Our borough has a diverse range of shopping opportunities, from small parades to big town centres. In these difficult economic times, we want to encourage as many of our residents and visitors as possible to spend locally within these centres. To support this, it is vital that the environment provides as enjoyable a shopping experience as possible. The quality of shop front design is a vital component of improving the look and feel of these centres. A more attractive environment will in turn attract more customers and encourage them to shop for longer, contributing to lower vacancy rates.

The council is also committed to regeneration of the borough’s town centres. To achieve this, we want to deliver a step change in the quality and design of our street scene, creating a place to be proud of, where people will want to visit and stay, and where the community will be able to come together and celebrate.

We hope that these guidelines make the process of refurbishing and installing shop fronts in Hounslow clearer; and at the same time inspire thoughtful and successful approaches to shop front design to attract customers and investment into our shops, parades and town centres.
The design and appearance of a shop front and its signage has a big impact on both the building and the street on which it is located. A well-designed shop front should respect both the building itself and the character of its street. Good design is positive for the overall appearance of the street scene, ensuring a high quality retail environment which is more attractive to shoppers, visitors and opportunities for inward investment. These guidelines aim to strike a balance between encouraging best practice in shop front design and not stifling creativity and the expression of personal and ethnic identity where it’s appropriate.

This document provides guidance on the principles that should be followed in the design of new shop fronts.

This document is intended to help those:

- Wishing to erect signs, canopies or security features on a shop
- Wishing to alter or install a new shop front
- Wishing to display goods in front of their shop
- Seeking to achieve a good standard of design which will benefit traders, shoppers and the quality of the environment
- Wanting to establish whether a permission or consent is required for the work planned on a shop front.

These guidelines apply to all shops in Use Class A (inclusive of restaurants, cafes, bars and takeaways) in the borough, from individual units, to those located in a local parade or town centre.

using the design objectives

This document sets out nine design objectives which establish good practice for designing shop fronts in the borough, both for traditional and modern units. The text in the blue boxes provide the design guidelines and the accompanying text outside of the blue box provides supporting and explanatory information.

All designs should adhere to Building Regulations to ensure that they are in line with space, design and accessibility standards; and should seek the required permissions to be authorised.

Using this document and engaging in early discussion with the council will help to ensure the most successful shop front outcomes, with the required permissions and consents.
policy context

This document is based on planning policies set out at local, regional and national level. It expands on policies within the council’s Development Plan and provides detail at a local level.

**local**

Unitary Development Plan (2003; saved 2007)

Policy S.4.2 Shop Front Design
High standards of design are expected for all new shop fronts.

Policy ENV-B.1.4 Advertisements
Advertisements must follow the relevant criteria and not be unsafe or unduly dominant.

Policy ENV-B.1.9 Safety and Security
New developments should be designed to create a safe and secure environment and reduce opportunities for crime.

Emerging Local Plan (2013)

The emerging Local Plan for Hounslow will ensure that the relevant policies from the UDP are replicated as appropriate. This SPD will link to these policies as they emerge.

**regional**

London Plan (2011)

Policy 2.15 Town Centres
Supports the promotion of town centres and their surrounding neighbourhoods, helping to build a sense of place and identity.

Policy 7.2 An Inclusive Environment
Ensuring high standards of accessibility and inclusion within design

Policy 7.3 Designing Out Crime
Seeks to create safe, secure and appropriately accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

**national**


Chapter 7 Requiring Good Design
The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment.

It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development.

Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment.
what permissions and consents will you need?

The scale and nature of the alterations or additions to a shop front will determine whether approval must be sought from the council. This could be for a planning permission; a listed building, conservation or advertising consent; or a licence from the Street Trading Team.

It is important to remember that an application for these approvals may not be successful. Where the proposed alteration or addition contravenes policy, guidance or regulations, the council may refuse the application and the work to the shop front will not be allowed. Where work to a shop front is found to be in breach of, or without the required permissions and consents, enforcement action will be taken by the council where considered expedient.

- Will you be replacing the complete shop front?
- Will you be making any significant alterations to the shop front?
- Will you be installing - a blind/ canopy
  - shutters/ a grille
  - a structure on the forecourt?
- Will the works include an internally/ externally illuminated sign?
- Will the works include a new/ additional fascia or projecting sign?
- Is the unit in an area of Special Advertisement Control?
- You may need to apply for planning permission.
  - Contact the Planning Department for further information.
- Is the shop in or part of a listed building or located within a conservation area?
  - Check online at: www.hounslow.gov.uk/conservation
  - You may need listed building or conservation area consent.
  - Any work should preserve and enhance the listed buildings and/or conservation areas
  - Contact the Planning Department for further information.
- You will need to obtain a license from the council.
  - Contact the Licensing Team for further information.
glossary

a  Fascia
   Area at the top of the shop front where the shop sign is to be positioned.

b  Cornice
   Area above the fascia, either decorative or plain.

c  Pilaster
   A vertical dividing element between shops, usually sitting forward of the shop front.

d  Console/Corbel
   A decorative or plain element at the top of the pilaster. Its height determines height of fascia.

e  Plinth
   The base element upon which a column, pedestal or structure rest. Usually resting on the ground.

f  Stall riser
   This is the solid section beneath the window sill.

g  Sill
   Horizontal element at the bottom of the window frame.
**Canopy / Awning**
An external shade that folds or rolls out providing shelter and shade.

**Mullion**
A vertical element that forms a division between units of a window or door.

**Transom**
A horizontal element that forms a division between units of a window or door.

**Fanlight**
A fan-like window placed over another window or commonly a doorway.

**Shop number**
Street number positioned on the fascia or fanlight.

**Projecting sign**
Sign that is at a right angle to the fascia and has the same name on it.
The earliest forms of trading were at markets and fairs through open stalls, but by the late 18th century permanent shops started to become common along main roads. The first shop structures were adaptations to residential buildings or were simple cabins placed on the front of a house. Later styles resulted in purpose built shops with residential dwellings above or behind. As this form of shop unit became more prevalent, they often dominated street frontages with their design and style and in some places created the high streets we are familiar with today.

**Pre-twentieth Century**

Formal shop fronts were being built by the early 17th century, with the open area of the shop being enclosed by a simple screen or by windows and doors in some cases. This was the beginning of the first permanent retail structures, which included a *stallriser* below the shop ‘stall’ at the lower level, which helped to protect against the damp and raise the goods display to eye level, the window and the door for access, together with a *fascia* where the shop sign was located.

More permanent shop fronts were developed in the 18th century. Design was influenced by the size of the glass available as a result of industrial developments. Building character developed further during the Georgian period (1714-1830) to make shops more decorative; this was often influenced by a resurgence in popularity of Ancient Greek and Roman styles.

- **Pilasters**, or half-columns were located on the sides of shops to enhance elegance
- Above pilasters, curved brackets, or *corbels*, supported the *cornice* flashing (an overhanging ledge) and protected the end of the fascia. Corbels often contained and protected the ends of blinds and shutters, which were located above the shop front.
- A *cornice*, which was often made elaborate and decorative, projected out above the fascia to throw rainwater away from the shop
- Glass was of limited size as it was still hand-blown during the 18th century. Therefore the small panes of glass were divided up by glazing bars.

In the 19th century, projecting bay windows, which were previously the norm, were outlawed in many places as they obstructed the pavement. Recessed doorways became standard as they gave shelter as well as giving a greater view of the window display area.
The interwar period (1918-1939) brought economic uncertainty, however shop fronts continued to adapt with advances in materials and techniques available. The use of chrome, polished materials, such as Vitrolite (which was a coloured structural glass) and granite became popular during this time.

In the latter parts of the 20th century, many traditional shop fronts were replaced with ones which are now considered to be of lesser quality and merit. In the 1960s and ’70s, a change in design philosophy meant that the traditional design was no longer the norm and this often led to the creation of shop fronts with poor proportions, including over-large windows and dominant fascias.

The guidance in this document seeks to ensure good shop front design which complements the character of the overall building to achieve a sympathetic balance between the traditional and the modern aesthetic.
design objective one

shop front refurbishment: retention of original features

DO1
When refurbishing an existing shop front original features should be retained such as pilasters, corbels and stall risers. New shop fronts and signage should not obscure, damage or destroy such features and the original proportions of the shop front should be maintained. Where a shop is in a Conservation Area, particular care should be taken to retain the traditional features of an original shop front.

In cases where pilasters or corbels do not exist, strong divisions between each shop should be maintained.

Cash dispensers or ATMs should be sensitively placed and designed, when installed into existing shop fronts. The existing decorative detail should not be compromised. See DO2 for further details on installing ATMs.

The retention of architectural features of merit can help integrate a new shop front into a building. The shop front should not be considered as merely an insertion into the building.

Traditional features may have been removed from many shops, while others are concealed by more recent alterations. Where original features no longer exist, it may be desirable to reinstate original features or replace with similar features. Where they remain, opportunity should be taken to restore them. For further information on the 27 Conservation Areas within the borough, see the accompanying text for DO3.

The stall riser is a common example of an original feature. This was historically part of the shop display table and is still common in some types of shops. Stall risers raise the display of goods to a viewable level and provide a robust base to protect the shop front from damage. They also give the shop front character and proportion.

Retention of corbels, fascia and cornice ensure a harmonious and well-proportioned frontage.

Retention of stall riser, pilaster and the window mullions and transoms give a solid appearance to this shop front.
design objective two

creating well-proportioned frontages

DO2
When designing a completely new shop unit as part of a new building, a well-proportioned shop front is essential to ensure good design is achieved.

Elements such as doors, fascias and windows should all be in proportion with both the building itself (including the character of upper floors, scale, proportion and materials) and the general street scene.

Accordingly the removal of the shop front to create a completely open-fronted shop or the installation of large plate glass windows will not normally be acceptable.

Fascias should not be over large in relation to the building façade and the shop front, otherwise it will become disproportionate and out of scale. For further detail see DO7.

Glazing bars should be used to sub-divide large windows, giving them a sense of scale and proportion. Stall risers should be incorporated at the base of the window and should usually be between 0.4m and 0.7m in height.

Cash dispensers or ATMs
Where external ATMs are installed they should take up the minimum area of shop front possible and should not compromise the proportions or the design of the shop front. See DO1 for treatment in existing shop fronts.

External ATMs should be located appropriately to avoid the users of the ATM becoming an obstruction to other pedestrians.

Well-proportioned fascias, windows and doors help to achieve good shop front design. Applying this objective to all new shop fronts will help to ensure there is a common pattern of shop fronts along the street, creating a sense of character.

Large expanses of glass or completely open shops are usually out of scale with both the street scene and the upper floors of the premises and can create a featureless shop front.

Stall risers focus attention on the window display and raise it up to the shopper’s viewpoint. They provide a strong, solid base to the shop front.

Signage, lighting and ATMs should be in proportion with the overall shop front to ensure they do not dominate the character and context of the building and street scene.
DO3
The type of material used in a shop front is an important element of the overall design and should take into account the character of the building.

Designs should not employ a large number of different materials or use materials that could clash with adjoining premises or the general street scene.

Traditional materials such as timber, masonry, and stucco are normally more appropriate within Conservation Areas and on Listed, historic or traditional buildings. For new shop units, materials used should be in keeping with the wider building and be of a high quality. Synthetic materials such as anodised aluminium, plastic or fibreglass are rarely appropriate.

Care must be taken in the choice of different materials and colours used to ensure a sensitive design is achieved, particularly if the shop is located within a Conservation Area.

There are 27 Conservation Areas in the borough and the council’s policy is to preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of these areas and to resist inappropriate or harmful development.

To find out whether your building lies in a conservation area, download the conservation area map (found online at www.hounslow.gov.uk/conservation) or contact the planning department.

If the shop is part of a Listed Building then any changes to the shop front material will require a Listed Building Consent before works can be undertaken.

To find out whether your building is Listed as a ‘building of special historic or architectural interest’, contact the Planning Department.

Clashing colours and materials can lead to a messy and confusing shop front.

A simpler and higher quality range of materials makes the signage clearer to read and more effective.
DO4

Shop entrances should be fully accessible to all, including people with disabilities and those with prams or push-chairs. Building Regulations must be followed in all cases.

The minimum entrance-door widths to a new shop should be 1m, with at least 0.3m of space to the pull side of the door between the leading edge and the internal wall.

The pavement and the shop floor should be one level, to assist entrance. If a change in level is unavoidable, an internal, non-slip ramp should be installed. A ramp should be no steeper than 1:15 if its length is less than 5m, or 1:20 if it is longer.

Entrance-doors should be clearly marked out and distinguishable from the shop window. Good lighting and variation in materials can be used to aid visibility, particularly for those with limited sight.

Door furniture (i.e. handrails and handles) should be easy to use and contrasting in colour with the door itself.

Where there is a separate door to the upper floors of premises, this must be retained to allow independent access and continued use of the upper floors.

Access to shops should comply with relevant Building Regulations and should be designed to be accessible to disabled people, in line with the Equalities Act 2010 (found online at www.legislation.gov.uk). For further information please contact the council’s Building Control team.

For further guidance on accessible design please see the Greater London Authorities Accessible London SPD (found online at www.london.gov.uk); and the ‘Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers’ guidance from the Disability Rights Commission (found online at www.equalitylink.co.uk).
DO5
A shop window display should be maintained at all times. Solid or partly in-filled windows or obscure glazing, posters covering the window or plastic window vinyl will not normally be acceptable in occupied shop units.

Shop window displays should enhance the street scene and reflect the features and proportions of the building’s exterior.

For non-retail uses, a display should be provided in the window area where appropriate.

Where a unit with a frontage on to the street becomes vacant, efforts should be made to maintain a clean and uncluttered shop window and any visible space behind it. Where a unit becomes vacant over the long term the window space should be used inventively to maintain interest in the street and the property itself.

Windows are a key feature of the shop front and should be addressed through the design process. An attractive window display can draw people into the shop from the street and enliven the street scene. Obscured windows where a shop is in use, whether as a retail or non-retail use, can create unnecessary, ‘dead’ frontages to a street.

Where a shop might fall vacant there are opportunities to maintain an attractive window display in order to improve the look of the shop frontage, the remainder of the street and the surrounding area. This can help to encourage new occupiers to rent the unit and prevent the area from looking run-down and less attractive to potential investors.

For longer term vacancy it might be appropriate for the shop front to incorporate window vinyls with artistic or photographic elements or the empty unit might be used for pop-up events, for example art exhibitions.

Attractive window displays, which can be clearly seen from the street, invite customers into the shop.
DO6
Security devices should have a minimal impact on the architectural features and the appearance of a building and street scene.

Planning permission will not normally be granted for solid roller shutters as they can have a negative impact on the street scene and detract from the overall appearance of the building.

Toughened security glass is recommended as the most appropriate material for window security. Internally fitted grilles or mesh shutters are more suitable where toughened security glass is not appropriate.

Shutter box housing should be located within the shop or behind the fascia. Proposals which place it on the outside of the fascia or shop will not normally be permitted.

It is recognised that shop front security is an important consideration, however security features, if not well designed and integrated, can produce a bleak and hostile street scene. This can also be the case where shop fronts include blocked out windows and large alarm systems.

Toughened security glass is an effective method of enhancing both the street scene and providing security without the use of shutters. It is more likely to remain intact in the event of an attempted break-in, but does not detract from the shop frontage at night.

A best practice approach is to combine policy compliant security devices with interior lighting in shop windows, whilst the shop is closed, as this can make the street safer and more attractive to pedestrians. Greater use of the street during the evening will deter vandals and thieves.

Solid, external shutters deaden the street scene and can provide less protection for the shop than toughened security glass.

Internally fitted shutters are most appropriate where toughened security glass cannot be installed.

**Design Objective Seven**

**Positioning Suitable Fascias and Signage**

**DO7 Fascia Design**

Fascia signs should be sensitively positioned across the shop front and should not:

- Obscure first floor windows or window sills;
- Extend uninterrupted across a number of buildings;
- Cover or ignore any architectural details, such as corbels or pilasters;
- Protrude out from the building further than a depth of 0.15m to 0.25m;
- Form more than 20% of the overall height or surface area of the shop front; or
- Contain advertisements for other shops or products.

Lettering on a fascia sign should be proportionate to the sign dimensions. Advertisement consent must be sought where lettering on fascia is over 0.75m in height. The fascia sign should state only useful details which relate to the premises (e.g. name and unit number).

In Areas of Special Advert Control the stricter limits on permitted height and size of the advertisement must be complied with.

The fascia is a very prominent feature of the shop front and it must be sited and designed to take into account the features of the shop front, the building and adjacent buildings.

Fascia, projecting and canopy signs, plus posters and boards, are considered advertisements and therefore the relevant guidance and regulations should be checked to find out if advertisement consent is required. Refer to the diagram on page 5 of this document for further guidance.

An Area of Special Advert Control is a part of the borough designated so by the Local Planning Authority because it is considered to have scenic, historical, architectural or cultural features so significant that a stricter degree of advertisement control is justified to conserve the area’s visual amenity. In Hounslow these areas are defined within the UDP Map ENV-B1 - Special Advert Control (found online at www.hounslow.gov.uk/udp).

Fascia design is in proportion with the shop front and complements the existing architectural features. The signage is simple and clear with no advertisements for other products.

The lettering on this signage does not protrude further from the building than allowed.
DO7
Hanging or Projecting Signs

Only one projecting or hanging sign per shop will normally be acceptable.

Projecting or hanging signs should be positioned on the left side of the fascia and should not project more than 0.9m from the face of the building or be larger than 0.75m x 0.9m (0.675sqm).

Projecting or hanging signs will only be acceptable at fascia level on a ground floor unit.

Too many hanging or projecting signs, installed at varying heights, can erode the appearance and continuity of a street scene. By establishing a standard approach, all shop signage will be visible to potential customers and at an appropriate height and size to be legible.

DO7
Illuminated Signs

Internally illuminated signs will not normally be permitted in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Externally illuminated signs are preferable in all circumstances, particularly where the lighting element is well integrated with the sign.

Illuminated signs should not cause glare or dazzle to road users, damage the amenity of residential areas at night or have a negative impact on the street scene.

Intermittent flashing signs will not normally be acceptable in any location.

The brightness and style of illuminated signs should be in keeping with the area in which they are located, to minimise light pollution for residents and safety implications for drivers. There are methods of illuminating shop signage without projecting light out onto the street.

Poorly placed hanging and projecting signs can create a cluttered and unattractive street scene.

Well-integrated and externally illuminated signs are preferable.
Canopies and awnings can have a positive function, allowing pedestrians to shelter from the rain, sheltering goods on display and adding interest to the street.

Care is needed in the selection of the style, colour, location and number of canopies and awnings as they can affect the look of the street and obscure the view of shop fronts.

Planning permission may be necessary for fixed canopies or awnings. If any part of the fixture projects over the public highway (including footpath), it will be necessary to seek an appropriate licence from the council.

A canopy covered with advertisements and of poor quality, plastic material (bottom left); replaced with an advert-free canopy which is made of appropriate material and easily retractable (top). An appropriate and well-designed canopy which has been fully extended (bottom right).
DO9

Use of the shop forecourt will only be encouraged where it does not obstruct movement on the street or access into the shop; where the use is attractive and appropriate for a public space; and where the use enhances the wider streetscene. A licence must be granted for displays on a public highway and where goods displayed are not of the type sold in the shop.

The practice of placing free-standing advertisement signs on the public footway in front of the shop will be discouraged where they obstruct movement, obscure or clutter the public footway and/or shop front.

Canvas coverings around café or restaurant fronts will be discouraged where they obscure and clutter the public footway and/or shop front.

If a shop is located in an area which has been specially designated for street trading purposes by the council’s Street Trading Team, then the standard conditions must be referred to and followed, along with this SPD.

Too many signs and objects on the forecourt or public footway can clutter the street scene and restrict movement of pedestrians into shops and along the street.

A licence must be sought from the council’s Licensing Team for use of the public highway in front of a shop. Any unpermitted displays or objects that obstruct the highway may be removed by the council and offenders may be prosecuted.

The council’s Street Trading Policy should be consulted when using the forecourt of public highway in front of a shop (found online at www.hounslow.gov.uk/licences_and_street_trading).

Attractive, appropriate and permitted usage of the shop forecourt.
checklist

In order to design a successful and attractive shop front, make sure you have done the following things:

☐ Check which permissions and licences you will need.

☐ Make sure any traditional shop front features are retained.

☐ Proportion the shop front features with the front of the building and the rest of the street or parade.

☐ Check whether the building is Listed, in a Conservation Area or an Area of Special Advert Control.

☐ Choose an appropriate type and range of materials for the shop front.

☐ Make sure that the shop is accessible to all, including those with disabilities.

☐ Design attractive window displays and make sure shop windows are clear and not obscured.

☐ Secure the shop with integrated security features which do not have a negative impact on appearance of the shop front.

☐ Add fascias and signage which are well designed and in proportion with the rest of the shop front.

☐ If installing a canopy or awning choose an appropriate design and style.

☐ Where the shop uses the forecourt, make sure it has permission to do so and does not obscure or clutter the highway.