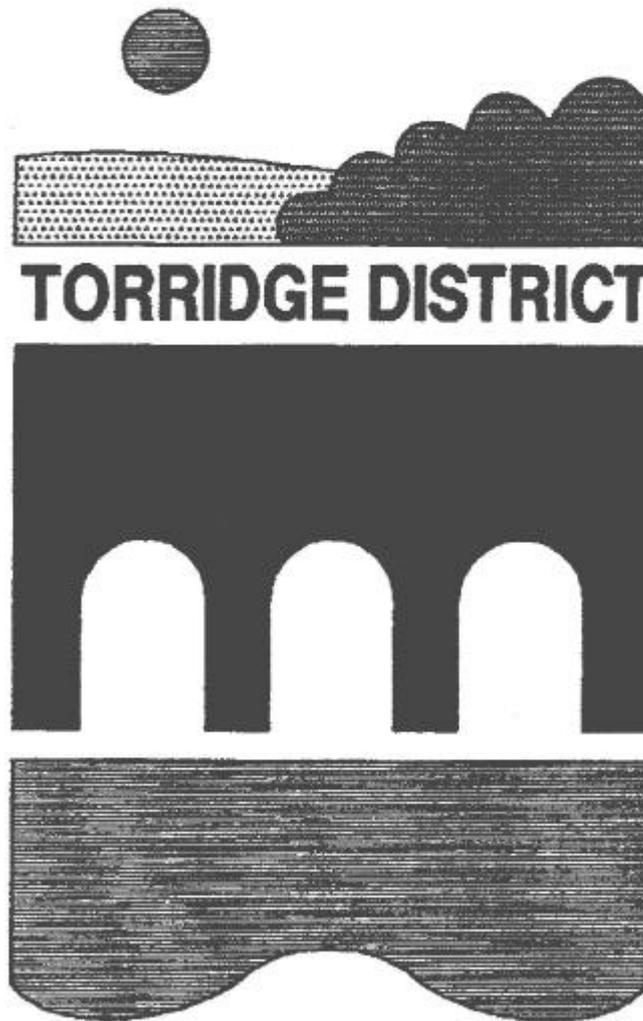


# SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

## Shop Front Design Guide

Bideford Conservation Area



**TORRINGTON DISTRICT**

**1999**

Director of Planning and Technical Services  
Torrington District Council  
Riverbank House  
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**S.P.G. Note 5**

# Shop Front Design Guide

## Bideford Conservation Area

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# Shop Front Design Guide

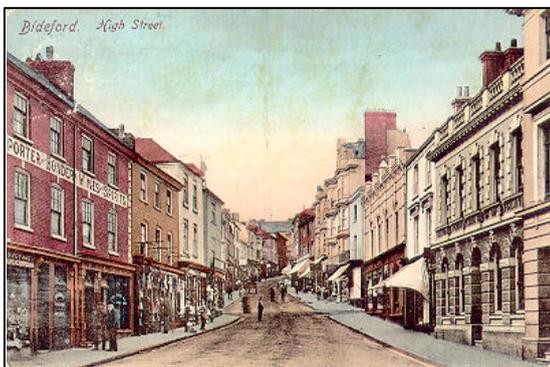
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## THE PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines offer advice for anyone who is considering changes to a shop front within the conservation area of Bideford town centre. The Guide will be used to assist in the determination of planning and related applications and has been approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Torridge District Council.

The conservation area was designated by the council because of its architectural quality and historical importance. Part of its special importance is the traditional commercial centre with many small shop units and narrow streets. Shop fronts make an important contribution to the overall quality of the street scene and therefore there is a need for control over shop front design within the conservation area. There are over 200 buildings within the conservation area which are individually listed by English Heritage for their special architectural or historical importance and many of these contain shops. These guidelines aim to give advice on appropriate design for both listed and unlisted buildings.

Well designed shop fronts make commercial sense as they attract customers into the shop and contribute in continuing to make Bideford an attractive town centre for shoppers and tourists. The use of quality materials is also beneficial in both appearance and durability and further respects historical tradition.



*Bideford High Street 1890*

It is not the intention of these guidelines to provide copybook solutions but rather to give an idea of good design solutions and establish good principles. It is Council Policy to seek the improvement of shops and shopping streets and there is no wish to discourage modern or innovative design that is of good quality. Approaching the design of your shop front in this way will speed the process of consent. The guidelines will be relevant not only to retail shops but to all other types of businesses located in the commercial part of the conservation area.

## THE NEED FOR CONSENT

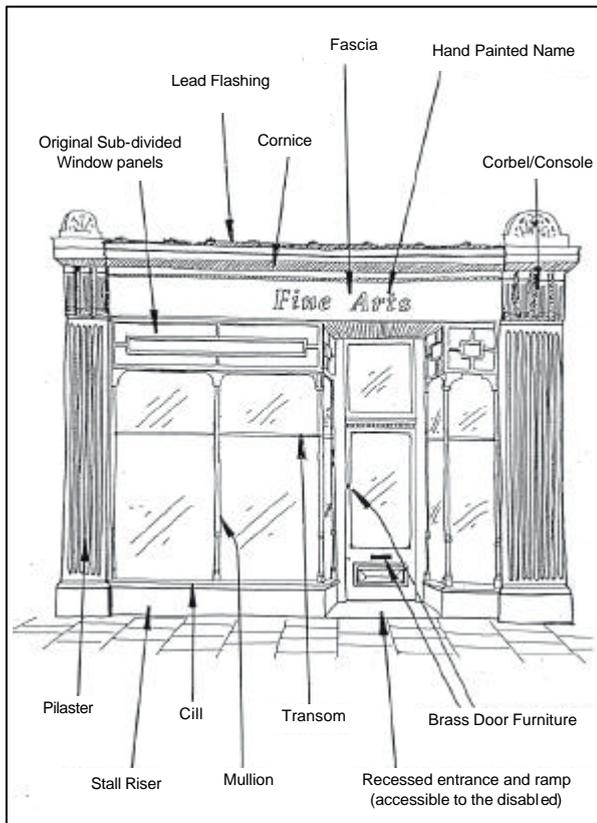
Planning Permission is needed for any new or replacement shop front and any other alterations which affect the external appearance of the building. These may include glazing, facing materials and blinds or shutters.

Conservation Area Consent may sometimes be needed for works to unlisted buildings when a substantial element of demolition is proposed. The planning department can advise on the need for Conservation Area Consent which may be a requirement additional to planning permission. Generally maintenance does not need planning permission but it may do if the building is also 'listed'. For listed buildings, Listed Building Consent will normally be required to remove and replace shop fronts and to make any alterations either to the interior or the exterior, including what might seem to be minor changes such as modifications to window frames, painting, window glass, canopies, the installation of security alarms and CCTV cameras.

When considering shop front alterations or undertaking major maintenance work to any building in the conservation area it is best to first seek advice from the planning department.

## A TRADITIONAL SHOP FRONT

The principal components of the traditional shop front have remained largely unchanged since the late 18th Century and are based on classical design whereby the proportions of the shop front relate closely to the scale and appearance of the building.

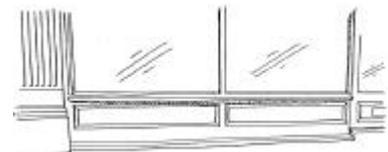


The elements of a traditional shop front are illustrated in the diagram above

There are some good examples of traditional shop fronts within the town centre. Where the original shop front has survived the details should be repaired as necessary and preserved when being adapted to modern standards. However many of the buildings in the town centre have shop fronts which have been altered, badly maintained, or inappropriately modernised in the past whilst retaining some of the original features. Restoration and reinstatement of the elements of the traditional shop front is preferred in any alteration.

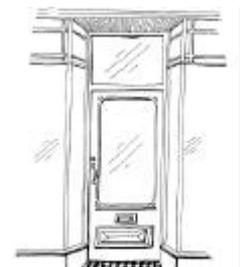
Many shop fronts in Bideford have timber or stone pilasters with decorative features. These frame the shop front and separate shop units from the neighbouring unit providing individuality in the shopping street. Further, pilasters, when designed as part of the overall elevation help to integrate the shop front with the whole facade. The temptation to save money by removing decorative features should be avoided: it is these features which lend originality and character to the building and thus contribute to the special character and appearance of the Bideford town centre conservation area.

Stallrisers improve the proportions of a shop front by providing a solid visual base beneath the window display. Importantly, they also have a practical purpose by providing protection from day to day wear and tear of the glazed areas. Whilst stallrisers have decreased in height over time, as display areas in modern shop units have increased, every traditional shop front should have a stallriser with the minimum height being 450mm; they should normally incorporate a moulded projecting sill to provide a strong junction with the glass. Mosaic, bright or composite tiles, plastic panelling and the use of textured paints are normally neither appropriate nor acceptable in the Bideford conservation area.



A traditional stall riser

Many traditional shop fronts have recessed entrance doors which provide a three-dimensional interest in the street as well as weather protection for customers. Surviving Victorian and Edwardian patterned tiling on the floor and side walls of a door recess, of which there are a number of excellent examples in the Bideford conservation area, are often of architectural and historic interest and should be retained.



Traditional recessed shop door with tiled floor; note lack of door threshold allowing easy access for wheelchairs and pushchairs

Many of the original shop fronts in Bideford are Victorian when improved methods of glass manufacture resulted in large areas of glazing becoming common in shop fronts. These were often divided vertically with timber mullions and horizontally by transoms. The use of unframed panes of glass in replacement shop fronts should normally be avoided. Where different panes of glass meet along the length of shop fronts, particularly at corners, vertical framing members should be used. These will contribute to the overall appearance, continuing the tradition of frame and mullion detailing, and achieve an appearance of permanence.

Each building should be treated as a whole. When there is no reference in the design of a shop front to upper floors the character of the area will be reduced. If a single shop occupies more than one building a change in fascia level can be considered, so that individual buildings rather than the whole shop are emphasised. It is still possible through a unified colour scheme and signs to show a common ownership.



*Single shop occupying two buildings. Variation in shop front design coupled with its change in fascia level emphasises individuality of buildings*

## FASCIA BOARDS AND SIGNS

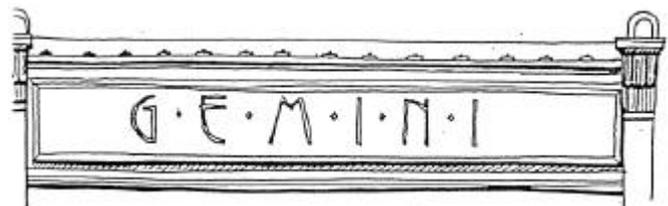
Fascias should not dominate the building in size and scale. An ugly fascia can dominate the street scene leaving a negative impression. The purpose of a fascia is to advertise the shop name and type of business, provide weather protection and visually integrate the two parts of the building.

The main points of good fascia design are:

- A gap should be left between the top of the fascia and upper floor window cills.
- It should be contained within the shop front and its frame. It should not obscure architectural details on the building.
- Allowance should be made for the introduction of a roller blind with associated box fitting.

Where possible fascia signs should be hand painted since this is the traditional approach and gives individuality. Box signs used in place of a traditional fascia are not acceptable.

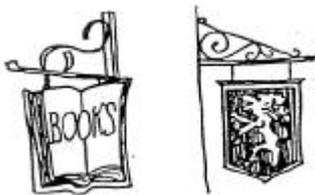
If a building was not designed for commercial use a fascia should not be added - signs can be applied directly to windows or the stonework by applied letters.



*A traditional fascia, hand painted on timber*

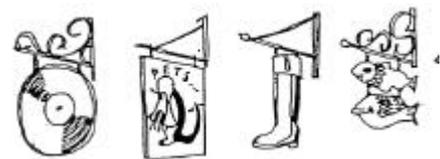
An excessive number of signs on a building is generally unacceptable, detracting from the intrinsic architecture of the building and the character of the conservation area. They can also cause confusion in the mind of the shopper.

Internally illuminated fascia signs and illuminated projecting box signs are generally unacceptable, detracting from the atmosphere of the historic town centre. In some cases illumination of a hanging or projecting sign would be appropriate and achievable by discreet lighting cowls fixed to the sign. Swan neck lights can be visually intrusive particularly on listed buildings and their use considered with great care.



A number of shops in the town centre have hanging signs for additional advertising. These can add to the quality of the street scene. Hand painted signs are most appropriate for the conservation area and listed buildings. Signs must be positioned at least 2.1 metres from the bottom edge of the sign to the pavement.

The setting of retail units in an historic town such as Bideford is more important than a bland corporate identity or a national shop front. It is usually possible to ensure a design that is easily recognisable but does not detract from the overall street scene by sympathetic treatment that respects the historic area.



*A selection of hanging signs which are largely self explanatory*

When considering displaying a sign it is best to first seek advice from the planning department as the display of an unauthorised sign is an offence liable to prosecution.

## SHOP FRONT MATERIALS AND COLOUR

For a traditional shop front, painted timber is appropriate for glazing bars and fascias. Properly maintained timber can have a long life and will not date as quickly as some more modern materials.

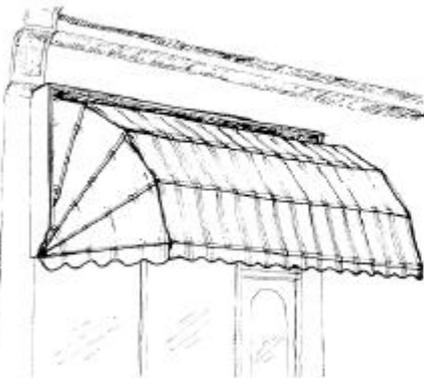
The use of modern artificial materials is generally not acceptable for a shop front which retains traditional features. Where a shop front is more recent certain materials may be acceptable. As a general rule glossy acrylic materials, un-coated aluminum, and synthetic tiles are not appropriate for the conservation area.

The pastel tones of rendered buildings contribute to the special character of the conservation area. Window frames, door frames and pilasters should be painted in a contrasting darker colour continuing a historical tradition.

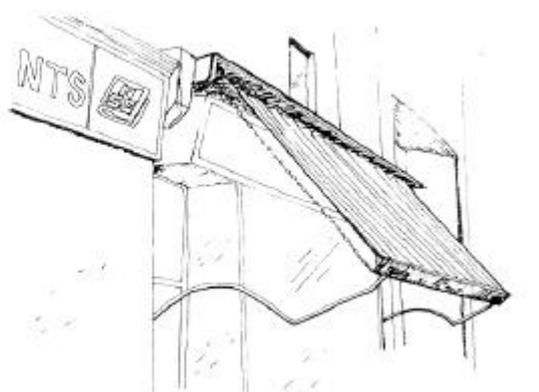
Fascias, signs, blinds and other elements of the shop front should be part of these colour schemes.

## BLINDS, CANOPIES AND SHUTTERS

The traditional canvas retractable fan and flat roller blinds, are traditional and appropriate in the conservation area. Fixed "Dutch" blinds in weather coated plastic are not suitable as they hide architectural details and interrupt the building elevation. Canopies should not extend sideways further than the shop front over architectural details, and the blind box should not protrude further forward than the fascia board. Blinds above ground floor level are not acceptable.



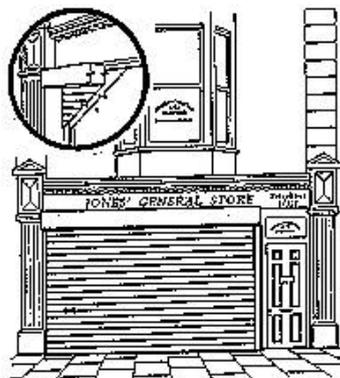
*A typical retractable 'fan' blind*



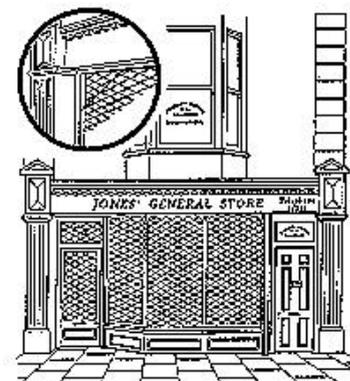
*A traditional flat 'roller' blind*

For security reasons it may be necessary to install shutters to the shop front. Metal external shutter blinds are not acceptable giving a dead appearance at night time, inappropriate for the vibrant and attractive conservation area. Internal "open weave" and "perforated" retractable shutters are preferred, located immediately behind the shop window, coated in a complementary colour. They allow window shopping to continue at night time and at weekends.

Laminated glass, however provides security without affecting the appearance of a property and is the first solution that should be considered. Small paned windows are less of a temptation to willful damage than large sheets of plate glass, and cheaper to replace. Therefore shopkeepers are encouraged to build or alter shop fronts to include shop windows divided by mullions into smaller panes.



*External roller shutter*



*An internal 'open weave' retractable shutter or grille*

## **ALARM BOXES, CCTV CAMERAS AND EXTERNAL LIGHTING**

The positioning of security alarm boxes, closed circuit tv cameras and external flood lighting fittings should be carefully considered and discussed with council officers before installation. None of these items should obscure or damage architectural details and their installation on a listed building will usually require consent. Alarm boxes, if placed on the shop front itself, are best located at a corner of the fascia with the box painted the same colour as the fascia. On all shops, but particularly where the goods sold are considered to be at high risk from theft, the Police recommend the correct fitting of high strength materials, i.e. laminated glass. Advice can be sought from local crime prevention officers on any aspect of shop security.

## **ACCESS**

Level access from the street should be provided for pedestrians with restricted mobility. This means avoiding stepped access and clutter in the shop doorway.

Signs and goods displayed on a street can be a hazard to partially sighted people and obstruct pedestrian flows. On the other hand displays of goods on private forecourts can add to the visual interest.

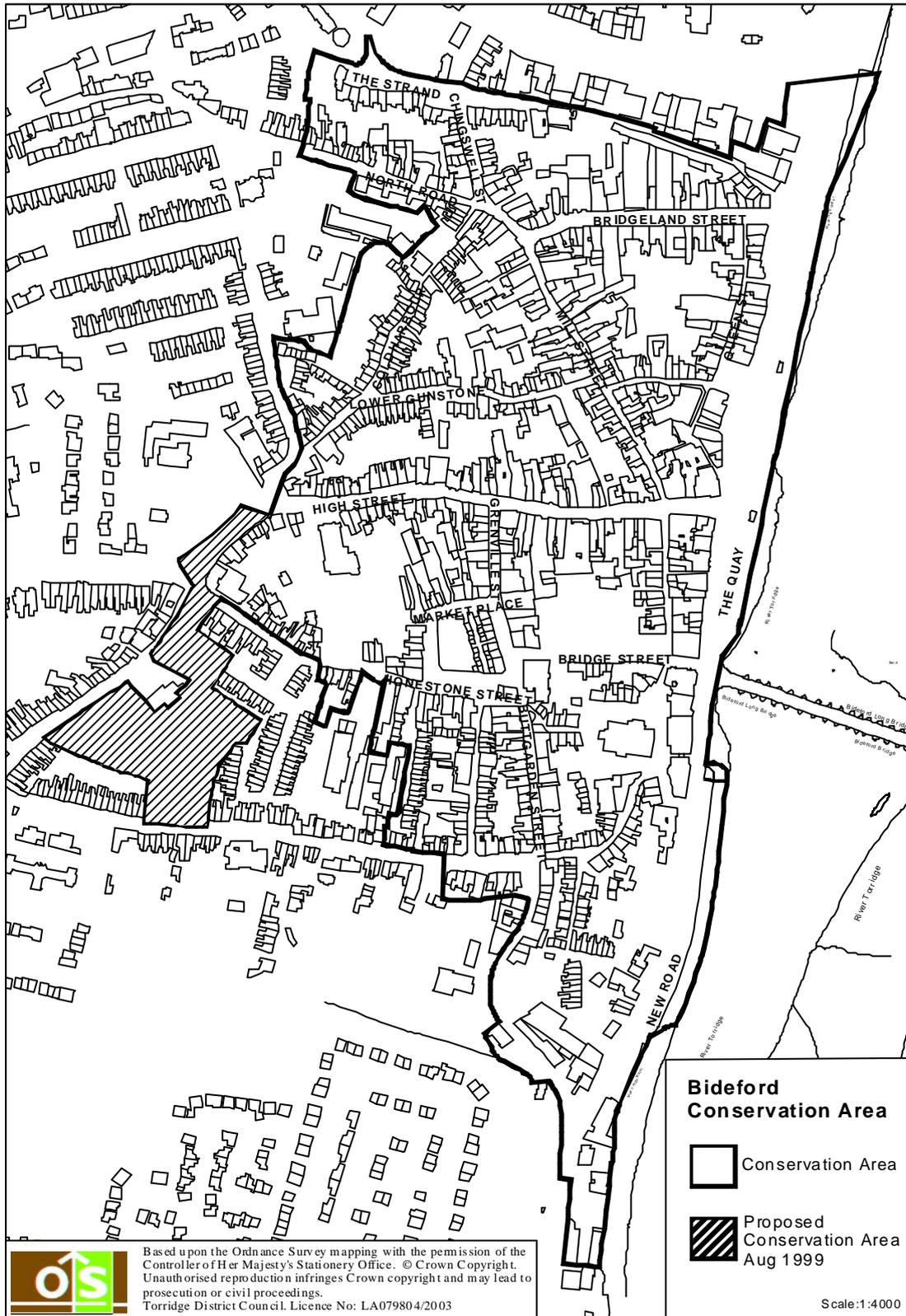
Displays of goods should be kept as flush to the building line as possible and should not project greater at ground floor level than at chest height. Where pavements are narrow on-street displays extending more than 450mm from the shop frontage are likely to obstruct the public highway which is an offence. A clear pedestrian route of at least 2 metres width should be provided.

## **FUNDING**

Grant Aid towards shop front repairs in certain streets within the conservation area may be available from funding schemes administered by the District Council. The planning department can give advice on funding possibilities. A comprehensive approach to repair and improvement will normally be needed.

**The character of the Bideford conservation area is very much a sum of its parts: unusual or traditional features must be retained and grant aid may be available for the repair of traditional features.**





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