

# Chislehurst High Street

## Shop Fronts - design guide

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# Chislehurst High Street Shop Front Design Guide

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## **Shop front design principles for Chislehurst High Street**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Chislehurst has the setting and the amenity to become one of London's most outstanding destination High Streets. Essential to that aim is the need for well designed, high quality and attractive shop fronts that add to the visual amenity of Chislehurst High Street. The intention is to promote attractive shop fronts, sympathetic to the architectural structures in which they are located and yet creating a favourable first impression of a business.
- 1.2 This design guide has been jointly produced by the Chislehurst Town Team and by Bromley Council. It provides a framework for delivering a sensitive approach to shop front design and signage and protecting buildings from insensitive change over time.
- 1.3 This document is intended as guidance for those:
  - wishing to alter or install a new shop front
  - seeking to replace or erect signs, canopies or security features on a shop
  - whose current shop fronts fall short of the standards in this document
  - wishing to display goods in front of their shop
- 1.4 This document was adopted by Bromley Council as a Supplementary Planning document on dd/mth 2014. It sets out design principles which establish good practice for shop fronts in Chislehurst High Street.
- 1.5 These guidelines apply to all commercial and retail uses on the High Street. Using this document and engaging in early discussion with the Council will help to ensure the most successful shop front outcomes.
- 1.6 The Chislehurst Town Team and Bromley Council encourage the retention of historic and original shopfronts. They require a high standard of appearance of all shop fronts and associated awnings, roller shutter grilles, signs and lighting. Shop fronts must always respect the upper part of the building and relate well to adjoining frontages. The design can be either traditional or modern but basic principles of scale and quality materials should be employed.

## **2.0 Planning Applications**

- 2.1 Planning applications are required for all new shop fronts, or alterations to existing shop fronts that materially affect the external appearance of a building.
- 2.2 New shop fronts, projecting signs, lighting or external shutters will require Planning Permission and new lettering may require Advertisement Consent. If the shop is a Statutory Listed Building you may also require Listed Building Consent. We therefore advise that you contact the Heritage Team at the Council if you are considering carrying out work. Telephone 020 8461 7532.
- 2.3 All illuminated signs or fascias, and many other non-illuminated signs and advertisements, require Advertisement Consent.
- 2.4 The Planning Department can give advice to applicants on what needs permission.
- 2.5 Applicants are strongly recommended to use the Council's pre-application service.
- 2.6 All designs should adhere to Building Regulations to ensure they are in line with space, design and accessibility standards, and should seek to required permission to be authorised.
- 2.7 It is important to remember that where the proposed alteration or addition contravenes policy, guidance or regulations, Bromley Council may refuse the application and the work to the shop front will not be allowed.

### 3.0 Shop front features

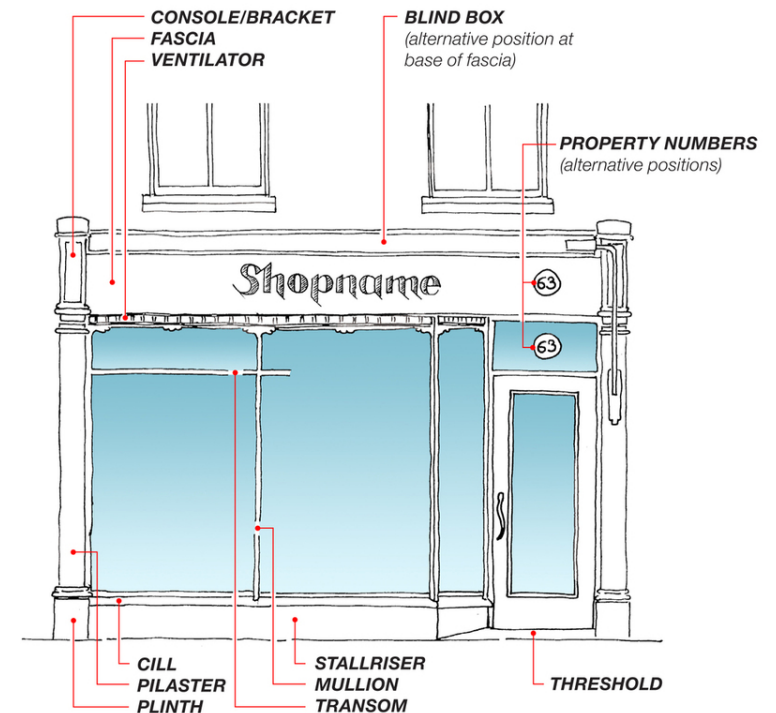
3.1 The adjacent diagram illustrates the key components of a shop front.

### 4.0 The benefits of good design

4.1 Whilst the principle purpose of a shop front is the advertisement and display of the goods and services provided inside the building, good design promotes not only the individual shop but contributes to its location, raising the quality of the High Street, or lowering it if good design is not employed.

4.2 Key issues for good design in Chislehurst High Street are:

- the design should not be considered in isolation but as a part of the overall composition of the building and the wider look and street scene of the High Street
- the design should reflect and respect the history of the surroundings and the local area
- the materials should be in keeping with the host building
- the proportions of the shop front should harmonise with the main and adjoining buildings
- standard 'house' design should be integrated sensitively to reflect the characteristics of the street scene or building
- there should be good accessibility for clients/customers.



## 5.0 Retention of original features

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Where a traditional or historic shop front exists, Bromley Council will insist on its retention by means of appropriate repair or restyling. Where traditional features remain, opportunity should be taken to restore them.
- 5.3 Traditional features may have been removed from many shops, whilst others are concealed by more recent alterations. Where original features no longer exist, it may be desirable to reinstate them or replace them with similar features. Any disfiguring later additions should be removed, damage repaired and features reinstated with materials which are the same as, or match, the original.
- 5.4 Existing Victorian or Edwardian pilasters, consoles and fascias should remain undisturbed, or be restored where they have been altered.

Good examples of keeping and restoring original features.



## 6.0 Creating well-proportioned frontages

- 6.1 Elements such as doors, fascias and windows should be in proportion with both the building it belongs to (so that it forms an integral part of the elevation rather than an isolated element on the ground floor) and the general street scene. This can be achieved by taking into account the scale and architectural style of the building and by echoing the arrangement of the windows, columns and areas of walling on the upper floors and neighbouring buildings.
- 6.2 In small scale buildings the shopfront should also be small. The depth and height of the fascia, the size of the display windows, and the proportions of the various detailing, should all be modest.
- 6.3 In larger buildings the shopfront can be correspondingly larger but it should still be in proportion to the building. If large windows are necessary but otherwise out of scale, their impact can be reduced by subdivision. This can be achieved with mullions and transoms which can also be used to help relate the shopfront to architectural features on the upper floor.



Examples of well- proportioned frontages

## 7.0 Maintaining Rhythm

- 7.1 A shop front extending across several buildings, especially where the fascia is continuous, often spoils the vertical rhythm of narrow frontages. This can be avoided by subdividing it into separate shop fronts - one to each building.
- 7.2 If buildings differ in size or architecture, then varied designs are more likely to be appropriate, and variation in the height of fascia will maintain the vertical rhythm of the buildings

- 7.3 If the buildings are more or less the same size and architectural style, then it may be acceptable for each shopfront to be the same design but shop front design principles should be applied to ensure the line of shops look attractive.



Examples of shop front principles not being applied to a line of shops giving a disjointed street scene.



## 8.0 Shopfront Modelling

8.1 Unrelieved flat-fronted shopfronts can deaden streetscapes. In contrast, inset doors, bold architectural features and intricate detailing, as shown below, can provide three-dimensional modelling and visual interest both to the shop and the street.



## 9.0 Fascias and Signage

9.1 Fascias form the dominant feature of the shop front. The fascia is key to promoting a business's service and is usually the first feature a customer will take notice of. Therefore it is critical that acceptable materials for fascias are used and incorporated into the wider design of the shop front.



9.2 The fascia should

- be of a scale proportionate to the rest of the building (as a general rule fascias look well-proportioned if they are no deeper than about a fifth of the shopfront's overall height)
- protrude from the building further than a depth of 0.15m to 0.25m
- respect adjoining shop fronts
- not extend below the bottom of the corbel or uninterrupted across a number of buildings
- not obscure windows and architectural detailing
- align with other fascias in the parade



9.3 Box fascias should be avoided as they are unsympathetic to their surroundings in terms of bulk, size, materials and lighting with the box fascia.

9.4 Internally illuminated box signs are not appropriate

9.5 Owners should consider traditional approaches such as hand painted or applied lettering to signage. Such approaches are often more cost effective than factory-made signage.

9.6 Wording should be succinct as too much lettering can create confusion and appear untidy.

9.7 The relevant guidance and regulations should be checked to find out if advertisement consent is required for signage.

## 10. Using appropriate materials

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 Designs should not employ a large number of different materials or use materials that could clash with adjoining premises or the general street scene.
- 10.3 Natural aluminium, acrylics and other shiny artificial materials are generally out of place on older buildings and inappropriate for Chislehurst High Street conservation area. Preference should be given to materials that have an affinity with existing buildings and the local area. Traditional materials of good quality, such as wood, stone, brick, tiles and metalwork can offer a wide variety of profiles, textures and finishes, which maintain their appearance better than many modern materials. Timber gives greater scope for interesting moulding than aluminium.



## 11. Cornices, Corbels, Pilasters and Stall risers

- 11.1 These should always form part of a traditional shop front design. Existing ones should be retained and where a historic one is missing it should be reinstated.
- 11.2 A cornice may incorporate a trough light where the projection is sufficient but this should be sited well below any upper floor window cills.
- 11.3 Where pilasters form part of a new design they should incorporate a base plinth and a corbel/console bracket.
- 11.4 Stallrisers should provide a solid visual base to the shop front and visually balance the fascia and cornice.





## 12.0 Using appropriate colours

- 12.1 Muted or neutral colours will avoid a clash with colour schemes of the individual shops. Harsh and gaudy colours draw undue attention to themselves and should be avoided. The High Street is within the Chislehurst Conservation area so dark or pale colours, or white, which were traditionally used on shop fronts, are required. Painting should aim to unify a shop front, not split it up into disparate elements, and is best achieved with a single colour or a limited palette of complementary colours.
- 12.2 If the consoles and pilasters are painted, they should be all the same colour scheme if possible, to maintain the continuity of the parade.

## 13.0 Canopies and Blinds

- 13.1 Victorian-style retractable canvas canopies have been enjoying a revival and can give shelter to shoppers in addition to enlivening the street scene. Care should be taken, however, to avoid obscuring architectural details, excessive amount of advertising, garish colours or reflective materials such as acrylic. Solid canopies and Dutch canopies are best avoided. Victorian style canopies are fitted above the fascia and have side supporting brackets. Roller blinds should always be retractable and the blind box should be an integral part of the shopfront rather than an added-on extra.
- 13.2 All canopies should be at least 2.4m above the footpath once fully extended, but should not be fixed to the building any higher than ground floor level. Non-retractable canopies are not permitted



A good example of the appropriate scale of lettering and fascia for a shop front, as well as use of a blind.

13.3 Planning Permission is required for some canopies and blinds so the Planning Department should be consulted before installation.

13.4 Highway regulations require the outer edge of lowered blinds to be set back at least 1m from the kerb and the outer and inner ends of the supporting arms respectively not less than 2.14 and 2.3m above the pavement. Side flaps should be avoided as they can obstruct pedestrians.

#### **14.0 Projecting and Hanging Signs**

14.1 Hanging signs are a traditional feature of shops which can add vitality to the streetscape. On traditional shopfronts and old buildings, timber or cast metal signs are particularly appropriate, but individually crafted elegant modern designs, using other materials, are not precluded.

14.2 Projecting signs should not be overly large in relation to the rest of the shopfront and should be placed ideally at fascia level. As a general rule only one sign will be allowed per shop and its area should be no more than 0.75m squared. The position of the bottom of the sign must be at least 2.6m above the pavement, and the outer edge at least 1m in from the kerb.



Example of an attractive hanging sign

- 14.3 Heavy box type signs with internal illumination are not suitable for Chislehurst High Street. Light hanging signs with a minimum of lettering are preferable.
- 14.4 Large-scale detailed drawings of proposed signs at a scale of 1:5 will be required with Advertisement Applications, clearly showing the construction, lettering and graphic design.

## 15.0 Lighting

- 15.1 Too often, illuminated signs are bulky or poorly designed or sited, adding unwelcome clutter to shop fronts. If a new shop is to be illuminated therefore, the choice and location of fittings should be considered from the outset so that they form an integral part of the design rather than ending up as later ad hoc additions. Over illumination must also be avoided because it can upset the balance of light with other premises and with street lighting.
- 15.2 Given Chislehurst High Street's conservation area status, early consultation with the Planning Department is strongly advised.
- 15.3 Fascia illumination should be subtle – like that in the restaurant pictured. External lighting, backlit lettering, individual halo letters and cold cathode tubes can all be considered. Nonetheless the type and design of lighting need to be appropriate to the shopfront, the building and the location. External fascia light sources should be concealed as much as possible and should be carefully directed at the signs, to avoid glare onto the pavement below or into the windows of upper floor residences.



## 16.0 Illuminated Display Windows

- 16.1 The impact that attractively lit window displays can have on trade and on the vitality and sense of security of shopping streets at night should not be forgotten. Traders are encouraged to keep their premises lit well into the evenings. Carefully illuminated displays, using spotlights rather than bare fluorescent tubes, generally have the most impact.
- 16.2 Although internal display lighting is not subject to planning control, it should be noted that illuminated signs within a metre of a shop window do require 'Advertisement Consent' from the Planning Authority.





## 17.0 Corporate Identities

17.1 Chain stores and restaurants etc. need to respect existing buildings and streetscapes so that local distinctiveness is maintained. Consequently the use of standardised corporate shop fronts in Chislehurst conservation area is no longer acceptable and shop fronts of such companies may need to be substantially moderated. Compromises are often possible which enable a corporate image to be maintained, as shown below, without being at the expense of local character.



## 18.0 Street Numbering

18.1 The street number is a legal requirement for shops and ought to be clearly displayed somewhere on the shopfront. It could be included on the fascia but fanlights, pilasters and consoles are common alternative positions.

## 19.0 Security features

19.1 Whilst it is recognised that security is an important consideration, security features, if not well designed can give a negative appearance of the High Street. Security measures should have a minimal impact on the street scene.



19.2 Planning permission will not normally be granted for solid roller shutters.

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

19.4 Burglar alarms and telecom junction boxes should not conceal architectural features or be located in over-conspicuous positions, and the associated wiring should be neatly fixed, or better still, hidden. They may need consent when they are to be located on a listed building.

## **20.0 Accessibility**

20.1 Shops should be welcoming and accessible for all customers, including people with disabilities, parents with children in prams and buggies, and elderly, less agile people. The following features should therefore be considered:-

- Entrances should comply with Part M of the Buildings Regulations which sets out statutory access requirements.
- Steps and raised thresholds should be avoided.
- Ramps should have gentle gradients - shallower than 1:20 if possible but no steeper than 1:12.
- If possible there should also be a level area immediately in front of entrance doors and a space of 300mm alongside the leading edge of the door to make it easier for a person in a wheelchair to get close to the door handle.
- Surfaces should be free of irregularities and be non-slip.
- The use of mat wells should be avoided as they can be barriers to the less ambulant and are potential trip hazards. Flush fitting barrier matting is preferable.

20.2 In listed and other old buildings these standards should be taken into account as far as practical, but they should be commensurate with preserving the building's character and setting.

## **21.0 Display of goods and advertising boards**

- 21.1 The display of goods outside a shop must be well arranged and appropriate. A licence must be sought from the Council's Licencing Team to display goods on the public highway in front of a shop
- 22.2 Free standing advertisement signs on the public footway in front of a shop are only acceptable when a clear 1.2 metre footpath is still available to pedestrians.

## **22.0 Hanging Baskets, Window Boxes and Tubs**

- 22.2 These should be carefully designed and sited to avoid obscuring or damaging architectural features or causing an obstruction.



## **Appendix - Bromley Planning Policies**

If you are submitting a planning application for a new shopfront several policies may apply.

Policy BE19 Shopfronts

Policy BE20 Security Shutters

Policy BE21 Advertisements, Hoardings and Signs

The Chislehurst Supplementary Planning Guidance also provides useful information.

Shop entrances should be fully DDA compliant.

RNIB Building Sights.