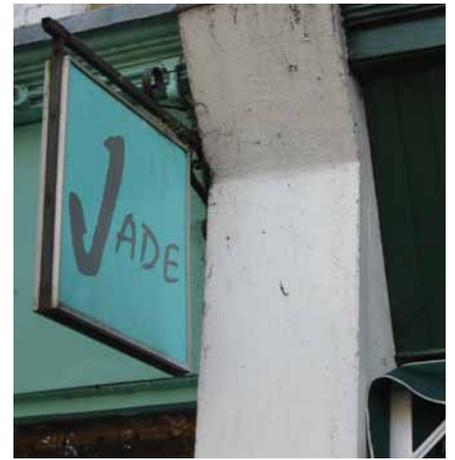
3.6 The effect of the block developments is the discernible 'family groups' of buildings, notably at Nos.21-33, Nos.4-12 and rounded corner at Nos.1-7. There is clear evidence of a consistency of shopfronts within these groups and there are some important pairs, such as Nos.15/17. The evidence includes pilasters and console brackets, tiles and faience (glazed terracotta) decoration.



*The first plots to be developed established the rhythm of Connaught Avenue*

### Issues

- 3.7 Several original shopfronts have survived and more survive in part and may be recoverable. Many of the changes have been led by function, rather than tradition. This has reduced the distinctiveness of Connaught Avenue and has introduced over-large signage and non-traditional materials, such as brushed aluminium and plastic.
- 3.8 There is, therefore, considerable scope for future improvement. The feasibility of this is demonstrated by those cases, such as the Italian restaurant at No.52, where replacement shopfronts have been undertaken with full regard for the character of the area.
- 3.9 Priorities for the Connaught Avenue shopfronts are:
- To re-establish the primary framework particularly in the 'family' groups and matched pairs.
  - To use a reduced palette of materials related to history and status, generally timber, faience and occasionally bronze.
  - To maintain traditional features, such as recessed entrances, stall-risers and glazing divisions.
  - To use traditional signwriting within the confines of the original fascias.
  - To take full account of character in designing any modernisation, such as improved access.



It may not be possible to regain the 'Bond Street' epithet for Connaught Avenue, but the fact remains that the quality decisions made for individual properties have a direct bearing on the overall trading strength of the street as a whole.



*Much of this shopfront survives, but the dividing pilaster has been stripped of its detail*

## 4. SHOPFRONT PRINCIPLES

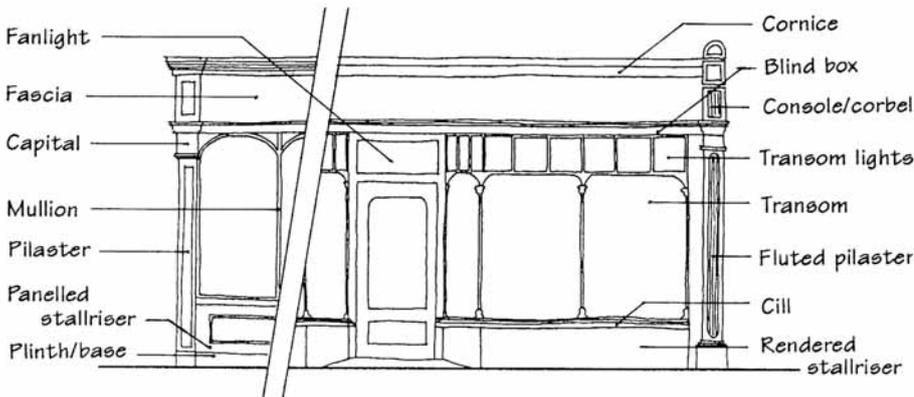
### General

- 4.1 The first consideration must be the wider townscape. There may be continuing themes or proportions along the street that should be observed. This is particularly important if the building is part of a designed 'family' group – a pair or a terrace. It is also important to consider whether there are any vertical alignments in the building that should be recognised in the design.

1. *Proposals must be seen in the context of the townscape and of the whole building.*

### Design and construction: The primary frame

- 4.2 In addition to framing the display of goods or services, the purpose of a shopfront is to carry the load of the upper floors safely to the ground in a convincing manner. In most cases, there is a substantial beam spanning the width of the shop supported by piers or the cross-walls to either side.
- 4.3 This post-and-beam construction is the basis of classical architecture and it is not surprising, therefore, that classical details are commonly used to dignify the shopfront opening. Thus the posts become columns or pilasters and the beam is expressed as the fascia with a cornice moulding above. The fascia bears on the heads of the pilasters often with console brackets at either end.



*The elements of a traditional shopfront*

- 4.4 Modern buildings have less need to rely on classical decoration because their structure is already apparent in the architecture.

2. *The essential architectural framework of shopfronts separates the shop units and establishes the rhythm of the townscape. The Framework must be retained or re-established where elements have been lost.*

#### Fascias

3. *The fascia should not extend into the first floor area.*
4. *Deep fascias tend to be overbearing. In new designs, fascias will be no more than one fifth of the overall shopfront height.*
5. *The top edge of the fascia should have a cornice moulding, which has the added benefit of deflecting the weather from the fascia.*
6. *Where a shop occupies adjacent properties, the fascia should be divided on the line of the party wall. Traditionally this is achieved by an intermediate console and pilaster.*
7. *Blind boxes should be incorporated behind fascias.*
8. *Box fascias with internal illumination are unacceptable.*



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*An over-deep fascia spans two properties regardless of the architectural division.  
This detracts from the rhythm of the townscape.*

Pilasters

9. *Pilasters should stand proud of the shopfront face.*
10. *They generally have three-dimensional modelling in the form of plinths, panels, capitals and console brackets, which should be retained or reinstated.*
11. *Mouldings must always be an integral part of the design. Details applied to a flat surface are unconvincing and must be avoided.*



*Pilasters eroded by rainwater pipes and alarm box*

4.5 Once the primary frame has been established, there is more freedom within it for new shopfronts to respond to localised needs – Doors may be central or to either side, for instance. However, in older property where historical elements are established there is a general presumption in favour of retention and reinstatement .

### **Stallrisers**

4.6 Modern shopfronts may have windows that rise from floor level, but traditionally there is a solid panel below the window which provides a visual base and allows goods to be presented closer to eye level. Stallrisers may incorporate openings to provide light and ventilation to basements. They can also improve security.

12. *Stallrisers are often made of panelled timber, but impervious materials – brick, stone, render – have also been used to resist dampness and rot. Clues as to what is appropriate should be apparent from the upper floors or neighbouring property.*

13. *The height of stallrisers should be determined by the height of the plinth on the pilaster. They are often surmounted by a moulded cill.*

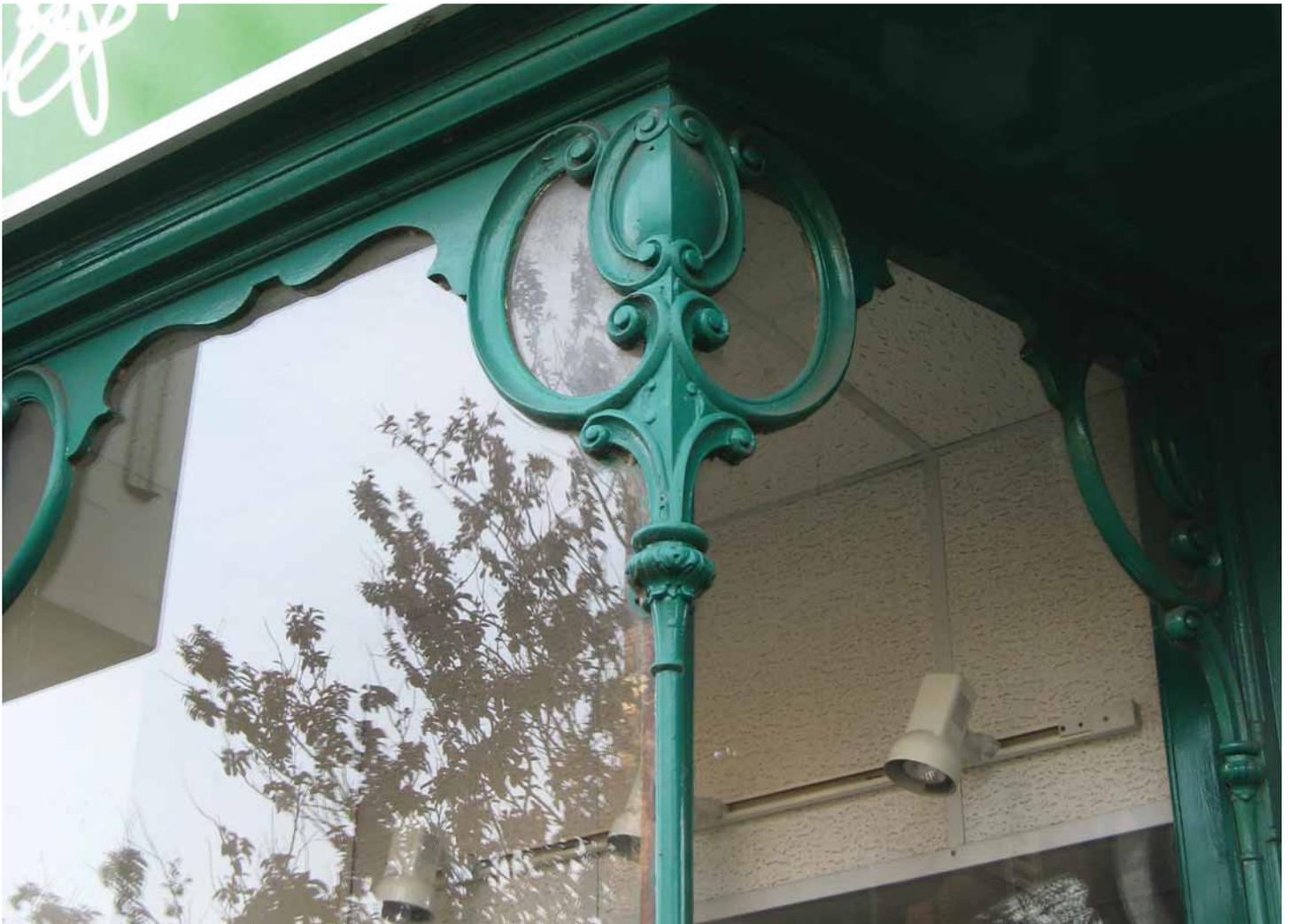
### Doors

14. *In historic shopfronts, the detailing of doors should respect the style and character of the property. They are generally glazed, but may have a solid panel up to cill height so that the line reads across.*

15. *Recessed doorways with curved or splayed glass leading into them add to the liveliness of frontages and are to be encouraged.*

16. *Access to upper floors should be maintained. Access doors will generally be solid but detailing, such as panelling, should complement the overall shopfront design.*

17. *Folding doors in modern shopfronts should still include a deep bottom rail in order to provide a visual base that harmonises with other shops when they are closed.*



*Survival of ornate window detail*

## Windows

- 4.7 Historically, the division of shop windows into separate panes was determined by limitations in the size of glass manufacture. This gave rise to the need for structural glazing bars known as mullions (vertical) and transoms (horizontal). The panes became larger as the technology progressed. In Edwardian shopfronts, however, it is common to find small panes of glass above the transom in contrast with the larger panes below

18. *Historical glazing patterns should be retained or reinstated.*
19. *In new designs, the layout of glazing should not conflict with the age and style of the 'parent' building.*
20. *Transom lights should be retained. They can be used to disguise suspended ceilings.*

## Materials and colour

- 4.8 In general, shopfronts need to be durable and simple to maintain. It is best, therefore, to minimise the variety of materials and to avoid those that have not stood the test of time.

- 4.9 Traditionally, timber has been used for shopfront construction and it still has the advantage of being extremely versatile. Softwoods were generally used as they were almost always painted. However, the most readily available softwoods today are faster grown and less stable than in the past, so careful selection is necessary.

- 4.10 Hardwoods, such as oak or mahogany, were only used where polished finishes were required or for delicate sections. Today, hardwoods are sometimes used in place of poor quality softwoods, but care must be taken to ensure that they are from sustainable sources and can take necessary finishes. Advice on timber selection is available from TRADA (see Appendix 2).

21. *Timber should be close-grained, knot-free and capable of being painted.*
22. *Where timber panels are used for stallrisers, it is important that they are treated with a preservative and that there is adequate damp separation from the ground.*

- 4.11 The vulnerability of shopfronts to rising damp and to splashing from passing vehicles has led to many stallrisers being constructed of impervious materials, such as stone, brick, render or ceramic tiles. Pilasters and consoles may be similarly constructed, although the use of tiles or other materials to cover up historical detail is never acceptable.

- 4.12 Metals have sometimes been used in order to minimise the section of framing components. These have generally been bronze or chrome-plated steel. The more recent use of satin-finished aluminium has not evoked the same quality and has often suffered from corrosion, particularly in sea air. It is therefore not recommended.

- 4.13 Shopfronts are generally painted, except where self-finished materials, such as ceramics, glass or metals, are used. In the past, paints did not achieve the high gloss of modern paints, so matt or semi-matt versions are preferable. Colours should be muted so that lettering and goods for sale can stand out. For the same reasons, the high gloss and garish colours of modern plastics must be avoided.





*Ceramic tiles were often used in butchers and fishmongers to provide a decorative and hygienic surface*

23. *Use matt finishes in subdued colours.*

24. *Avoid non-traditional materials such as satin aluminium and plastics.*

### **Blinds, shutters and security**

4.14 There is a sound tradition for retractable blinds to protect shops and shoppers from sunlight or rain. Flat roller blinds should use canvas or a similar non-reflective material and signage should be kept to the minimum necessary. Fixed 'Dutch' canopies tend to obscure the detail of shopfronts and are, therefore, unacceptable.

25. *Retain and refurbish existing traditional blinds.*

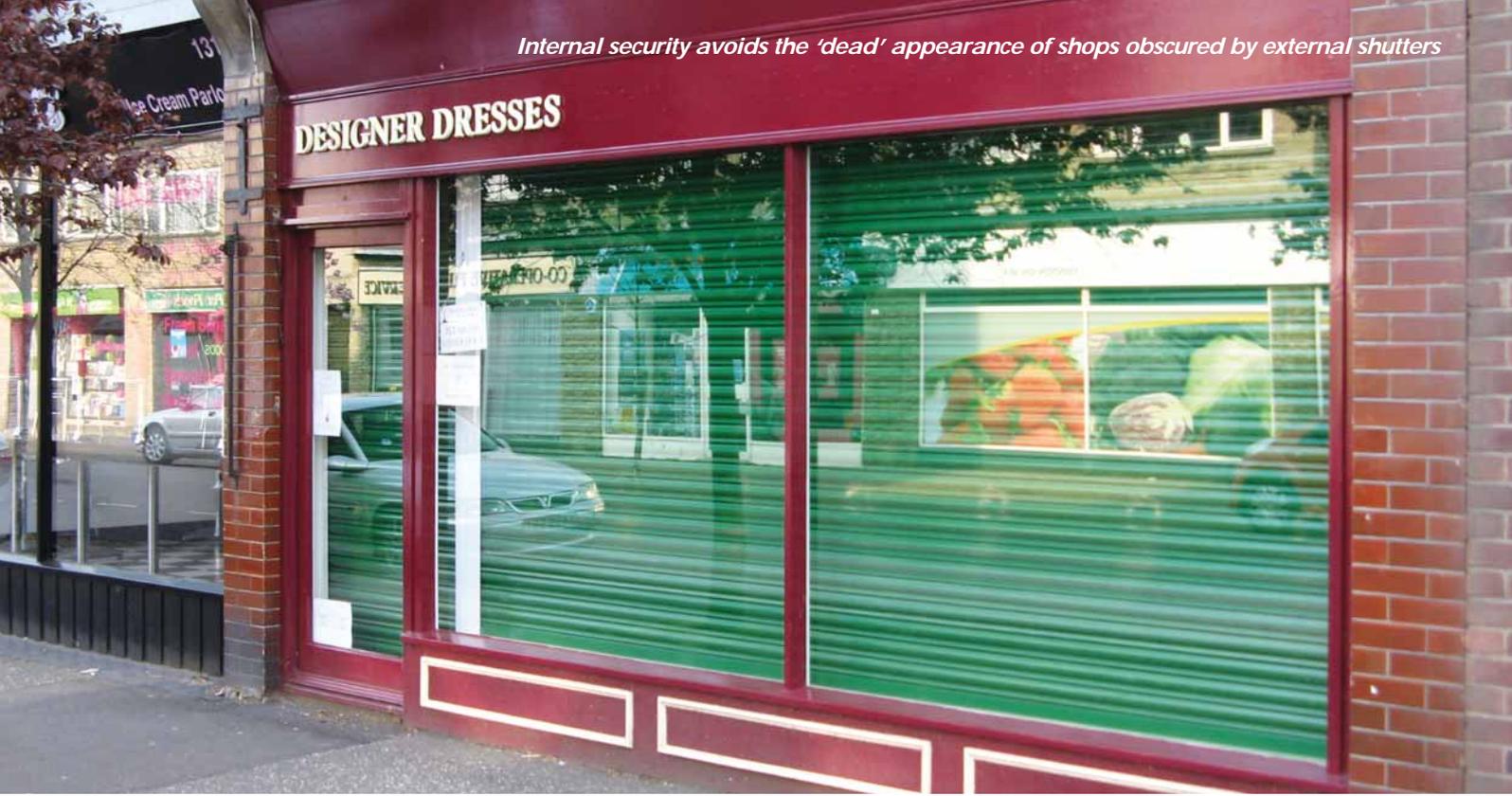
26. *Retracting mechanisms should be concealed behind the fascia or behind a blind lath just below it.*

27. *Non-reflective surfaces and 'Dutch' canopies are not acceptable*

28. *A retracting blind must have a clearance of at least 2.1m above the pavement and the leading edge must be at least 0.9m back from the kerb, with no side panels.*



*Plain flat retracting blinds are more traditional than 'Dutch' blinds*



- 4.15 Modern glazing must be capable of minimising injury, if it is broken. This tends to rule out traditional plate glass except in areas that people do not come into contact with. Instead, use is made of toughened glass, which shatters under extreme impact, or laminated glass, which crazes. Laminated glass also provides effective security because it does not break. However, rebate requirements for modern glazing systems may lead to the need for sensitive modifications to traditional shopfronts.
- 4.16 While solid shutters were used in the past to protect the glass as well as the contents of shops, their modern successors attract fly-posting and graffiti, and create 'dead' frontages. Laminated glass and the lighting of interiors allow the vitality of the street to continue out of hours. This improves the character and safety of the street to the benefit of the local community and retailers alike.
- 4.17 Where a shutter is still considered necessary, it should be of the open mesh type installed internally and as unobtrusively as possible.
29. *Solid external roller shutters are not acceptable.*
30. *Consider the security benefits of toughened or laminated glass.*
31. *All security devices should have a minimal effect on the qualities of the shopfront and of the street. Any shutters should, therefore, be internal with hidden mountings and operating mechanisms. They should be of open mesh construction and of an unobtrusive colour.*
32. *Thought should be given to ensure that burglar and fire alarms are positioned unobtrusively.*

## Signage and lighting

- 4.18 Simple signs communicate effectively, so proliferation and the introduction of advertising are to be avoided. Instead, signage must relate to the scale and character of the building and the street.
- 4.19 Any sign that causes an obstruction to the highway, such as 'A' boards, may be removed by the County Council under powers provided in the Highways Acts.
33. *Signage should be limited to the name and purpose of the business rather than the advertisement of products.*
34. *Fascia signs should use signwriting or individual letters in colours that contrast with their backgrounds. Lower case fonts, with initial capitals as necessary, are easier to read than all capitals.*
35. *Superimposed box fascias are not acceptable.*
36. *Corporate images must be capable of adapting to the dimensions and character of the shopfront.*
37. *Hanging or projecting signs are welcome, but there should be no more than one such sign to a shop. A minimum clearance of 2.6m is required between the pavement and the underside of the sign, and the top of the sign must not be higher than the first floor cill level.*
38. *No signage will intrude above the fascia, except as defined in 37 above.*



*Too much signage obscures the shopfront*

4.20 In many cases, sufficient illumination is provided by ambient street-lighting and the internal lighting of the shop. Where further lighting is desired, the source must be as unobtrusive as possible. Internally illuminated box signs are not acceptable.

39. *Concealed illumination of fascias can be achieved through spotlights built into soffits or tubes hidden in troughs. Alternatively, halo lighting provides light from behind individual letters.*

40. *Back-lit fascias and large spot-lights will not be allowed. Swan-neck lights may be acceptable where they can be shown to be unobtrusive.*

### **Access**

4.21 The Disability Discrimination Act requires that those who provide a service to the public must take reasonable steps to ensure adequate access for people of all abilities. In new developments, accessibility will be an integral part of the design. With older buildings, some adaptation may be necessary commensurate with the need to preserve the special interest of the area. Much can be achieved without unduly compromising historic character.

4.22 Steps and thresholds should be replaced where possible with ramps no steeper than 1:12 with a non-slip surface. Ramps projecting onto the pavement will not be allowed. They must, therefore, be accommodated within recessed entrances or internally. Barclays Bank provides an example of this.

4.23 Doors should provide a minimum opening width of 800mm, although 925mm is preferred. They should include a kicking plate at the base, handles that are easy to grasp, clear signs to indicate 'push' or 'pull', and door-closers with a minimum of pressure.

4.24 For larger premises, automatic doors are preferred. Where they are largely glass, doors should be distinguished from windows with banding or signage.

*Design quality is equally important for shopfronts in more modern buildings*



### Application of the principles

- 4.25 Tendring District Council is determined to raise the overall quality of shopfronts, particularly in Connaught Avenue, and to maintain high standards where they already exist. The Council will use the principles in its interpretation of national and local policy, and in the determination of applications.
- 4.26 The Council will resist wholesale removal of shopfronts unless it can be demonstrated that they do not contribute positively to the character of the conservation area. Instead, the presumption will be for repair and refurbishment rather than replacement.
- 4.27 Where replacement or major refurbishment proves necessary, designs must be based on research in order to establish local precedents, rather than conjecture. Principle 1 above draws attention to the importance of local character in the wider townscape.
- 4.28 The Council is particularly concerned to ensure that every opportunity is taken to re-establish the primary framework (pilasters, fascias and cornices) where a shopfront is part of a pair or family group that share common design elements.



*A modern shopfront that maintains many of the design principles*

## 5. POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### **National and local planning policy**

5.1 Planning legislation makes it a statutory duty for local authorities not only to designate conservation areas but also to bring forward proposals for their enhancement. It also provides the mechanisms for requiring applications for planning permission, and for conservation area consent.

5.2 Government policy is provided in Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements.

#### Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

5.3 PPS1 sets the overarching policies for planning including as key objectives, the enhancement of the historic environment and promotion of a high quality of inclusive design. 'Good design is indivisible from good planning.'

#### Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres

5.4 PPS6 promotes the vitality and viability of town centres by 'encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment accessible to all.'

#### Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment

5.5 PPG15 addresses the management of conservation areas and establishes the presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to their character or appearance. Annex C provides guidance on alterations to listed buildings which is nonetheless relevant to buildings in conservation areas, particularly with respect to shopfronts. The relevant guidance is reproduced at Appendix 2. A revision of PPG15 is expected during 2010. It will be published as a Planning Policy Statement (PPS15).

#### The Tendring District Local Plan 2007

5.6 The local plan acknowledges the need to consolidate the retail core of Frinton within Connaught Avenue and maintain its role as a quality shopping centre. Clearly, this has implications for development control practice especially in the context of the Frinton Conservation Area.

5.7 Policy EN17 states that 'Development within a conservation area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.' In particular, 'Development will be refused where:

*a) it would harm the character or appearance of the conservation area, including historic plan form, relationship between buildings, the arrangement of open areas and their enclosure, grain, or significant natural or heritage features;*

*b) the height, siting, form, massing, proportions, elevation, design, or materials would not preserve or enhance the character of an area.'*

5.8 Policy EN18 addresses fascia and shopfront signs in conservation areas:

*'Fascia and shopfront signs in conservation areas will only be permitted if the advertisement or sign:*

*a) is either painted or individually lettered in a suitable material of an appropriate size and design in relation to the building or fascia upon which it is to be displayed;*

- b) *illumination is discreet in size and external to the sign;*
- c) *is of a traditional fascia or hanging type;*
- d) *is of the minimum size necessary to convey its message; and*
- e) *otherwise, would have no adverse effect on visual amenity or highway safety.'*

5.9 In addition, policies EN18a and EN18b place detailed constraints on the display of advertisements.

### **The need for permissions**

#### Planning permission

5.10 Any works which materially affect the external appearance of a shop will require planning permission. Thus an application is needed not only for a replacement shopfront but also for alterations, such as removing or adding glazing bars, installing security shutters or modifying the fascia. The Council's planning staff welcome pre-application discussions to ensure that all the issues have been taken into account at an early stage.

5.11 Planning permission is not generally required for repainting or repointing, or like-for-like repairs.

#### Conservation area consent

5.12 Consent is necessary for total or substantial demolition of a building.

#### Building regulations

5.13 Approval is required where a new shopfront is proposed, or where works involve a material change to the existing, structural alterations or changes to the means of escape. Early contact with the Council's Building Control staff is recommended.

#### Advertisement consent:

5.14 Many forms of advertising require consent under Control of Advertisement Regulations. The regulations are not simple and it is prudent to seek advice from the Council as to whether consent is needed and whether it is likely to be forthcoming. Where consent is needed, applications are considered on the basis of size, form, location, materials, finishes and illumination.

#### Highways

5.15 A licence under the Highways Acts is required for any works affecting the public highway, including the pavement. This includes the display of goods, siting of advertisements such as 'A' boards or serving food and drink. As highways authority, Essex County Council is keen to contribute to the vitality of Connaught Avenue and Old Road through the administration of licenses. In doing so, however, it will always take account of potential hazards and the need to ensure public safety.

### **Tendring District Council requirements for planning applications**

5.16 Applications are made on standard forms available from the Council's offices or website. In addition, a Design and Access Statement will be necessary. This will explain the need for the proposals, the form they will take and how they will fit into the streetscene. It will also explain how access expectations have been taken into account.

5.17 In addition, Design and Access Statements should explain how the proposals will enhance the character of the conservation area. Also, where external illumination is proposed, it should demonstrate that light levels will not cause adverse consequences such as glare or light pollution.

5.18 The level of detail supplied with the application must be sufficient for the Council to make a full assessment of the likely affect of the proposals on the building and on the street. The minimum requirements are:

- *Drawings or photomontages to illustrate the context of the site as existing and proposed must be to scale.*
- *Elevations of the building and shopfront as existing and proposed at a minimum scale of 1:50.*
- *A plan to show the relationship of the shopfront to the pavement and the shop interior at a minimum scale of 1:20.*
- *Cross-sections to show constructional detail at a minimum scale of 1:10.*
- *Detail drawings of mouldings at a minimum scale of 1:5.*



*Good surviving shopfront with restrained lettering set off by the bold colour*

## Community involvement

5.19 The draft guidance was made available on the Tendring District Council website and copies were provided for consideration by:

- *Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust.*
- *Frinton and Walton Town Council.*
- *Frinton Chamber of Commerce.*
- *Frinton Residents' Association.*
- *Local Ward Members of the District and Town Councils.*
- *Tendring District Council.*
- *Tendring District Council Planning Portfolio Holder.*

5.20 The Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust welcomed the document and had no need to make any further comment. No points were raised by the Chamber of Trade or the Residents' Association. The responses from the Frinton and Walton Town Council and from Tendring District Council were co-ordinated by the Heritage and Conservation Manager. These included:

- The emphasis on the purpose of the guidance (1.6)
- The effect of quality decisions on the overall trading position of the area (3.9)
- Several points of clarification that have been taken into account
- Further references that have been added to Appendix 4



*Shopfront obscured by advertisement*

- 5.21 The Town Council's central concern is to allow Frinton's commercial areas to thrive, but not at the expense of their heritage.
- 5.22 One particular issue raised, though not entirely related to shopfronts, was the damaging effect on the townscape of advertisements, especially where they obscure shop windows, fascias and the windows of upper floors. Advertisements should be kept to the minimum necessary and should always be secondary to their architectural context.
- 5.23 Where advertisements are causing harm to the amenity of the area, it is open to the District Council to take Discontinuance Action or to seek the designation of an Area of Special Control of Advertisements.

**General**

1. Proposals must be seen in the context of the townscape and of the whole building.

**Design and construction: The primary frame**

2. The essential architectural framework of shopfronts separates the shop units and establishes the rhythm of the townscape. The Framework must be retained or re-established where elements have been lost.

Fascias

3. The fascia should not extend into the first floor area and in any case must be below the first floor window cills.
4. Deep fascias tend to be overbearing and should be avoided. As a rule of thumb, fascias should be no more than one fifth of the overall shopfront height.
5. The top edge of the fascia should have a cornice moulding, which has the added benefit of deflecting the weather from the fascia.
6. Where a shop occupies adjacent properties, the fascia should be divided on the line of the party wall. Traditionally this is achieved by an intermediate console and pilaster.
7. Blind boxes should be incorporated behind fascias, rather than being planted on the surface.
8. Box fascias with internal illumination are generally unacceptable.

Pilasters

9. Pilasters should stand proud of the shopfront face.
10. They generally have three-dimensional modelling in the form of plinths, panels, capitals and console brackets, which should be retained or reinstated.
11. Mouldings must always be an integral part of the design. Details applied to a flat surface are unconvincing and should be avoided.

**Design and construction: Within the frame**Stallrisers

12. Stallrisers are often made of panelled timber, but impervious materials – brick, stone, render – have also been used to resist dampness and rot. Clues as to what is appropriate should be apparent from the upper floors or neighbouring property.
13. The height of stallrisers should be determined by the height of the plinth on the pilaster. They are often surmounted by a moulded cill.

Doors

14. In historic shopfronts, the detailing of doors should respect the style and character of the property. They are generally glazed, but may have a solid panel up to cill height so that the line reads across.

15. Recessed doorways with curved or splayed glass leading into them add to the liveliness of frontages.
16. Access to upper floors should be maintained. Access doors will generally be solid but detailing, such as panelling, should complement the overall shopfront design.
17. Folding doors in modern shopfronts should still include a deep bottom rail in order to provide a visual base that harmonises with other shops when they are closed.

#### Windows

18. Historical glazing patterns should be retained or reinstated.
19. In new designs, the layout of glazing should not conflict with the age and style of the 'parent' building.
20. Transom lights should be retained. They can be used to disguise suspended ceilings.

#### **Materials and colour**

21. Timber should be close-grained, knot-free and capable of being painted.
22. Where timber panels are used for stallrisers, it is important that they are treated with a preservative and that there is adequate damp separation from the ground.
23. Use matt finishes in subdued colours.
24. Avoid non-traditional materials such as satin aluminium and plastics.

#### **Blinds, shutters and security**

25. Retain and refurbish existing traditional blinds.
26. Retracting mechanisms should be concealed behind the fascia or behind a blind lath just below it.
27. Non-reflective surfaces and 'Dutch' canopies are not acceptable.
28. A retracting blind must have a clearance of at least 2.1m above the pavement and the leading edge must be at least 0.9m back from the kerb.
29. Solid external roller shutters are not acceptable.
30. Consider the security benefits of toughened or laminated glass.
31. All security devices should have a minimal effect on the qualities of the shopfront and of the street. Any shutters should, therefore, be internal with hidden mountings and operating mechanisms. They should be of open mesh construction and of an unobtrusive colour.
32. Thought should be given to ensure that burglar and fire alarms are positioned unobtrusively.

#### **Signage and lighting**

33. Signage should be limited to the name and purpose of the business rather than the advertisement of products.





34. Fascia signs should use signwriting or individual letters in colours that contrast with their backgrounds. Lower case fonts, with initial capitals as necessary, are easier to read than all capitals.
35. Superimposed box fascias are not acceptable.
36. Corporate images must be capable of adapting to the dimensions and character of the shopfront.
37. Hanging or projecting signs are welcome, but there should be no more than one such sign to a shop. A minimum clearance of 2.6m is required between the pavement and the underside of the sign, and the top of the sign must not be higher than the first floor cill level.
38. Apart from hanging or projecting signs, no signage should intrude into the upper floors.
39. Concealed illumination of fascias can be achieved through spotlights built into soffits or tubes hidden in troughs. Alternatively, halo lighting provides light from behind individual letters.
40. Back-lit fascias, large spot-lights or swan necks are generally obtrusive and unacceptable.

#### **Access**

41. Steps and thresholds should be replaced where possible with ramps no steeper than 1:12 with a non-slip surface. Ramps projecting onto the pavement are likely to be considered a hazard. They should, therefore, be accommodated within recessed entrances or internally.
42. Doors should provide a minimum opening width of 800mm, although 925mm is preferred. They should include a kicking plate at the base, handles that are easy to grasp, clear signs to indicate 'push' or 'pull', and door-closers with a minimum of pressure.
43. For larger premises, automatic doors are preferred. Where they are largely glass, doors should be distinguished from windows with banding or signage.

#### **Application of the principles**

44. The Council will resist wholesale removal of shopfronts unless it can be demonstrated that they do not contribute positively to the character of the conservation area. Instead, the presumption will be for repair and refurbishment rather than replacement.
45. Where replacement, or major refurbishment, proves necessary, designs must be based on research into established local precedents, rather than pure conjecture.
46. The Council is particularly concerned to ensure that every opportunity is taken to re-establish the primary framework (pilasters, fascias and cornices) where a shopfront is part of a pair or terrace that share common design elements.

**Annex C to PPG15**

*Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment September 1994*

## SHOPFRONTS

**Shopfronts and display windows**

- C.52 Wherever shopfronts of merit survive they should be retained. Early 20th century shopfronts such as those with Art Nouveau or early Art Deco details can be as unusual as 18th or 19th century examples. Features of value such as blinds in blind boxes, shutters in shutter boxes against an upright and stall-risers are often concealed beneath later facings. Premises where works to shopfronts are proposed should always be inspected and the possible survival of old features checked.
- C.53 There are many examples of first floor display windows, and infrequent examples of second floor ones. These date from the late 19th and early 20th century and give a characteristic appearance which should be preserved. Proposals to remove a modern shopfront to restore an elevation to its previous designed appearance matching the rest of a terrace can usually be encouraged, but should be viewed with caution in cases where the shop front is of interest in itself.

**Shop blinds and security grilles**

- C.54 Retractable apron blinds covered in canvas are often characteristic features of historic shopfronts and should be retained. Modern plastic canopies are not acceptable.
- C.55 External steel roller shutters are not suitable for historic shopfronts. Traditional timber shutters give reasonable protection: laminated glass and internal chain-link screens are modern alternatives. Traditional stall-risers are an effective deterrent to 'ram-raiders', as are small shop windows between masonry piers.

**New shop fronts**

- C.56 New shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with the rest of the elevation and incorporate any ground floor details of interest. Large inserted plate-glass shop fronts without any visual support for the upper part of the premises can have an unfortunate effect, and shop fronts should not extend into the storey above or alter the proportion of first floor windows. Modern materials such as plastics are to be avoided as facings. The fascia board should not be out of scale with the building as a whole and should usually be finished at the top with console brackets and a cornice or other capping. Not only is this the traditional treatment for shop fronts but the cornice provides an architectural division between the modern shop front and the older upper floors.
- C.57 Depending on the nature of a proposed commercial or office use, it is very often unnecessary to provide display windows and thus alter an intact ground floor. Existing openings should be retained wherever possible, and if alteration is necessary it should only be to the minimum extent required. Standard corporate shop fronts are seldom appropriate for historic buildings, nor are internally illuminated fascia boxes or signs. The prestige value of listed building premises and their distinctive detailing can be emphasised instead.





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*Fascia spanning two buildings divided by an intermediate pilaster and bracket to acknowledge the architectural division*

### **Tendring District Council**

- *Planning*
- *Conservation*
- *Building Control*

Council Offices, Thorpe Road, Weeley, Essex CO16 9AJ  
T> 01255 686868 [www.tendringdc.gov.uk](http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk)

### **Essex County Council**

- *Highways – Local Area Office*

910, The Crescent, Colchester Business Park, Colchester, CO4 9QQ

T> 0845 603 7620 [www.ehss.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.ehss.essexcc.gov.uk)

### **Essex Police**

- *Architectural Liaison Officers*

Eastern Division, Colchester Police Station, Colchester, CO3 3BU

T> 0300 33 4444 [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)

### **Industry groups**

- *National Association of Shopfitters*

NAS House, 411 Limpsfield Road, Warlingham, Surrey, CR6 9HA

T> 01883 624961 [www.shopfitters.org](http://www.shopfitters.org)

- *Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA)*

Stocking Lane, Hughenden Valley, High Wycombe, HP14 4ND

T> 01494 569600 [www.trada.co.uk](http://www.trada.co.uk)

## APPENDIX 4 REFERENCES

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- <http://www.accesscode.info/>  
*Accesscode: a Code of Practice on Access and Mobility*
- \* Note: In 2009, the EHTF recognised its relevance to the whole of the UK by changing its name to the Historic Towns Forum

