

**PLEASE NOTE ILLUSTRATIONS ARE YET TO BE INSERTED**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- S8.1 The detailed design of shop fronts, whether for new or existing buildings, is a factor influencing the overall character not just of the district's conservation areas, but of all areas where shopping facilities exist. For conservation areas, the twin objectives of conservation are to protect and enhance the existing environment, and shop fronts must be considered in this light. Obviously good historic shop fronts are deserving of protection and enhancement by means of sympathetic colouring and proper maintenance. New shop fronts should be regarded as an opportunity to enhance the street scene by providing something that respects the traditional concepts, forms a logical part of the overall elevation and emphasises the uniqueness of a particular village or town.
- S8.2 Where opportunities occur, it should be the long-term aim to achieve replacement shop fronts which re-emphasise the individual components of the frontage by being less obtrusive and better related to the overall proportions of the building. The intention of this booklet is to suggest how these aims can be achieved by placing the problems within the relevant historical design context. The suggestions included in this document are primarily aimed at improving shop fronts in conservation areas or in historic buildings, as other commercial areas are usually capable of assimilating a greater variety of designs. Nevertheless, where appropriate, the concepts will be applied across the district and not just to conservation areas.
- S8.3 This guide is intended to amplify and expand on the policies and advice included in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan (see section 11 of the guide for further details).

## **2 HISTORY**

- S8.4 The early history of the shop is a somewhat under-researched subject, and one worthy of further study. There is little doubt that the first 'shops' in Britain were no more than stalls or booths set up in market places or at important fairs, and that manufacture took the form of cottage industry carried out in the traders' homes.
- S8.5 Nevertheless, the word 'shop' appears frequently in mediaeval documents often as a tenanted element of an otherwise residential building complex. It appears that there were numerous examples of landowners erecting substantial town houses with a row of 'lock-up' shops on the ground floor. Sometimes the upper floors contained lodging rooms, presumably for bachelor apprentices or students, the entire tenanted block being a speculative venture.
- S8.6 Examination of the few examples of mediaeval survivors reveals a 'shop front' of two or more unglazed openings with carved, four-centred arched heads and rebates for some form of internal shutter. Evidence suggests the possibility of a low shelf pegged to the exterior of the structure, just below cill level. There seems to have been another form of 'shop front' composed of a wider opening without arched spandrel panels and with a complicated system of sliding shutters. These late 14/15th century examples all show shop fronts that are an integral part of the structure of the building; the mullions, cills, arched heads and bracing being

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physically and visually perfectly fused into the overall appearance of the building (1). The richness and sophistication of the decorative detail distinguish these handsome timber-framed buildings as an important product of the perpendicular style.

- S8.7 Essex lacks surviving examples from the late 16th century, but contemporary survey drawings provide some useful information. For example, a schematic drawing of Cheapside, London shows rows of identical gable-fronted buildings with shops beneath. The unglazed shop front was still an integral part of the structural frame and the cill becomes a fully developed 'counter' or stall-board. It would seem that 'retail' had by then become the dominant function.
- S8.8 The late 17th century example had a timber-framed shop front but surmounted by three storeys of masonry building. The large ground floor pilasters are reminiscent of inadequate Victorian attempts to integrate the shop fronts into the overall elevation. The curious small fanlight of lattice glazing was to be a popular feature with shop front makers for over a century and can be found in many sophisticated 18th century examples.
- S8.9 The first glazed shop fronts are likely to have been of small, squarish panes. Topographical drawings suggest that paned windows of this kind were the rule through the first half of the eighteenth century, but with a gradual increase in complexity and sophistication.
- S8.10 A common variation incorporated the shop opening (glazed from c.1700 onwards) and the mezzanine window within a single arch, forming an entirely arcaded ground floor. Through the influence of Palladio this motif enjoyed some popularity in 18th century England. Despite this introduction of a 'correct' classical model, the majority of the late 18th century shop fronts belong to the timber tradition. Many shop fronts were obviously incorporated in existing buildings or as part of newly completed speculative terraces, thus necessitating a solution independent of the facade above. Despite this inherent difficulty, late 18th century shop fronts are invariably satisfactory in relation to the overall appearance of the building.
- S8.11 To achieve this result the designers used a number of recurring devices. The shop front was treated as an example of fine quality joinery, attached to the facade like a free-standing bookcase. Most shop fronts projected in the form of bow, or series of bows, with a rich overall texture of finely detailed components. The small panes of glass, set in curves to reflect the light, tended to disguise rather than reveal the considerable width of the shop opening itself. The way in which the classical design elements such as pilasters and entablatures are attenuated and re-interpreted is reminiscent of the 'timber perpendicular' of the mediaeval examples. In examples with a 'Gothic' flavour, the similarity is even more apparent. For humble village shops, the rectangular-paned, small bay window with lean-to pentice roof was prevalent and many examples fortunately remain.
- S8.12 Many nineteenth century shop fronts survive and may form a significant part of shopping frontages in small market towns. Their design tends to follow one of the two basic types outlined above; infilling of a masonry arcade or colonnade, or timber structures applied to the face of the building. As the century wore on, glass became cheaper and available in larger panes, whilst increasing advantage was taken of new materials such as cast iron and ceramics for cladding. Many examples are extremely decorative although much of the ornamentation is debased and unassimilated into the overall scheme.

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- S8.13 Designers seemed to have lost sight of any need to consider the shop front as an integral part of the building and the results were often extremely damaging. Large areas of glass undermined the visual stability of the building and dominant name fascias introduced powerful horizontals at variance with the proportions of the building.
- S8.14 Generally, Victorian shop fronts are in the same plane as the building frontage or are hollowed out with cavernous recesses, both tendencies denying the apparent stability of the structure. However, the 18th century tradition of good craftsmanship lingered on and the decorative treatment of components is often worthy of study.
- S8.15 The illustrations of 19th century details on page XXX show the kind of simplified classical or eclectic details that are still worthy of close study today.
- S8.16 The 20th century has seen the design faults of the previous hundred years continued and further exaggerated, with the addition of numerous new and unsympathetic materials such as mosaics, plastics and exotic metals. The introduction of standard 'corporate identity' designs has further undermined the individuality of shopping streets, whilst crude 'neo-Georgian' essays in hardwood and fibreglass have devalued the old traditions.

### **3 RETENTION OF HISTORIC SHOP FRONTS**

- S8.17 In view of the relative rarity of early shop fronts, all examples of pre-1800 date should be highly valued and retained. Even where shops are to be converted to dwellings or other uses, good examples ought still to be kept and if necessary privacy achieved with curtaining or ingenious forms of obscured glazing. Many 19th century shop fronts are equally worthy of retention and should be carefully repaired and maintained. Older shop fronts may form part of the elevations of Listed Buildings and are consequently subject to the Listed Building Consent procedures.
- S8.18 To remove a reasonably attractive Victorian shop front only to replace it with a poor, utilitarian modern design is a pointless and wasteful operation. Owners often do not realise that an inventive colour scheme on an old shop front can provide the new 'image' which they seek.
- S8.19 Old butchers' shop fronts are particularly interesting; their projecting canopies, shutters, grilles, meat rails and sash windows represent a response to special needs and are reminiscent of earlier shop front forms.
- S8.20 In repairing older shop fronts care should be taken to retain early glass, where this still exists.

### **4 THE DESIGN OF NEW SHOP FRONTS**

- S8.21 The shop front has, as its basic elements, an entrance door, a sign indicating the name of the proprietor and trade and a large glazed opening for the display of goods and for attracting business.
- S8.22 The glazed opening is the primary visual element of this combination and presents the most difficult design problems.

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S8.23 Voids in the fabric of buildings normally fall into one of two categories:- the trabeated opening (post and beam) or the arcuated (arched). The trabeated type is that found in buildings with a structural frame. The arcuated form belongs most naturally to load-bearing masonry structures. The use of arcuated openings in framed buildings or trabeated openings in heavy masonry structures can produce uncomfortable visual ambiguity.

#### **THE SHOP FRONT AS PART OF AN ELEVATION**

S8.24 The shop front should be considered as an intrinsic part of the overall appearance of a building. It should appear to be perfectly related to the upper floors in structural concept, proportion, scale and vertical alignment. All the elements of the elevation should be fused together to express an effect of logical visual inevitability.

S8.25 In order to consider fully the implications of this statement, it is convenient to examine the problems presented by the design of a complete new commercial elevation in a historic street. The first task is to identify all the design constraints in the composition of the elevation. This can be used to assist in the design of the shop front and its incorporation in the existing street elevation. For the purpose of this exercise all the examples shown on the following pages are for two storey buildings with ground floor shops and an upper floor of offices or flats. The two-storey elevation is more difficult to compose than that for a three or four storey building because the proportioning difficulties are more extreme.

#### **FORMAL SOLUTIONS**

S8.26 In considering the overall appearance of an elevation suitable for a traditional location, thought must be given to its relationship with neighbouring existing buildings. The new elevation should be compatible with its context in materials, scale and visual intricacy in order to take its place within a harmonious street scene. It is suggested that the 'classical' method of composing formal architecture is not only well represented in our historic commercial areas but also is a vital part of our conscious and unconscious assessment of formal buildings. However far the detailed design of a particular building may depart from the classical design elements, its proportional relationship should still be subject to these criteria.

S8.27 Sketches (2-12) show a variety of ways of integrating shop fronts into the overall elevation of a building. Each type includes a diagram of the concept, a typical elevation, and a section showing the relationship of storey heights.

#### **FORMAL TRABEATED SOLUTION**

S8.28 In the first example (2) the shop front is framed in a Doric colonnade with the entablature forming a natural fascia. The upper storey forms a classical 'attic' and each bay of this storey should be more or less square in proportion.

S8.29 As the section drawing shows, this is an excellent way of relating a tall ground floor shop with the usual office/residential floor-to-ceiling height of the upper floor. The lower 'order' and the pilaster, together with the treatment of the upper floor, help to fuse together the overall facade and mitigate the scale discrepancy between the sizes of the voids in the two floors.

S8.30 With both trabeated and arcuated types of formal solution, simple infill glazing is desirable to form a more or less invisible 'skin' between outside and inside.

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- S8.31 The second example (3) shows a similar Doric colonnade at ground floor level with an upper floor proportioned to represent a second storey-height 'order' standing on pedestals. This upper 'order' has been simplified and adjusted to the limits of legibility. This solution provides a shop unit of relatively low floor-to-ceiling height with a generously proportioned office suite over.
- S8.32 Examples (2) and (3) represent two approaches adopted for the satisfactory proportioning of a formal two-storey building. Solutions involving a more nearly equal relationship between storey heights will inevitably be less satisfactory.

#### **FORMAL ARCUATED SOLUTION**

- S8.33 Solution (4) is parallel to that of (2), but with a glazed, arcaded base rather than a colonnade. The upper floor is again treated as an attic storey richly decorated to contrast with the simplicity of the ground floor. Variations on this theme can be produced, either with a storey-height order of columns and entablature imposed on the arcade, or with a giant order running through both storeys.
- S8.34 It will not normally be practical to use the arcuated type based upon (3), as either the arcade would be absurdly squat or the upper floor ridiculously tall. A compromise is possible, making use of an elliptical arched colonnade (5) to reduce the ground floor height, but this still provides a very tall upper floor. A three storey elevation lends itself well to this solution.
- S8.35 A simple brick elevation using segmental arches to suggest a colonnade and attic effect is illustrated in (6). The narrowness of the intermediate piers is suggestive of giant and secondary orders. Because of the lack of surface architectural detail, the disparate scale effect between storeys is apparent. In this example the problem is avoided by setting back the shop front as a true arcade.

#### **SOLUTIONS BASED ON THE TRADITIONAL TIMBER FRAMED SHOP FRONT**

- S8.36 Example (7) illustrates a new building suggestive of a mediaeval timber framed structure. The shop front is based on the 15th century types already described, the storey-height painted mullions appearing to be part of the primary structure. In this way the window area of the ground floor is visually part of the overall elevation as infill panels of glazing rather than plaster.
- S8.37 The theme is continued in (8) where a timber framed appearance is sought only for the upper floor. The ground floor expresses the characteristics of load bearing brickwork, with heavy piers and arches for narrower spans. Such a solution will be successful if the shop windows appear to be narrow enough to be spanned by a timber beam. The glazed area and stall riser should look like later lightweight infilling.
- S8.38 With the approach shown in (9) the shop fronts are treated as projecting showcases, like the popular tradition in the 18th and 19th centuries. By reason of the forward projection and the crucially important intricacy of the subdivision of the glazed area, the shop front appears to be applied to the building rather than forming a hole in it.
- S8.39 The example (10) shows a small, flush shop front treated as an elevational feature, like an overlarge Georgian doorcase. It is important that there is plain surface all around the window to isolate it in the wall area, and that the glass area is



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subdivided into relatively small panes to stress the apparent continuity of the wall plane. An elaborately three dimensional treatment of the surround is also essential.

S8.40 Projecting shop fronts, as (11), can be extremely successful when they appear to be separate structures placed against the face of the building, as a kind of street furniture. Again, they should be surrounded by areas of plain walling and intricately subdivided with glazing bars.

S8.41 The last example (12) is based on the 17th century open, unglazed shop front and is ideal for retailers such as greengrocers and fruiterers where an open shop front with shutters is desired. The posts should be very substantial and painted so as to provide a strong visual sense of support. It may be possible to achieve a glazed shop front with this kind of appearance, making use of non-reflective glazing set back, or else in the 1950's style of parabolic glazing fixed to the back of the stall-board. Ordinary plate glass is visually inappropriate in this kind of design, as the size of the shop window openings will clash with the scale of those on the upper floor.

## 5 DISPLAY

S8.42 The display of goods to attract custom seems to have been a fairly unimportant aspect of the mediaeval shop. With the exception of the retailers of perishable goods, it seems likely that most shopkeepers kept fairly small stocks of goods and produced to customer orders. Many of the 15th century shop fronts are very high above footpath level and would not have been practical either as counters or display windows. It seems likely that the 18th century glazed shop window provided the first opportunity for window dressing and, in the large towns, the pleasures of window shopping are first noted in this period.

S8.43 As it is the intention of Local Plan policy to encourage more appropriate shop fronts with, inevitably, small areas of glazing, the problems of display must be considered.

S8.44 For some kinds of shop, the window area has become simply a means of lighting and viewing into the shop interior, with the unfortunate result that the extent of the internal floor space is greatly emphasised. In recent years the use of windows for display seems to be on the decline. Even supermarket operators, renowned for obliterating their windows with disagreeable posters, are now building totally windowless stores. Such trends work in favour of reducing the dominance of glazing in new shop fronts, but it remains important to pay regard to those retailers (such as shoe shops and clothiers) who continue to require large window displays to attract custom.

S8.45 For such timbers, the traditional English timber shop front seems appropriate (7-11), the window designed as a showcase of limited depth with a glazed or for greengrocers and fishmongers the open unglazed shop is the traditional and most attractive form (12) whilst for the butcher the canopy and sash window should be the pattern.

## 6 DETAILED DESIGN

S8.46 Having considered the general principles of shop front design it is essential to pay equal regard to visual detail if the end result is to be convincing. A shop front has to bear very close inspection as a direct result of its function and any coarseness of design or execution is immediately apparent. Although present day shop fronts

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usually have a fairly short life, an air of permanence should nevertheless be the aim. A rapid sequence of alterations is often a manifestation of dissatisfaction with the crudities of usual 20th century solutions.

- S8.47 Whatever the character of the design it will only be a success if carried out with a high standard of craftsmanship and care. Today, when labour-intensive operations are expensive; this care is rarely exercised, resulting in shoddy and utilitarian effects. Sometimes the problem is side-stepped by utilising standard factory made components, but these inevitably require unsympathetic materials and present a mass-produced appearance. To some extent the problem can be minimised by skilful design, making use of easily available materials without costly fabrication, but arranged to make interesting architectural effects.
- S8.48 A new shop front for an attractive historic building obviously requires an exceptional standard of craftsmanship in order to realise a design of quality and originality. Where this utilises classical or historic elements these should be as authentic as possible.
- S8.49 Where the building is entirely new or is somewhat less important, rather more freedom is usual and justifiable. It is suggested that drawing (13), showing alternative treatments for a two-light, flush display window, demonstrates a valid concept. Although the elements are loosely classical, the pilasters lack entasis and the composition is assembled of more or less standard joinery sections, fret-cut panels, and glued and screwed stick-on details. A rich colour scheme with the inserts and panels picked out with one or more contrasting colours would add to the effect by emphasising the complexity of the detail. This kind of solution is desirable for many conservation areas because it is a continuation of the British timber shop front tradition. Like the 18th century examples, it offers a large measure of visual intricacy and an elaboration of linear components (always an important part of the English aesthetic), and forms a self-contained composition when attached to the face of the building. This type of design presents great opportunities for invention of less historically based detail, but this should always be arranged so as to provide an overall texture and to make an organised composition.
- S8.50 Even where the designer has the best of intentions, a lack of understanding as to the capabilities of the shop fitter and a failure to control the overall effect often spoils the result
- S8.51 The best solutions rely on close collaboration between the architect and the fabricator -a partnership that could exploit the potential of shopfitting companies. who could extend their scope into the field of purpose-made shop fronts enriched with detail.
- S8.52 An additional detail design problem, which should not be overlooked, is the provision of sun-blinds. If these are required they should be incorporated into the design of the shop front, with the blind box itself as slim and unobtrusive as possible. 'Dutch blinds' should be avoided, as they require additional vertical housings and their sidings tend to interrupt the street view. Security matters are considered in detail in section 9.

## 7 MATERIALS

- S8.53 Materials should be chosen to emphasise the historic character of the area and to reinforce the visual unity of the street scene. Painted timber is the prevalent shop front material of virtually all historic streets and should generally form the basis of

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new designs. The use of varnished, natural or stained hardwoods and softwood is almost always inappropriate, being alien to the existing pattern and also to the painted timber features of the upper floors. The texture of materials is an important consideration that should strongly influence choice. The intention should be to achieve a gradual transition between the rough, natural textures of walling materials and the smooth, hard surface of window glass. Again, painted timber is the ideal intermediate texture to make this transition. Materials such as rustic stonework, ceramic products and exotic materials like marble should be avoided as being too pretentious for most conservation area street scenes.

S8.54 Plastic sheets and anodised or plastic-coated metals should not be used, as these are generally unsympathetic when viewed in combination with natural textures. Many of these materials also have glossy surfaces, and their reflective qualities emphasise every imperfection in the fitting and jointing of the panels. Materials without texture also suffer from the disturbing phenomenon known as 'colour filming' where the colour of the material does not appear fixed to the surface but to float either in front or behind the real surface. With all painted timber features, particularly fascias, care should be taken to achieve good weathering properties and freedom from short-term distortion.

## 8 COLOUR

S8.55 The colouring of a shop front should be determined by the need to harmonise with the rest of the building and street scene, and to emphasise the important design elements.

S8.56 There are well-established procedures for the painting of classical designs, such as the gilding or picking out of mouldings, capitals and fluting. Care should be taken to emphasise the structural logic of such a design by using the same base colour for pilasters and entablature (fascia).

S8.57 Where natural materials abound, earth colours are generally advisable and high intensity hues should be avoided, particularly on north facing or poorly illuminated frontages. It is useful to remember that 'cold' colours will normally give the effect of recession and 'warm' colours that of projection. Particularly where walling is dark in tone, the use of white paint for the framing is visually satisfying and provides a unifying link with painted upper-storey windows.

S8.58 The shop front should be painted to harmonise with the upper floors of the building and to reinforce the overall effect of unity throughout the façade. This, of course, can increase the 'impact' of the shop in the street scene.

## 9 SECURITY SHUTTERS

### INTRODUCTION

S8.59 Rochford District Council considers that a high standard of design for shop fronts and other business premises, particularly within the town centre conservation areas, is essential. However, it is recognised that town centres, neighbourhood parades, etc. by their very nature are subject to crime, both premeditated and opportunist, particularly opportunist vandalism and that shopkeepers and business will want to ensure their premises are adequately secured.



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- S8.60 It is considered that the aims of achieving a high standard of design, the maintenance and enhancement of the conservation areas, the protection of the appearance of Listed Buildings and the prevention of criminal damage, are not mutually exclusive. With careful planning and attention to detail, satisfactory security measures can be incorporated into existing shop fronts and must be an essential part of the consideration when planning a new build shop or the insertion of a new shop front in an existing building. Sketch examples are given at appropriate points in the guidance.
- S8.61 The local planning authority is of the opinion that early consultation and discussion is essential in order to adequately assess the appropriate solutions to any individual problem and to ensure that, in the case of new shop fronts, security requirements are addressed as an integral part of the design, before applications are submitted.
- S8.62 The guidelines below refer to all proposals within town centres. Where the proposal relates to a Listed Building, different considerations will apply and these are detailed accordingly.

#### **TRADITIONAL SHOP FRONT DESIGN**

- S8.63 One of the major problems, cited frequently by shopkeepers, is the need to replace broken shop windows. The cost of replacement can be significant, but is usually higher where the shop front comprises a full height plate glass window with no vertical or horizontal divisions and no stall-riser. Such shop fronts are more vulnerable, not just to mindless vandalism, even where laminated glass has been fitted, but also from premeditated attacks such as ram-raiding. Wire mesh screens and other internal security measures can in the main be installed without the need for planning permission but, of course, may not prevent windows from being broken in the first instance.
- S8.64 The local planning authority considers that the replacement of plate glass windows with a carefully designed traditional style shop front, in keeping with the character of the town centres, is the ideal solution to improve shop front security (see sketches 2-12). The incorporation of a stall-riser and lowered fascia, together with small paned windows which introduce both vertical and horizontal articulation and additional strengthening provided by wooden mullions and transom bars, has the effect of dramatically improving security, but also has a positive visual effect. The small paned windows can also be laminated for additional strength.
- S8.65 The provision of a strengthened stall-riser prevents the possibility of ram-raiding and internal security 'brick bond' style security screens can, in most cases, be unobtrusively incorporated in the design. In cases where there is concern over repeated burglaries and/or vandalism and where there is already in place a well designed shop front, the fitting of laminated glass to improve security must be considered before other security measures are contemplated.
- S8.86 Planning consent is required for the construction of a new shop front and where any changes are proposed to a Listed Building, Listed Building consent will also be required.

#### **INTERNAL GRILLES**

- S8.87 Internal grilles come in several designs, the most common being a 'brick bond' style screen located on the inside of the shop front and provide an excellent and unobtrusive means of protecting against burglary. In instances where additional

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security is required, these can usually be installed without the need for planning consent, except in the case of a Listed Building, where Listed Building consent will, in most cases, be required.

S8.88 Many shops have window display areas that are separated from the main shop floor. In some cases, it maybe appropriate to provide additional security screens to the rear of this enclosed window display area.

#### **REMOVABLE SHUTTERS OR GRILLES**

S8.89 Removable lattice grilles may be acceptable in certain circumstances on shops where:-

- i. the shop front is of traditional design;
- ii. the grille can be set between the pilasters and above the stall riser;
- iii. no damage is caused to the existing architectural features or mouldings;
- iv. the grille is painted a sympathetic colour; and
- v. the fixings are unobtrusive.

S8.90 The design of the lattice grille will be assessed having due regard to the location of the site and the appearance and character of the building. Any consent granted for this type of grille will be conditioned to require the removal of the grilles during normal working hours, Monday to Saturday, with the grilles being stored out of sight when not in use.

S8.91 Brick-bond style grilles, normally reserved for internal use are sometimes pressed into service to provide an external security measure. Proposals for this type of grille will be assessed in the same way, but in all cases, the box for storing the grille must be hidden behind the shop fascia and no fittings must be attached to the front of the pilasters.

S8.92 In the case of Listed Buildings, the installation of removable grilles will not be acceptable on buildings that make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of an area. In some cases, a lattice type grille will be acceptable on a listed building, but the importance of careful design and detailing of fixings cannot be understated. The local planning authority will want to be satisfied that the proposed grille is not to the detriment of the character and appearance of the building. As stated above for unlisted shops, the proposed grille must be placed between the pilasters and above and below the stall riser and fascia: there must be no fixings attached to the front of the pilasters. Once again, any consent will be subject to conditions requiring the grilles to be removed during working hours and to be stored out of sight.

S8.93 The use of 'brick bond' style screens will not be acceptable on any Listed Building. Visually, such screens are not in keeping with the appearance of historic buildings.

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### **REMOVABLE WOODEN SHUTTERS**

- S8.94 Wooden shutters were often an integral part of shop front design, particularly in Victorian times and, in some situations, may be an acceptable alternative to protect shop premises. However, whilst wooden shutters have the potential to be intrinsically attractive in their own right, they do nevertheless prevent the goods inside a shop from being viewed.
- S8.95 Not all shop fronts will be capable of modification to accept wooden shutters, since their weight, ease of removal and simplicity of storage will limit the size of the shutters. Modern plate glass shop fronts will not normally be suitable for conversion and, as with most other types of shutter, a traditional style shop front offers the best opportunity for a successful scheme. The guidelines outlined in the previous section will apply.
- S8.96 Wooden shutters may be acceptable on a Listed Building where they will not affect the existing architectural detailing or mouldings, though shutters will not be acceptable on a Listed Building which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of an area. The design of the shutters and the location of the fixings must be carefully considered. In cases where removal wooden shutters are deemed to be acceptable, the shutters must be fitted between pilasters and above and below the stall-riser and fascia, so that the external appearance of the shop front can be maintained as far as possible.

### **ROLLER SHUTTERS**

- S8.97 Planning consent will not be granted for the installation of steel roller shutters on any shop or business premises in the district.
- S8.98 Roller shutters detract from the visual appearance of the town centres and individual buildings and create 'dead' frontage within a street, resulting in a threatening, fortress like effect. Furthermore, such shutters can attract graffiti and fly-posting still further from the amenity of an area.

## **10 ADVERTISEMENT MATERIAL**

- S8.99 Information, whether in the form of lettering, signs or symbols must always be considered as an integral part of the total composition of a building. Therefore any application for a new shop front should indicate details of such lettering and signs.
- S8.100 In selecting forms of advertising, the character of the area, the building and the particular business should all be taken into account. Certain letter styles are evocative of particular trades or are expressive of states of mind (solid and respectable, gay and frivolous, etc.), and this factor can be used to provide identity or to integrate the design with the overall character of the building.

### **LETTERING AND SYMBOLS**

- S8.101 In general serif letters are more appropriate than enlarged typefaces as they are more strongly defined, have better articulation and are more vigorous, thus

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more in sympathy with the architectural framework. Individual letters should neither be too widely spaced nor cramped together, as legibility will be impaired. Also, it should be borne in mind that letters become unreadable when they depart too radically from familiar forms.

S8.102 Italic letters is generally unsympathetic to buildings, as the diagonal emphasis is destructive of repose and in conflict with the satisfactory resolution of the vertical and horizontal emphasis of the building.

S8.103 Lettering and symbols should be regarded as minor points of emphasis on a building and should not conflict with the major focal points of a facade. They can provide a valuable element of visual intricacy and therefore gain a degree of compatibility with adjoining buildings. Free-standing cast metal or cut-out wooden letters can be useful in this respect because their depth can give them apparent visual weight, although this type of letter should be used with care, as in sharp perspective it can become difficult to read. Painted lettering with shading can also provide visual intricacy. It has a directness and a close relationship to the building without intruding upon the form, which makes it a vital part of the townscape vocabulary. Traditionally, many commercial premises had lettering painted directly upon the brick or render front. When this was carried out with wit and assurance it became a pleasing feature of the street scene.

S8.104 Individual letters must be well-proportioned and compatible in visual weight one with the other. The actual size of the lettering should be determined by the need to be reasonably legible to pedestrians, not unduly obtrusive in relation to the building facade, and integrated with all other elements making up the streetscene.

#### **MATERIALS FOR LETTERING**

S8.105 In general, materials for lettering and signs should have regard to the factors set out in the section on shop front materials. Hand-painted softwood signs are the most satisfactory form of fascia, as they have both texture and a degree of individuality in valuable in establishing an identity, but are also appropriate elsewhere in the district.

#### **HANGING SIGNS**

S8.106 There is a long tradition of hanging signs dating back through guild-signs to Roman times. They are an apt way of conveying information to the pedestrian, particularly in an enclosed situation such as an arcade. Where a fascia is undesirable, a hanging sign might be a useful alternative.

#### **OTHER ADVERTISEMENTS**

S8.107 Advertising pure and simple, that is lettering and signs in excess of the name of the business and the service or goods supplied - must be carefully controlled where it affects historic buildings or conservation areas. In the majority of cases it should be discouraged, principally for the reasons set out at the beginning of this Section. Where it is incorporated, it must be designed with particular regard to the form and elevations of the building.

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S8.108 If window-area is not necessary for display of goods or lighting it is likely to be obscured with posters. Where display requirements are such that large windows are unnecessary, the opportunity should be taken to limit the glass area and adopt the 'showcase' approach mentioned earlier.

S8.109 Advertisement hoardings, except those around construction sites, are unacceptable in conservation areas, as they are totally alien to the architectural and street scene. Signs should be kept to the essential minimum and integrated with the buildings.

S8.110 Public Houses are usually attractive buildings and their signing has traditionally been a local focus. There is an increasing tendency to replace craftsmanship and individual design with standardised and mass-produced products which, in their materials, colour and scale, totally disregard the architectural qualities of the building and the surround scene. Traditional signs should always be retained, whilst new ones should respect and follow the tradition of individually and local identity.

#### **SPONSORED AND CORPORATE SIGNS**

S8.111 Sponsored and corporate signs tend to undermine the individual identity of a town and village as well as that of the premises themselves. Whilst it is conceded that there are reasons for brand identity it is important that these pressures should be tempered to ensure that such identification is made, but not overstated.

#### **LETTERING, INFORMATION AND ADVERTISEMENTS**

S8.112 Whilst commercial premises need to inform the public of the goods and service which are available, there is also a commercial desire to attract attention. Unrestrained, such efforts result in self-defeating rivalry producing larger and more garish signs ending in confusion and visual chaos.

S8.113 To combat this tendency a code of good manners based on high standards of design should be established to limit this aggressive and self-destructive competition. It will be rigorously applied in all conservation areas, and indeed in all but the most blatantly aggressive commercial areas.

### **11 ...AND FINALLY**

S8.114 The detailed advice given in this guide is intended to amplify and expand the policies on design and conservation included in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan. In particular, attention is drawn to the advice in Chapter 7 and Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance 7 dealing with conservation areas and Listed Buildings, and to Chapter 9 which includes sections dealing with shop fronts and advertisements.

S8.115 However, it should be borne in mind that whilst this guide deals with the subject of shop fronts in some depth, is intended to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, and early contact with the Planning Department to discuss proposals in detail is encouraged.

S8.116 The Council produces a series of leaflets, relating to particular aspects of the development control process, including advice on all forms of development in conservation areas. In addition, the Rochford District Local Plan contains detailed policies for the future development of the District and this can be viewed or



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purchased at the Council Offices. If any additional advice is required you should contact:

Planning Services  
Council Offices  
South Street,  
Rochford  
Essex SS4 1BW

Tel: (01702) 546366  
Fax: (01702) 318181  
Website: [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

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### GLOSSARY

ARCUATED	Term applied to a building dependent structurally on the use of arches or the arch principle.
CLASSICAL	The principles of Greek or (more often) Roman art and architecture. Classical revivals are attempts to return to the rule artistic law and order as well as evocations of the glories of ancient Rome.
COLONNADE	A row of columns carrying an entablature or arches.
DORIC	In classical architecture, one of the accepted modes for a column with base, shaft, capital, and entablature.
ENTABLATURES	The upper part of an order i. e. Doric order, consisting of an architrave, frieze, and cornice.
ENTASIS	The very slight convex curve used on Greek and later columns to correct the optical illusion of concavity that would result if the sides were straight.
FANLIGHT	A window, often semi-circular, in Georgian and Regency buildings, with radiating glazing bars suggesting a fan.
FASCIA	A plain horizontal band, usually in an architrave.
GOTHIC	The architecture of the pointed arch, the rib vault, the flying buttress, the walls reduced to a minimum by spacious arcades.
MEZZANINE	A low storey between two higher ones.
MULLION	A vertical post or other upright dividing a window or other opening into two or more lights.
ORDER	In classical architecture, a column with base.
PALLADIO	Italian architect (16) who crystallised various Renaissance ideas, most notably the revival of Roman symmetrical planning.
PENTICE	A horizontal board usually placed above a window or door, providing protection to the building from dripping rain water.
PERPENDICULAR STYLE	An English style of architecture characterised by the stress in straight verticals and horizontals, by slender, vertically subdivided supports.
PILASTERS	A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall, and in classical architecture, conforming to one of the orders.

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SPANDREL	The triangular space between the side of an arch; also applied to the surface between two arches in an arcade.
TRABEATED	The adjective describing a building built on the post-and-lintel principle, as in Greek architecture.
TRANSOM	A horizontal bar of stone or wood across the opening of a window or panel.