

6. Shopfronts

KEY MESSAGES

- Shopfronts should be designed to a high standard and should consider the character and design of the building and its context
- Shopfront alterations to existing buildings should respect the detailed design, materials, colour and architectural features of the shopfront and building itself.
- Shopfronts in newly designed buildings should be designed to integrate well with the surrounding area and contribute positively to the public realm.
- The Council strongly encourages shopfront security measures to be internal rather than external. Solid shutters will only be considered acceptable in exceptional circumstances.
- Vibrant and well-designed shopfronts animate and activate the street scene and contribute to creating healthy places.

- 6.1 Shopfronts make a significant contribution to the character and richness of experience of Camden's centres and streets.
- 6.2 It is important that new shopfronts and alterations to existing shopfronts are sensitively designed and do not detract from the character of the host building or the surrounding area. Insensitive alterations to existing shop fronts and poorly designed shopfronts in new buildings can erode the character of existing frontages and the local area.
- 6.3 Well-designed shopfronts increase the visual attractiveness of a building and the local area and can have an impact on commercial success by increasing the attraction of shops and centres to customers. This is particularly important in town centres and shops in conservation areas and listed buildings.
- 6.4 This guidance relates to Camden Local Plan Policies D1 – Design, D2 – Heritage and D3 – Shopfronts and should inform planning applications for new shopfronts and schemes involving alterations to existing shopfronts.



When does this guidance apply?

- 6.5 This guidance applies to all applications that provide shopfronts as part of new buildings and all schemes which may materially alter the external appearance of an existing shopfront and therefore may require planning permission or listed building consent.
- 6.6 This guidance applies to street level premises that have a display window and/or a fascia sign. It includes non-retail uses found in shopping areas or elsewhere such as estate agents, banks, building societies, restaurants and pubs. It will also apply to historic shopfronts that have been converted for other uses such as residential.
- 6.7 Planning permission is generally required for:
- new shopfronts;
 - alterations to an existing shopfront including awnings and canopies, external security shutters, blinds, grilles and security measures; and
 - change of use.
- 6.8 Planning permission is not normally required for routine maintenance works, such as redecoration or straightforward repairs. For further detailed guidance please contact the Council's duty planning service: 0207 974 4444 or planning@camden.gov.uk
- 6.9 Planning permission is required for the proposed complete or substantial demolition of any building in a conservation area. This includes the removal of a shopfront or of any feature that gives character to a building. In assessing applications to alter shopfronts within conservation areas special attention will be given to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas (for further information see **chapter 3 Heritage** of this CPG). In cases where a historic shopfront exists, the Council will encourage its retention.
- 6.10 For shops in conservation areas, reference should also be made to the relevant Conservation Area Statement/Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Strategy (there are 40 in total). These describe the area and its special character and include guidelines that provide the framework for development proposals in the area and the appraisals contain audits of **shopfronts of merit**.
- Shopfronts of merit:** These are shopfronts that contribute to the character of an area and are of townscape merit. Some are identified for their historical interest, others because they are good examples of a particular style of architecture.
- 6.11 Advertisement consent is a separate procedure that applies to the display of advertisements on shopfronts. You can find further guidance in the document Outdoor advertisements and signs: A guide for advertisers (CLG, 2007) and in [CPG Advertisements](#).

- 6.12 Building regulations approval is required for all work which alters the shop's structure, entrance arrangement, changes its fire escape, or affects the level of access currently provided.

General principles of shopfront design

- 6.13 There are a number of general principles that apply to the design of shopfronts, whether new or historic, as set out below:
- Shopfronts should respect the design, character and proportions of the building within which they are situated and respect the character of the street.
 - Shopfronts should always be considered as part of a unified design of the whole building and should respect the character of adjacent properties.
 - Any corporate “house styles” or branding should be appropriately and sensitively adapted to respond to and fit in with the context of the building or surrounding street.
 - The materials and proportions of shopfronts should be sensitively chosen to be appropriate to the host building and surrounding context.
 - Shopfronts should be designed to add visual interest, quality and vitality to the street scene.
 - Any signage or lettering should be uncluttered and respect the character and design of the building.
 - Any security safeguards should be unobtrusively incorporated.
 - All shopfronts should be designed to provide access into the premises for all (For further guidance on designing accessible buildings please see CPG Access).
- 6.14 Any alterations (or replacement) of shopfronts that form part of a listed building will require Listed Building Consent and will need to be consistent with the age, style and character of the building. For further information and guidance on altering heritage assets see [chapter 3 Heritage](#) of this CPG. When dealing with a listed building, more stringent controls will apply for the following works:
- re-painting a shopfront in a different colour,
 - installing a security alarm or extractor fan,
 - altering the shop interior,
 - installing blinds or shutters, and
 - advertisements.

Altering existing shopfronts

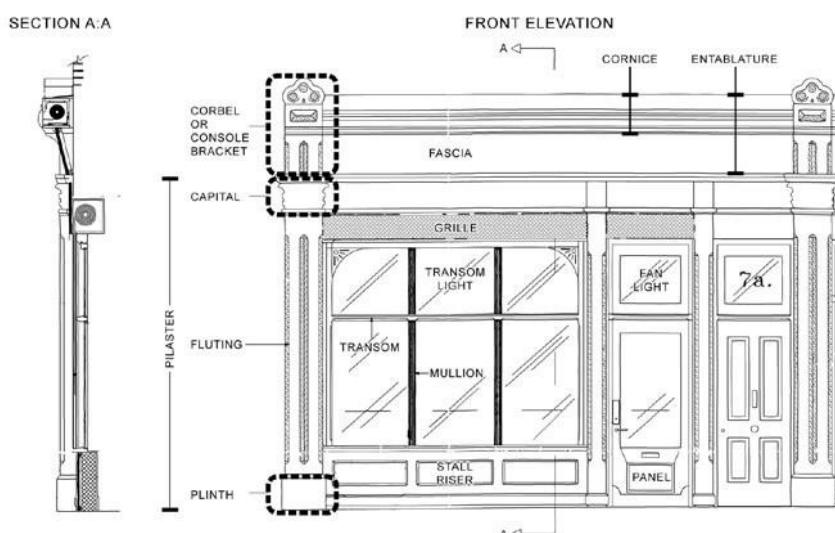
- Shopfront alterations should respect the detailed design, character, materials, colour and architectural features of the shopfront and building itself to which it is attached.

- Historic, locally distinctive or characteristic shopfronts which contribute to the townscape should be retained. In some cases the reinstatement of missing features will be encouraged.
- If a historic shopfront is to be altered, care must be taken to ensure any alterations are historically accurate and appropriate to the building and the street.
- Standardised “house-style” branded frontages may have to be amended in order to harmonise with the surrounding context and respect the host building, particularly in conservation areas and for listed buildings.

Shopfront elements

- 6.15 The basic architectural features that make up shopfronts are illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 3. Shopfront elements



- 6.16 The following section provides guidance in relation to the main elements of shopfront design. It should be considered when alterations to an existing shopfront and new shopfronts are being designed.

Windows / displays

- The window display is the main visual element of a shopfront. Shop frontages should be largely glazed to maintain a window display rather than creating a solid frontage (including obscured glass) which will be discouraged.
- The Council discourages shop window displays and graphics that completely obstruct views into the shop (for example vinyl graphics applied to the window). The layout of shop units should be designed to overcome the need for excessive window graphics, for example to hide shelving.

- Digital adverts behind glazed shopfronts are strongly discouraged because of the visual clutter they may create and likely detrimental impact when insensitively sited. In cases where they may be necessary, it is advised that these should be set back from the glazing, modestly sized and that any proposed illumination remains static.
- On traditional shopfronts, large expanses of undivided glass should be avoided. Vertical glazing bars (mullions) should be used to subdivide large windows to help visually relate the shopfront with the upper elevations of the building.

Access

- All new build shop units and shopfronts should be designed to be fully accessible to everyone.
- In the case of existing buildings, the following guidance should be followed:
 - Entrance doors should be accessible to all, particularly wheelchair users and people with limited manual dexterity. 1000mm minimum clear door width in new buildings and 775mm door width in existing buildings where a new shopfront or alterations to a shopfront are proposed. (Please also see Camden Planning Guidance on Access.)
 - Shops that have a change in level from pavement to shop floor surface can usually incorporate ramped access into or within the shop. Exceptions preventing a ramped area to be created may include the presence of structural beams or floor slabs.

Entrances

- The design of the entrance door and doorway should be in keeping with the other elements of the shopfront.
- Solid bottom panels of shopfront doors should align with the stall riser. Where there is a transom, the top of a door should align with it.
- Any existing decorative tiling should be retained.

Recesses

- Where there is an existing shopfront recess - often found in older traditional shopfronts - these should be retained.
- However, new recesses in shopfronts will be strongly discouraged due to their potential for attracting anti-social behaviour.
- Traditional horizontally-operated lattice security gates can in some cases be employed to protect recessed shop entrances, but they should not extend across windows. Removable timber or metal lattice style shutters are often more appropriate on traditional shopfronts.

Fascias

- Fascias should be of a suitable size and proportion in relation to the building and should not normally extend above the cornice or below the capital where this would upset the overall balance and proportions

of a shopfront or the parade in which it is located (see Figure 9 and Figure 10).

- Fascia signs should not obscure or damage existing architectural features. Deep box fascias which project beyond the shopfront frame should be avoided.
- Lettering on fascia signs should be proportionate to the scale of the shopfront. To aid identification, fascia signs should include the street number of the premises.
- Where a shopfront and fascia extend across two or more shop unit bays, the removal of any intervening pilasters is not considered acceptable as it would:
 - weaken the frame's visual support to the upper floors; and
 - disrupt the character and rhythm of a shopping frontage created by the widths of individual shopfronts.
- Lettering on fascia signs should be proportionate to the scale of the shopfront. Main fascias should also be of a suitable size and proportion in relation to the building and should sit between cornice and shopfront itself and should not project above or below the cornice level obscuring upper floor or shop windows.
- Fascia and box signs should not obscure or damage existing architectural features.

Figure 4. Good design in a traditional shopfront - section and elevation

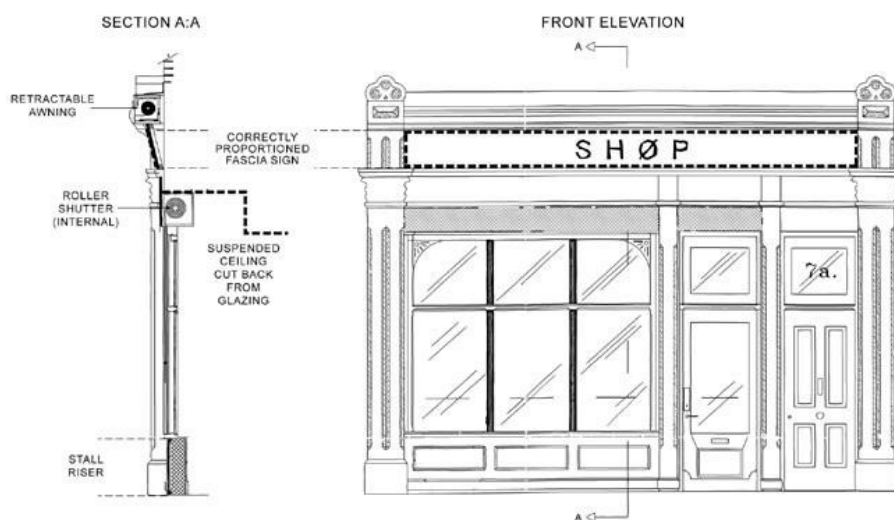


Figure 5. Inappropriate design in a traditional shopfront - section and elevation



Pilasters

- New pilasters are preferably placed in line with solid wall, not windows above, to emphasise their function. This is particularly important in the case of shopping frontages on sloping sites where existing stepped profiles of fascias and stall risers should be preserved or reintroduced wherever possible.

Stall risers

- Stall risers consist of solid elements below shop windows. They form a base to the shopfront display, and prevent the glazing from being damaged or soiled.
- Stall risers should be retained where existing and generally should be incorporated to any new shopfront on a period buildings.
- Where stall risers are provided, they should be at least 300mm high or to the top of the pilaster base or door panel and faced in appropriate materials for the context. They should not provide ledges that can be sat upon. Glazing should be brought to the front of a stall riser.

Colour and materials

- Materials should be chosen for their durability and appropriateness to their location.
- Traditional materials such as timber, stone and render will be the most appropriate for new shopfronts in conservation areas and listed buildings.
- More contemporary materials such as colour-coated steel, aluminium and bronze instead of timber may be appropriate depending on the building and its location.

- Any existing glazed brickwork or tiling should be retained.
- Colour schemes for shopfronts and in particular the projecting framework should be carefully considered, particularly in conservation areas and for listed buildings.
- Proposals should be accompanied by full details of materials, finishes and colours (or sample and specification cards).

Folding shopfronts

- Folding shopfronts are not generally considered acceptable, particularly on historic buildings such as listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas. When folding shopfronts are open, they erode the appearance of the shopfront, creating a visual void, and can increase noise and disturbance to the occupiers of neighbouring properties, particularly in the case of food and drink premises. When closed they appear as a row of doors rather than a shopfront, which creates a heavier appearance and reduces the area of glass in the shopfront.

Lightwells / grilles

- Pavement lights or small lightwells covered with metal grilles are typically found in front of shopfronts in parts of the borough. These provide light into the areas beneath whilst allowing shoppers close inspection of the window display.
- Creating open lightwells with railings in front of a shopfront is not generally considered acceptable as it prevents window shopping and disrupts the building's relationship to the rhythm of the street. This also applies if the shopfront has been converted into residential accommodation.

Design and appearance of shopfronts in new buildings

- 6.17 The design of new shop frontages should add to the richness of experience for users of streets and public spaces and contribute to the character and attractiveness of the frontage of which they form part. Shopfronts play a key role in creating active and attractive frontages, in particular in town centres, and enlivening streets and public areas. Well-designed shopfronts should include detailed features that help to add richness to the shop and wider streetscene; for example vertical or horizontal elements that respond to the rhythm or symmetry of upper floors or adjacent buildings.



- 6.18 Designs for new shopfronts should seek to respond to the existing and surrounding context and consider the principles of shopfront design in paragraph 1.13 above.
- 6.19 New shopfronts should be designed as part of the whole building and should sensitively relate to the scale, proportions and architectural style of the building and surrounding facades.
- 6.20 Shopfronts forming part of a larger new development should be considered as an integral part of the overall design.
- 6.21 Contemporary approaches to shopfront design will be considered if these are appropriately designed to fit in with the surrounding and adjacent context.
- 6.22 Consideration should be given to how the shopfront, as the ground floor element, provides a strong base to the building and its relation to the façade design above and also how it interacts with the adjoining streets and spaces and adjacent buildings.
- 6.23 New shopfronts should respond sensitively to the existing street scene and local context. Shopfronts should seek to integrate well with the rhythm of the street elevation in which the shopfront is located and be consistent with the pattern of adjoining buildings. New shopfronts should seek to integrate with the surrounding area and enhance the streetscene where possible.
- 6.24 As shopfronts are seen at close quarters, careful attention should be given to the type and quality of materials used, to their detailing and the execution of any finishes.
- 6.25 Large areas of unarticulated glazing should be avoided. This can be effectively done by breaking longer frontages into shorter sections within a unified base. Individual bays or multiple bays can cater for units of occupation by smaller or larger users.



- 6.26 Signage zones should be defined as part of the overall design to provide a unified composition to the frontage.
- 6.27 As noted in the general principles paragraph 1.13 above, users with particular branding house styles or standardised branding will be expected to adapt their style or brand to the architectural qualities of the host building.

Advertisements and signs

- 6.28 Shops and businesses need to ensure that their name and other details are clearly displayed on their premises and, as a result, signs are among the most prominent forms of advertising on buildings. However, signs that are unsympathetically designed can cause significant harm to the building and the local townscape. Signs should relate well to the character, scale and architectural features of the building and respect their local context.
- 6.29 Properties should only have one main fascia sign and one ancillary projecting or hanging sign per street frontage, although two projecting signs may be appropriate in cases of large shopfronts stretching across two or more shop units. Too many adverts/signs on a property contribute to visual clutter and can detract from the appearance of the street scene.

Projecting and hanging signs

- 6.30 Projecting and hanging signs should normally be level with the fascia rather than below or above it. They should be positioned to the side of the shopfront at fascia level.
- 6.31 Signs at upper floor levels will be discouraged. Advertising for upper floor premises by lettering on windows or by suspended banners on large frontages will only be considered acceptable where advertising a specific event for a temporary period.
- 6.32 Advertisement signs, including those on canopies/blinds, should:

- be considered as an integral part of a shopfront or building, designed in from the outset with new structures;
- be in harmony with the existing building, and neighbouring ones, in terms of their proportions, design and materials;

Please see Camden Planning Guidance on Advertisements, signs and hoardings for further guidance.

Canopies, awnings and blinds

- 6.33 Blinds can add colour and interest to the street scene. However, it is important to ensure that they do not dominate a shopfront or shop parade.

Canopy - A decorative structure providing a sheltered walk to the entrance of a building.

Awning - A sheet of canvas or synthetic fabric hung above a shopfront as protection against rain or sun

Blind - A structure of canvas or other material stretched used to keep sun or rain off a shop window.

- 6.34 Shopfront canopies and blinds are only likely to be acceptable where they are:

- retractable;
- traditional canvas;
- blind box integrated with the overall design;
- attached between the fascia and shopfront;
- of a width appropriate to the shopfront; and
- flush with the fascia level.

- 6.35 In general all blinds should be designed and installed to:

- ensure public safety;
- incorporate a minimum of 2.3 metres between the bottom of the blind and the pavement; and
- incorporate a minimum of 1 metre between the blind and the kerb edge.

Figure 6. Appropriate ways to install shopfront awnings

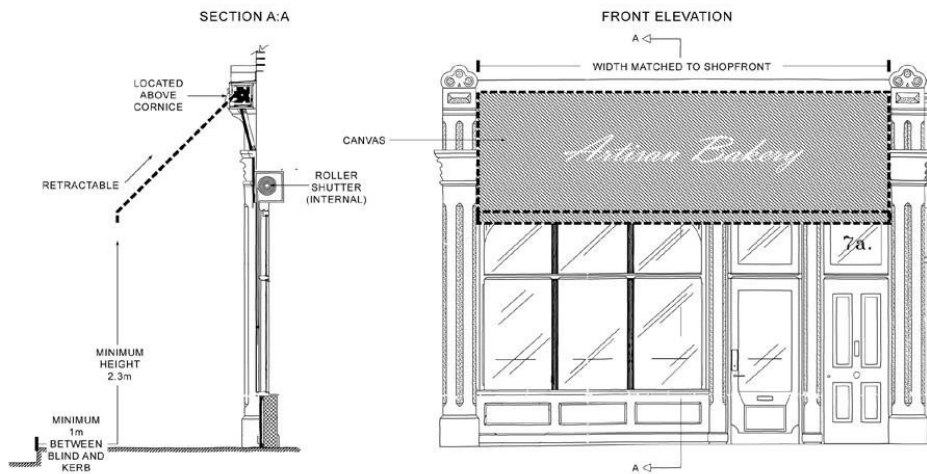
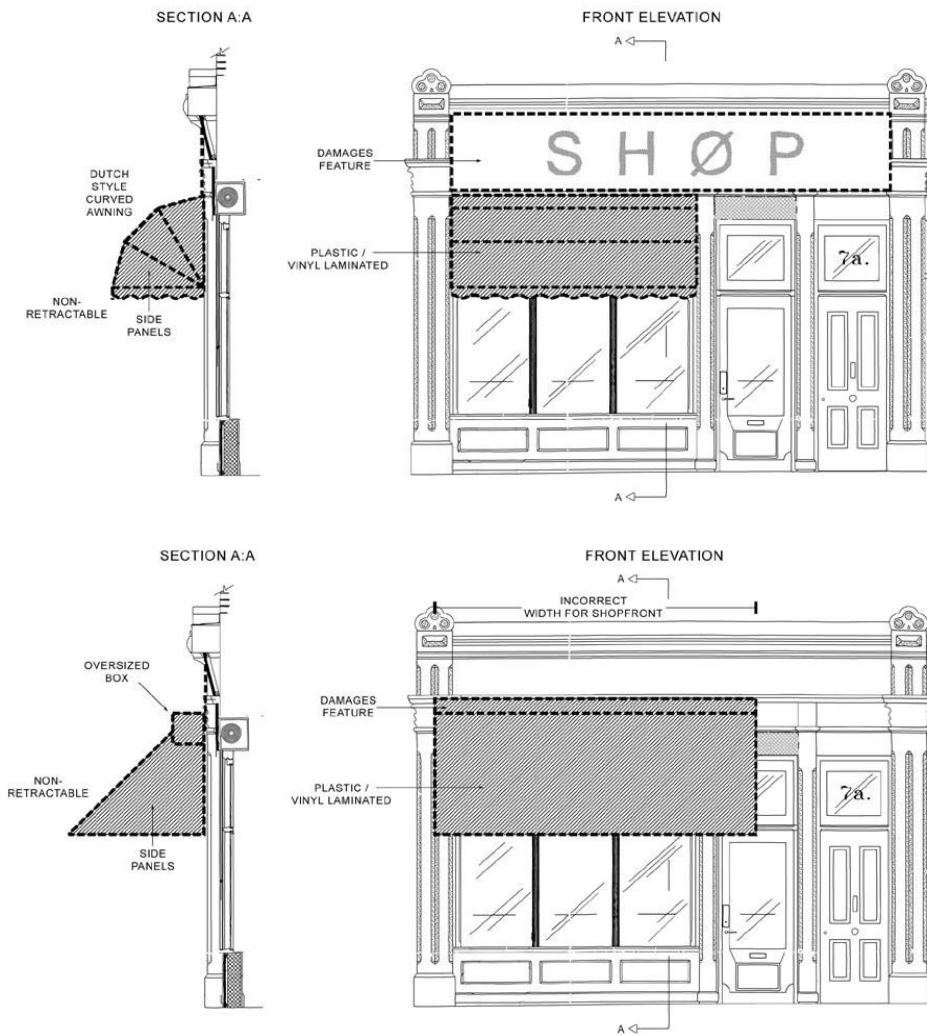


Figure 7. Inappropriate ways to install shopfront awnings



Retractable

- 6.36 Retracting awnings and blinds do not normally require planning permission, although they may require advertisement consent in certain cases. They should not:
- obscure or damage the fascia and other important features of the shopfront and buildings;
 - have discordant and over-dominant shapes, but be appropriate in position, design and materials to the character and scale of both the shopfront, building and locality.

Fixed

- 6.37 Fixed canopies will require planning permission. However, acrylic / plastic “Dutch blinds”, or similarly reflective materials will be strongly discouraged, due to their bulk and materials and resulting visual clutter. Single-pitched retractable canvas awnings are considered to be less visually intrusive on shopfronts.

Materials

- 6.38 Canvas blinds are often characteristic features of historic shopfronts and should therefore be retained or replaced using a similar design – acrylic or plastic blinds are not normally suitable.

Signage

- 6.39 Canopies or blinds with signage are treated as advertisements and therefore advertisement consent will be required rather than planning permission (See CPG Advertisements for further guidance on advertisements).

Shopfront security

- 6.40 Security shutters can be visually unattractive and create a 'dead', hostile appearance (especially out of opening hours), which can affect the commercial viability of an area and harm the pedestrian experience. They can:
- obscure the shopfront and hide window displays;
 - attract graffiti;
 - prevent natural surveillance;
 - create a hostile and unsafe appearance in streets and shopping centres; and
 - be visually unattractive.
- 6.41 These guidelines offer suggest the most appropriate means of providing security protection while minimising impacts on the appearance of the shopfront, the building and the character of the area.

Shutters

- 6.42 The Council strongly encourages internal rather than external shopfront security measures in order to avoid harming the appearance of shop premises and creating clutter. Other forms of enhanced shopfront security should be considered instead of external shutters. For example, internal shutters, improved internal lighting, alarm systems, the use of toughened or laminated glass, etc..
- 6.43 External security shutters will normally require planning permission. In cases where external measures (shutters, grilles or alarm boxes, etc.) are proposed they are like to only be acceptable where they do not harm the character of shopfronts, such as internal brick bond grilles or collapsible gates, and are integrated into the shopfront in terms of design, materials and colour.
- 6.44 External measures should avoid using solid roller shutters. This includes 'pin-hole' versions that rely upon internal illumination for any transparent effect. Solid shutters will only considered to be acceptable in exceptional circumstances as they are unsightly and can generate feelings of insecurity in those walking by, hide internal intruders and encourage crime and anti-social behaviour such as graffiti.
- 6.45 Internal shutters do not normally need planning permission. Where internal shutters are installed they should be set back to leave a window display.
- 6.46 In the case of listed buildings, the installation of any shopfront security measures, external or internal, will require listed building consent. On listed buildings, there will be a presumption against the use of external security shutters and grilles.

Shutter boxes

- 6.47 Shutter boxes should be disc and should not project forward of the fascia or obscure any architectural features. They should be concealed wherever possible, for example set behind or within the fascia panel, the guide rails concealed within the frame of the shopfront and shutter should be close onto the stall riser.

Grilles

- 6.48 Roller grilles are preferable to solid or pin-hole shutters as they provide security without obscuring window displays and allow views of the shop interior, which enhances surveillance and security.

Removable grilles

- 6.49 Removable or collapsible grilles can be used internally or externally and in both cases allow a certain degree of visibility. These only require planning permission if installed externally. However, listed building consent will also be required for internal grilles in listed buildings.
- 6.50 Removable grilles are expected to remain in place only outside trading hours and should be stored inside at all other times. Any fixings should

be discretely placed and must not harm architectural features or mouldings.

- 6.51 Where there is a recessed entrance it is preferable to install a 'Concertina style' gate between the openings.

Finishes

- 6.52 All grilles and shutters should have an acceptable finish. They should be coloured (painted, powder coated or stove enamelled) to match the rest of the shopfront, including signs. Uncoated shutters, galvanised steel, a milled finish or anodised aluminium are not considered acceptable finishes. In the exceptional cases where solid shutters are acceptable, original designs by artists will be encouraged provided they respect their location, particularly in Conservation Areas.

Burglar alarms

- 6.53 Burglar alarm devices must be sited so that they are both adequately visible as a deterrent but do not detract from the visual character of the shopfront.

Cash machines

- 6.54 Cash machines require planning permission and, in the case of listed buildings, listed building consent. Illuminated advertising for cash machines should be discreet and is subject to advertisement consent.
- 6.55 Cash machines (also known as cash points and ATMs) are only likely to be acceptable provided they are:
- treated as an integral part of a building's design wherever possible;
 - not dominant in the shop display frontage in terms of size or materials;
 - positioned sensitively and not be located where queuing could cause problems;
 - with minimal amount of display material;
 - located on the busiest elevation of a building to reduce the risk of robbery; and
 - fully accessible to all in both location and detailed arrangement.

In existing bank buildings of traditional design cash machines are most successfully inserted into existing stone recesses or beneath window bays.

Further information

- 6.56 Guidance on altering heritage assets within:
- Historic England – 'Easy Access to Historic Buildings' 2015 – www.historicengland.org.uk
 - Historic England – 'Easy Access to Historic Landscapes 2015' – www.historicengland.org.uk

6.57 For further guidance on how to make shopfronts more accessible to all, see:

- The Disability Rights Commission publication “Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers: A practical guide for businesses and other small service providers
- BS 8300-1:2018 ‘Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment. Code of Practice
- BS 8300-2:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. Buildings. Code of Practice