INTERIM DESIGN PACKAGE FOR SHOPFRONTS AND THEIR ADVERTISEMENTS

No 7 Market Street

Tynedale
COUNCIL

TYNEDALE COUNCIL

INTERIM DESIGN PACKAGE FOR SHOPFRONTS AND THEIR ADVERTISEMENTS

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APPENDIX A

SHOPFRONT AND SHOP ADVERTISEMENT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tynedale Council is concerned to retain and enhance the traditional character of its Conservation Areas. Shop premises are an important part of the larger Conservation Areas, and have a considerable impact on their appearance.

1.2 To encourage attractive designs, with a traditional flavour, the Council have assembled this "Design Package" as a guide to applicants. This guidance does not aim to remove the need for skilled architectural advice, but to supplement the services of the professional.

1.3 This Design Package has been assembled with the assistance of the Hexham Civic Society, which carried out an in-depth study of Hexham Conservation Area and produced the "Shopfront Design Guide" (Appendix C). This supplements and is sympathetic to the Council's Guidelines (Appendix B), adopted by the Planning Committee in January 1990. The Council acknowledges the assistance given by the Civic Society, and thanks them for their co-operation in producing this Design Package.

1.4 While the main emphasis is on Conservation Areas, good design is welcome everywhere, and using the advice elsewhere could give a much needed improvement even in less sensitive areas.

1.5 Although the "shopfront" is usually limited to the height of the ground floor, its visual relationship to the whole of the building's street elevation from roof to pavement should always be taken into account. While the Shopfront Design Guide was compiled with Hexham in mind, it may be applied equally to all areas in Tynedale.

1.6 A number of points are made in the Package. They are summarised here in brief note form for handy reference, which the reader may find useful as a check list when preparing a scheme.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

1. High design standards are worth pursuing. They enhance a firm's image.
2. The building is a major asset. Repair and maintenance should not be neglected as decay will reduce its value.
3. The design will be most effective if it considers the <u>whole</u> building, not just the display window.
4. A skilled design will reduce the sense of 'barrier' and help tempt the customer in.

2.2 TOWN CHARACTER

1. A design that carefully considers the affect on its neighbours will enhance the appearance of the whole street.
2. The town's character is worth protecting. It is an asset that can help in attracting custom.
3. It is a mistake to force a bogus 'modernism' on an old building. The town does not need to apologise for its history.
4. For new buildings, the best of harmonious modern design should be aimed at, to add to the town's heritage, not detract from it.

2.3 THE STREET SCENE

1. The building should not 'hog the scene'. Other traders should be allowed their fair share of prominence.
2. The building should play its part in the street scene, and not 'let the team down'.
3. Alterations should not go too far or be heavy handed. The building and street should be treated gently.
4. Established heights, roof pitches, plot widths and materials should all be kept to.

2.4 STANDARDISATION

1. Standardised components should only be used where they are the best design for the building.
2. Standardising regardless of heed or location, reducing the varied interest of towns, should be avoided.

2.5 VISUAL ASSESSMENT

1. Traditional materials should be used for all visible parts of the work.
2. Vertical emphasis and proportions should be kept to. The shop does not need 'streamlining' - it is not going anywhere.
3. Plot divisions should be expressed externally, even if the shop crosses them internally.
4. Existing vertically sliding sash windows should be kept and repaired, or replaced if lost.
5. The fascia sign should not obscure the lower part of upper windows - this unbalances the design.
6. All parts of the frontage should harmonise. The design should not alter part and ignore the affect on the rest.
7. Original detailing should be kept and restored, to protect the character and personality of the building and town.
8. Heavily patterned or textured renders are out of keeping with the old buildings and should not be used.
9. A tasteful colour scheme will enhance the proportions and details of the building.
10. Repair, maintenance and historically authentic restoration is preferable to alteration and 'pseudo historic' style.

2.6 DISPLAY WINDOW

1. Original display windows should be kept and repaired. They are well designed, increasingly rare, and of historic interest.
2. A strong 'framing' to hold the attention and give visual support to the upper floors should be aimed for.
3. Skilfully executed decorative detail will give interest and hold the eye.

2.7 ADVERTISEMENTS

1. Adverts should be kept to the minimum, should be in good taste and in harmony with the building design.
2. Adverts should provide necessary, useful information. 'Pushy', promotional advertising should be avoided.
3. Care should be taken in choosing colours, size, materials and lettering in harmony with the building.
4. Advertisements above fascia level can give a confusing, 'cluttered' look to the street and should be treated with extreme care.
5. Over-bright illumination should be avoided. External illumination is preferable to internal.
6. Internally illuminated "box" size should always be avoided.
7. The best illuminated advertisement is a well designed and well lit window dressing.

3. STATUTORY APPROVALS AND CONSENTS

In common with the great majority of buildings, alterations to shops, and the building of new ones, is subject to control under the Planning Acts and the Building Regulations. The legislation is complex and it is not possible to give fully detailed information on the need for obtaining consent, in a brief note. Generally the consents which should be obtained cover:

Planning permission - New buildings, change of use, large extensions, new shopfronts/display windows or alterations to existing ones, major changes in external appearance, advertisements above limited minimum sizes, internally illuminated signs.

Building Regulations Approval - Alterations affecting the structure of the building, drainage and sanitary fittings, installation of heating appliances, new buildings, extensions.

Listed Building Consent - alterations (however minor) which could affect the character of a Listed Building, whether for good or ill. Total or partial demolition, including the removal of items fixed to a Listed Buildings, or to an unlisted building (with very minor exceptions) in a Conservation Area. Commencement without prior consent is a criminal offence.

Further guidance in detail can be obtained from the Planning Department. For clarification, while the Civic Society have been extremely helpful in drafting this document, it should be made clear, that they have no statutory function in the granting of planning consents, which rests with Tynedale Council as the Local Planning Authority.

4. INTERIM POLICY FOR SHOPFRONTS AND THEIR ADVERTISEMENTS

4.1 On 6th August 1991 Tynedale Council adopted the following policy:

i. The Council will insist on a high standard of design for shopfronts and their advertisements, especially in its Conservation Areas.

ii. In Conservation Areas, the use of traditional designs, materials and styles will be preferred.

iii. The refurbishment of an existing traditional shopfront will be preferred to its replacement. Any replacement should follow the design of the original shopfront as far as this is compatible with the Council's "Interim Design Package" referred to below.

iv. All new shopfronts in Conservation Areas (including replacements of existing shopfronts and shop advertisements) shall follow the design principles set out in the "Interim Design Package", which shall also be preferred guidance for shopfronts and advertisements in other areas.

5 CONTACT POINTS

5.1 Hexham Civic Society
For further information contact:

Helen Orchard,
Secretary,
13 Quatre Bras,
Hexham.
NE46 3JY

Tel: (0434) 602536

5.2 Tynedale Council
For further information on Planning matters contact:

Mr. J. Chown or Mr. N. Wilkinson
Planning Department,
The Old Grammar School,
Hallgate,
Hexham.
NE46 1XA

Tel: (0434) 604011 Ext. 2292 or 2295

APPENDIX B

TYNEDALE COUNCIL'S GUIDELINES - Extract from Report to Planning Committee 17th January 1990, adopted by Council 6 February 1991

Item g) Shopfronts in Conservation Areas

At the December 1989 meeting in considering a particular case in Hexham, Members considered that firm policy guidelines would be desirable for Conservation Areas particularly in respect of Hexham Town Centre. The Hexham Town Centre Local Plan (p47) states:-

3.3.1 New Buildings/Alterations.

Only a limited number of new buildings have been constructed since the end of World War II in the Town Centre and these in the main adjoin Priestpopple and Battle Hill (e.g. work currently in progress on a shops/flat development on Battle Hill). In general the aim has been to obtain in new buildings a design which respected the architectural character of the adjoining buildings, and of the Town in general.

3.3.2 As regards alterations, there has been a general trend towards standardisation of design materials, particularly as regards shop fronts for the larger firms with emphasis on a universal 'house' design irrespective of the building or area.

Policy for New Buildings/Alterations

It is therefore proposed that within the Conservation Area there is a presumption to retain the existing buildings but in cases where it is accepted that the building has reached the end of its useful life, the new building will be designed in sympathy with the architectural character of the town and relate to the existing building height and building line. In appropriate cases the front facade may be retained with new building at the rear only. All alterations, including shop fronts, shall be designed in sympathy with the architecture of the building concerned and the traditional architecture of the town. (The following Guidelines were appended to the report):

Alterations to Buildings in Conservation Areas - Design Considerations

a) Recommendations for Alterations to External Elevations: (relevant extracts)

(vi) The symmetry and traditional divisions of elevations should be observed. Doors and windows no longer required can sometimes be blocked from inside leaving a dummy or blind feature to the exterior. Shop fronts should preferably never run through several distinct elevations.

(i) Original doorways or any surviving doors up to the Mid-Victorian period are valuable and should be retained, but if their replacement is essential any design should be appropriate to the character of the building.

(ii) Door furniture, fan lights, pediments, pilasters, cornices or other detailing should not be removed but retained even if the doorway is redundant.

(i) Surviving old shop fronts of merit should be retained where their condition merits it. Original features of value are sometimes concealed behind later fronts and can with advantage be revealed.

(ii) New shop fronts must be in sympathy with the rest of the elevation and avoid large areas of plate glass, as well as glazed tiles and garish materials. The fascia board should not be out of scale with the building as a whole and should preferably be finished at the top with a cornice.

The above recommendations can usefully be amplified and extended as indicated below.

1. New Shop Fronts

Where existing shop fronts are of no special merit or dilapidated, total renewal is acceptable and if sensitively handled, will greatly improve the appearance of the whole area.

Modern retailing methods generally demand large expanses of glass to enable goods to be displayed to as many people as possible. However, with the pedestrianisation of Fore Street or where traffic speeds are low the need for large windows is questionable as the 'scale' of movement past shop windows is reduced as people are more free to walk and wander at their leisure.

Consequently, it is possible to reconcile this need with the restraints of designing in the historic core of the town and there are already several good examples of this within the centre. In order to conserve and improve the quality of shop front design one should avoid large expanses of undivided glass which are alien to the scale of the surrounding buildings. By sub-dividing windows into traditional proportions the overall display space is maintained and architectural harmony can be achieved.

Where different panes of glass meet along the length of the shop fronts, or at corners, the use of a vertical framing members added for visual emphasis will contribute to the overall appearance and help to achieve a feeling of greater solidity and permanence.

The use of stallrisers is a feature of the majority of shops in the central area and these contribute to the traditional character of the area. Most of these stallrisers are in brick, timber and stone and this characteristic is to be encouraged and maintained. Window and door framing should be exposed and emphasised to give a solid appearance thereby blending in with existing shops by utilising timber frames.

2. Shop fascias and Name Boards

Most firms want to display their names somewhere on the premises and there are a number of ways in which this can be done for example by hanging a name board in the window or by applying individual letters directly to the pane. However, the most popular method is to use a fascia board, but unless careful consideration is given to the design, unsympathetic results occur. Firstly, fascia boards should be in timber and designed as an integral part of the shop avoiding both reflective materials and fluorescent colours or lettering. Harsher 'loud' colours such as bright red or yellow must be avoided for both fascias and lettering and more subdued colours used that would harmonise more satisfactorily with most surroundings.

3. Shop Signs

The design and location of shop signs is most important. Well designed signs coupled with pleasing shop fronts can add to the quality of the area, whereas poor design will detract.

Even small signs if badly designed can have a detrimental affect over a large area. It is important to realise that each shop front and each element in the front contributes to the whole character of the town Centre. Individual shop owners can play a vital part in ensuring that the character of the Centre is maintained and enhanced. Large nationally known shops who occupy premises in the Town Centre should be prepared to adapt their standard sign if it is felt that it is out of character in its particular location.

4. Illuminated Signs

The use of illuminated signs in the historic centre of the Town detracts greatly from the fine architectural character of the area. In general this visually disruptive element should be avoided particularly in Fore Street and Market Place.

A sign which projects outwards from a shop front and is spotlighted is also classed as an illuminated sign. This type of sign can serve a useful purpose in advertising premises which are open to the public at night such as public houses or restaurants and as such will usually be restricted to buildings of this nature.

5. Projecting Signs

In the past, projecting signs have been associated with certain trades, for instance banks or public houses. Where these are to be considered traditional painted timber or metal signs are recommended with appropriate lettering and design.

6. Advertising at Upperfloor Levels

The continued and increasing use of upper floor for business purposes in the centre is very welcome because it adds extra vitality. However, an over-abundance of advertising on upper floors can result in unnecessary clutter on building elevations, destroying their character. In the interests of avoiding this, all lettering on upper floors ought to be in either black or gold lettering and applied directly to window panes. Also, all advertising above ground floor level should relate solely to the use on that floor rather than commercial use below.

I recommend that the Committee adopt the above guidelines as a basis for dealing with planning applications and for advertising developers and shop owners.

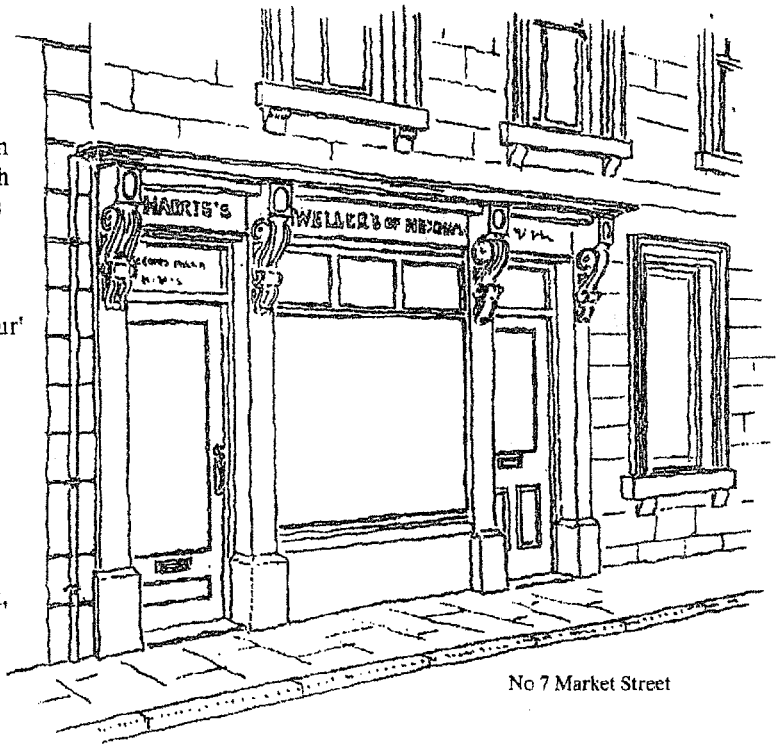
Tynedale COUNCIL

Shopfront Design Guide

HEXHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

1.0 Introduction

The design of shop fronts influences the character and quality of shopping in town centres. Shops compete with each other to provide the goods and services we need. Shopkeepers need to make their location known and display their wares. The variety of merchandise and its presentation give the street its 'colour' and life and help to create the busy atmosphere we associate with town centres. Where shops exist in historic towns we must recognise commercial requirements and at the same time continue to care for and respect the architectural heritage. It is often its 'historic' quality which is the important factor in a successful commercial street, and it is good commercial sense to capitalise on this asset.



No 7 Market Street

2.0 Shop Fronts

In Hexham the fronts and display windows of most shops usually extend to the full width of the premises. The shops themselves are strung together side by side. The 'shop front' is therefore generally defined as being the full width of the shop unit and the height of the ground floor as expressed in the facade.

A shop front is normally independent of the building structure Canopies, mouldings and columns, are all considered integral parts of the shop front. So too are the stallrisers, steps, rails, ironmongery and fittings such as letter plates, door knockers, letter boxes and other items which embellish the premises. With older buildings it is often a question of preserving or enhancing these features; in new shop front construction there is a need to achieve harmony of design and perpetuate the attention to detail that the historic buildings were given.

3.0 General advice relating to Shop Fronts

New and altered shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with the buildings around them and the architectural character of the street, to maintain and enhance the area and avoid visual distraction.

When shops change hands, or owners wish to make improvements, it is likely that the shop fronts will be affected. Such alterations will almost certainly require planning permission, so it is important that at an early stage the shopowner or his agent visits the Planning Department. Together with the officers, he can explain his ideas, discuss the alternatives and assess their suitability. He may wish only to repaint the existing front, or alternatively to replace it completely. In both cases early consultation is vital to avoid abortive work.

When designing a shop front we must look at our surroundings beyond the perimeter of the shop front. Shops in Hexham usually occupy the ground floor of narrow frontage buildings of two, three and four storeys. These buildings generally follow property boundaries established three to four hundred years ago. The emphasis of many buildings in groups is vertical, yet in a street of buildings of different styles and periods we tend only to 'read' the shops as horizontal bands and ignore the buildings above. It is important (and this can be seen in many of the good shop fronts in Hexham) to emphasise the relationship between the shop and the building rather than try to achieve uniformity with adjoining shops. When this emphasis is achieved the result creates a variety of fronts with differing stall riser heights, window designs and fascias, which will contribute to the complexity and interest in our streets.

No 19 Market Street


Redundant shopfront - St Mary's Chare
(original pilasters and door overlight)

3.1 Existing Shop Fronts

Hexham possesses few examples of shop fronts prior to 1800, though there are remains of some early door surrounds and overlights in St Mary's Chare.

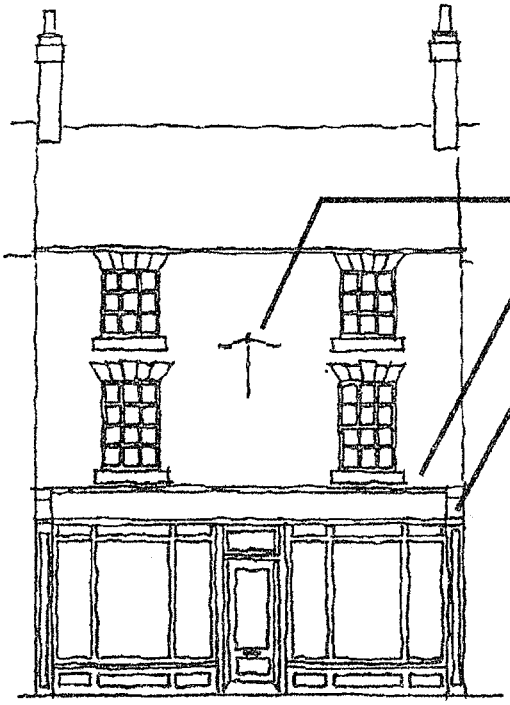
There is a wide variety of nineteenth century fronts ranging from heavily decorated woodwork to more modest affairs. It is important to retain those examples which will contribute to the street scene. Where alterations are intended they should avoid changing the character of the design. Aluminium framing inserted in a decorated shop front is unlikely to be successful. Attempts to 'open up' existing shop fronts, which will destroy the proportions of the design, should be avoided.

3.2 New Shop Fronts

Where existing shop fronts are of no special merit, total renewal is acceptable, and if sensitively handled will greatly improve the appearance of the whole area.

The notion that modern retailing methods demand large expanses of glass is questionable. In pedestrian areas movement is slower and people are more free to wander. Shopping in historic towns like Hexham is concentrating on more specialist retailers who may not need large areas of glass. Good display design and lighting behind a shop front is probably more important than the quantity of glass.

Where large areas of glass will be alien to the surrounding buildings, they should be avoided. By sub-dividing windows into traditional proportions the overall display space can be maintained and architectural harmony achieved. These divisions add visual emphasis and contribute to the feeling of solidity and permanence.



Considered Design

Traditional hanging sign

Gap between window sill/fascia

Console bracket

Fascia relates to the building as a whole

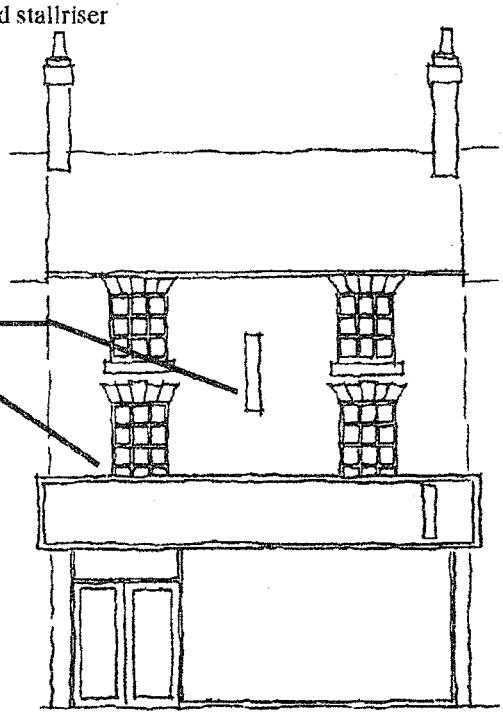
Overlight

Window mullion

Pilaster

Panelled stallriser

Recessed entrance, glazed/panelled door proportioned to suit building



Ill-considered design

Bulky projecting box design

Fascia obscuring window/sill

Large area of plate glass unrelated to the character/ proportions of the building

Shopfront lacking any detail; stallriser, glazing bars, pilasters

Position, proportion and detailing of entrance without consideration of whole building

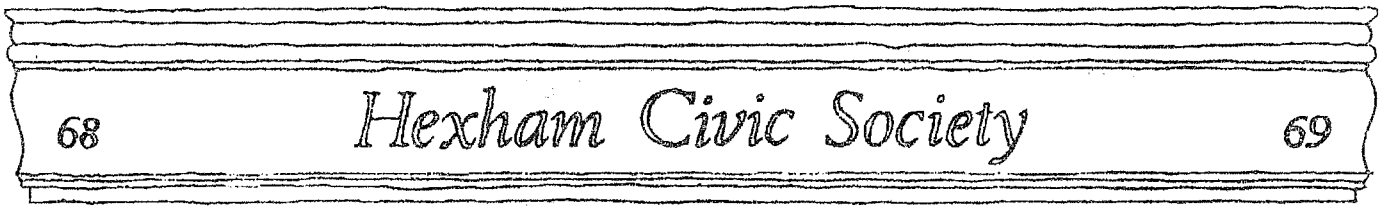
The use of stallrisers is a common feature of many of the shops in Hexham and these contribute to the traditional character of the town. Window and door framing will often be successful if exposed and emphasised to give a solid appearance.

Where businesses have expanded and acquired adjacent shops the identity of individual buildings should not be lost or swamped beneath insensitively detailed and proportioned fronts.

Example of poor horizontal relationship not respecting individual buildings

4.0 Shop Signs

Signs should normally be limited to the fascia, and style of letters should be proportioned to suit the overall design. The tradition of numbering shop premises as part of a name board or fascia detail should be encouraged.



Large nationally known shops should be prepared to adapt their standard signage if it is out of character in its particular location.

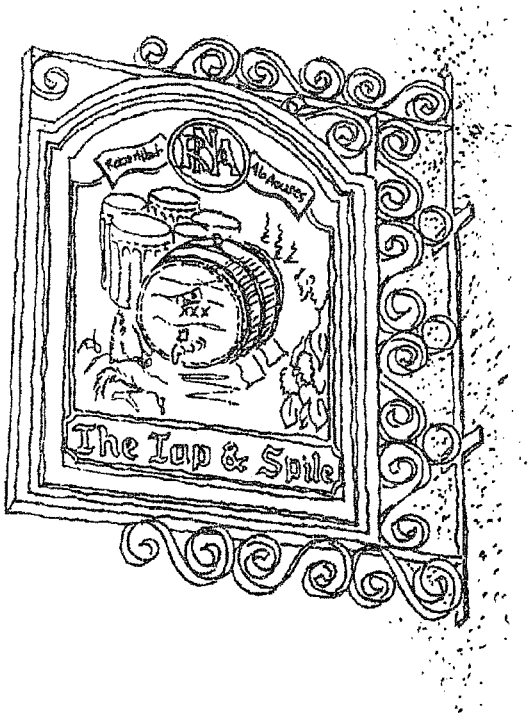
Fascia boards should be designed as an integral part of the shop front, avoiding reflective plastic materials; painted wooden fascias are preferred. Fluorescent and 'harsh' colours such as bright red or yellow must be avoided. Subdued colours are more likely to harmonise with most surroundings. This should not compromise the commercial aspect, as good display design is far more important to the retailer.

5.0 Illumination and Projecting Signs

The use of internally illuminated box signs or fascias should be discouraged because this will generally detract from the architectural quality of the building and street. Well considered spot lighting of certain buildings may contribute to the character of the street.

Projecting spot-lighted signs are classed as illuminated signs for 'planning purposes' and the local planning authority should be consulted at an early stage. This type of sign is obviously useful to premises open to the public in the evenings, such as public houses and restaurants. In addition certain trades have long associations with projecting signs, e.g. banking, and those can enhance the street-scape

Where considered appropriate, a painted wooden sign is recommended, with appropriate lettering and design.



Cast plaque, the Globe Inn, Battle Hill

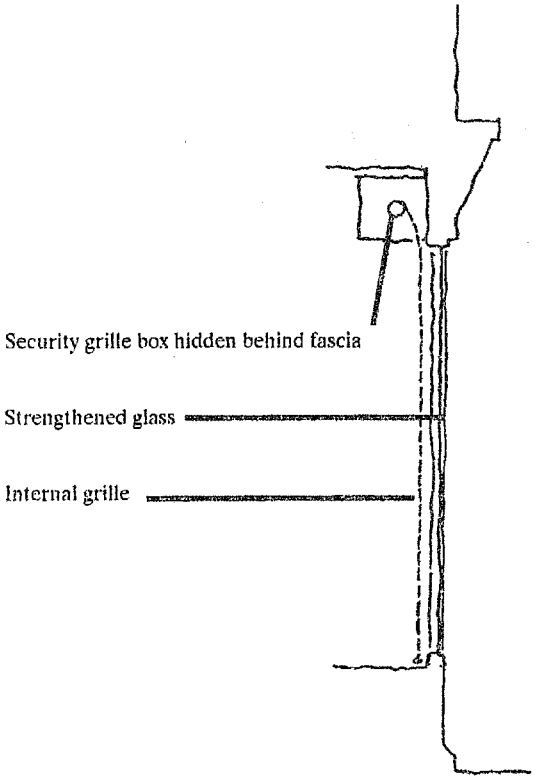
6.0 Door Furniture

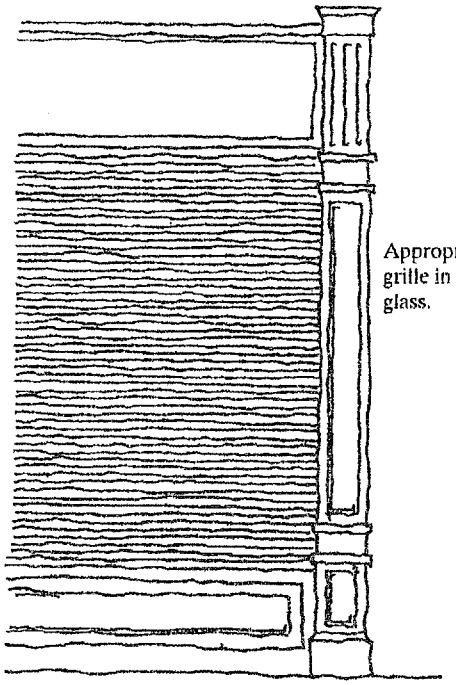
The final choice of door handles, letter boxes, etc can be critical in the overall success of a shop front design. The final selection will be a product of assessing the quality of the building, shop front and door. It may require a delicate or a robust feel. Modern fittings may be suitable but careful consideration should be given to traditional brass knobs and letterplates in older shop fronts.

Name plates should be grouped, and not allowed to sprawl over the face of the building.

7.0 Shutters and Grilles

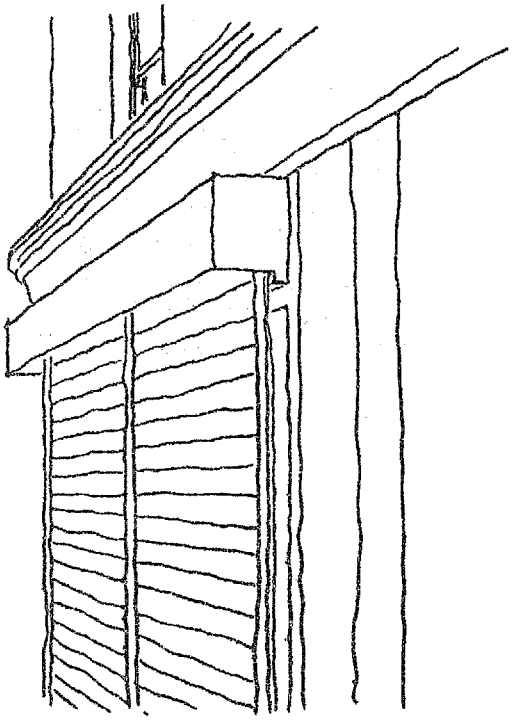
It is recognised that effective security measures are needed to safeguard and protect premises. The sketches shown here establish principles which are likely to respect the character of existing buildings. Toughened security glass as an alternative to a shutter enhances the street at night.





Appropriately fitted roller grille in position behind glass.

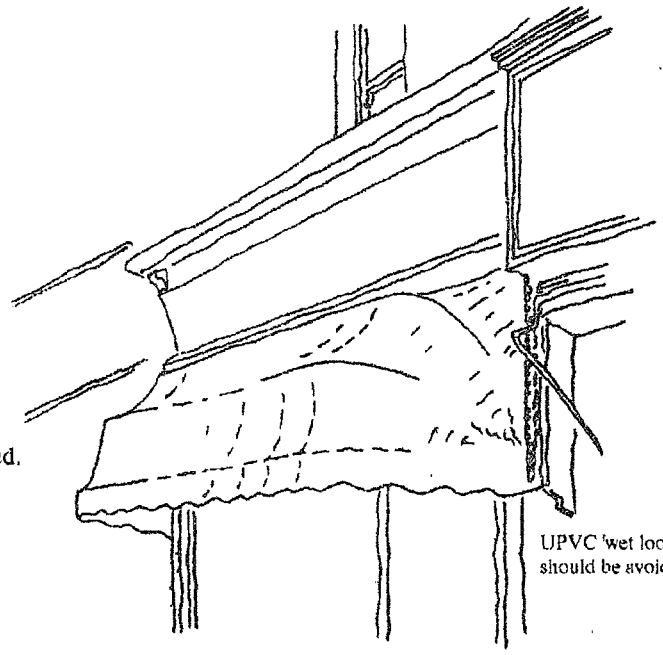
The use of external metal shutters presents an inhospitable siege image which is likely to attract graffiti and vandalism.



8.0 Canopies and Blinds

Traditional 'pull down' canopies and blinds can provide variety in the street as well as shading customers and merchandise. Care should be taken in detailing them.

'Wet look' blinds, Dutch canopies, etc are inappropriate and should be avoided.

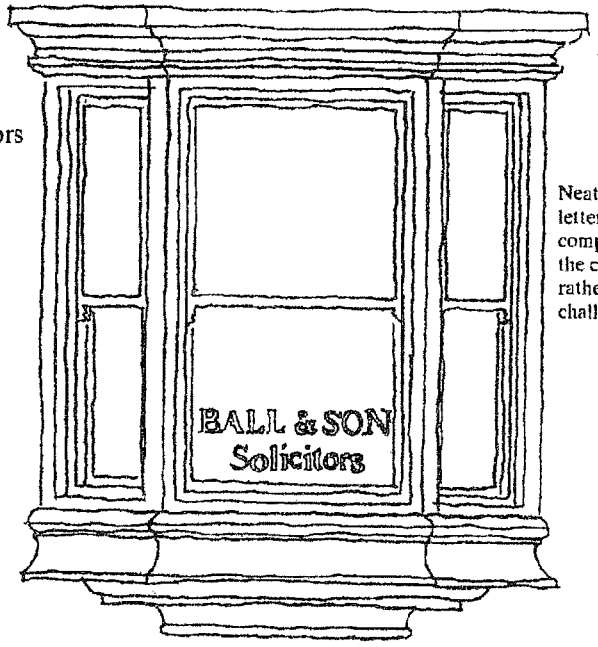


UPVC 'wet look' blind should be avoided.

9.0 Upper Floors

Where businesses operate from upper floors of buildings, painted lettering on window panes is preferred. Black or gold lettering seems the most successful.

Signs fixed to the outside of the building should be avoided.



Neat simple lettering should complement the composition rather than challenge it.

10.0 The exception that breaks the rule

It is common and valid criticism of design guides that they can be restrictive, lay down dogmatic design standards and smother individual flair and invention. This guide has attempted to avoid detailed statements. The way to enhance the buildings of our town lies in the total understanding of these buildings, so that design responds to their characteristics.

A design that conflicts with the advice offered here is not necessarily unacceptable, but both planning authority and designer must show sympathetic understanding of existing buildings.

Finally, anyone wishing to alter or construct a shopfront needs the help of a competent and understanding designer, preferably one used to consulting with the authorities in complying with planning requirements, etc.

To ensure that Hexham remains a thriving commercial centre it is imperative that the built environment is one in which it is a joy to shop. The historic context of Hexham is a major characteristic of its environment and the impact of shop fronts is enormous. Many existing shop fronts detract from this environment; we hope that as these are renewed they will be improved to enhance the Hexham street scene.