

5. SHOP FRONTS

- 5.1 There is a variety of different types of shopping area in Dacorum, including the modern shopping centre in Hemel Hempstead, the traditional "High Street" of Berkhamsted and Tring, the recent local centres of Hemel Hempstead and the older local centres of Apsley and Kings Langley, and other small parades or individual shops. These shopping areas are listed in Policy 39. The older town and local centres contain conservation areas and listed buildings. This Guideline supplements shopping policies in Section 6 of Part 3 of the plan. It seeks shop front designs of a high standard to ensure that all shopping areas are pleasant to be in and compare favourably with surrounding towns or competing facilities.
- 5.2 The main character of the older shops is created by the continually changing forms and styles of individual buildings and their shop fronts coming together to form the street scene. This gives a vertical emphasis to the street, creating variety and interest. This variety has been achieved over many years and can rarely be created instantly in any single development.
- 5.3 New developments tend to be large monolithic structures which put numerous constraints on shop front potential. The design emphasis is usually related to convenience and efficiency, and this is evident in the lack of interest in the street scene.
- 5.4 Conflict can arise when new shop fronts are unsympathetically inserted into older buildings, adversely affecting the character and proportions of these buildings. It is possible for new, up-to-date fronts to be inserted successfully into older shops, if respect is shown for the qualities of the existing building and its architectural features, and sensitive design is employed.
- 5.5 Detailed aspects of shop front design should be treated as follows:
- (i) Fascia Design**
- 5.5.1 Fascias by their nature form an important element in the design of shop fronts, advertising the name of the shops and forming the link between the building above and the window display below.
- 5.5.2 Fascias should not detract from the style, scale and proportion of the building on which they are located. Modern materials are not appropriate for old shop fronts which traditionally had hand-painted timber fascias. Illumination of fascias is dealt with in Section 12. Advertisements. Imagination should be exercised in the choice of lettering styles to fit the nature of the business.

5.5.3 The construction of fascias of a common depth which link two or more buildings that have separate architectural identities will not normally be permitted.

5.5.4 A reduction in the depth of the new fascia design will be required, when an existing shop front is to be replaced and where the existing fascia depth is considered excessive.

(ii) Signs

5.5.5 Signs and advertisements will be restricted to ground floor wall areas.

5.5.6 In addition to fascia boards, many retailers feel it necessary to duplicate the information on projecting or window signs. Left unrestrained, this can lead to an unsightly proliferation of signs.

5.5.7 Projecting signs which add to the general interest and character of the street scene are preferable, e.g. signs that project a picture (as used by public houses) or a symbol (such as a clock for a jewellers) or an easily recognised logo. Spotlit hand-painted signs are most successful in giving atmosphere and character at night.

5.5.8 Window or wall signs should relate to the location, size and proportions of the wall or window being used and the character of the building itself. They are unlikely to be approved unless very well designed.

(iii) Window Displays

5.5.9 Although not normally subject to control, window displays can contribute to or detract from the overall effect of the shop front design. Shop fronts should be designed with a certain type or range of window displays in mind, so that the optimum visual effect can be achieved. Applicants wishing to incorporate large areas of clear glass without stall risers may be required to give an indication of the type and quality of display likely to be used.

(iv) Stall Risers

5.5.10 Stall risers should normally be low and thus constitute a small and complementary proportion of the shop front. Where they are required to be much higher, the design and materials should particularly respect the style and nature of the whole building.

5.5.11 Any lettering should be in character with and generally be subordinate to the fascia.

(v) Shop Blinds

- 5.5.12 Where proposed, shop blinds should only extend to a maximum distance of within one metre of road kerbs, in order to prevent contact with large vehicles overhanging the pavement.
- 5.5.13 Proposals for new shop fronts should not normally affect the first floor, particularly the windows, of the existing building.