

DESIGN
PRINCIPLES

New or Replacement Shopfronts

In Letchworth Garden City



heritage
foundation
Letchworth Garden City

Introduction

The world's first Garden City

LETCWORTH IS SPECIAL...

It is the world's first Garden City, advocated by Ebenezer Howard as a solution to the poverty and squalor of England's cities and towns in the late 1800s. Garden Cities set out to achieve the perfect balance of town and country.

The approach of Howard's company to the ownership of land was special too: First Garden City Ltd insisted on retaining freehold ownership of its Estate. It did so in order to control developments on its land and create the necessary financial resources to fund future investment for the benefit of the town.



PLEASE REMEMBER...

An approval under the terms of your lease confirms that the proposals comply with the Foundation's requirements on design and aesthetics and is not:

- A planning permission;
 - Listed Building consent;
 - A permission to build.
- Also:
- Building Regulations approval may be required.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Contemplating development? Call us now on 01462 476017

You are advised to utilise our professional advice when formulating your proposals.

Pre-application advice

The earlier you come to talk to us, the more guidance we can provide.

Whether your plans exist in your head or are hand drawn, we can discuss your ideas and help you develop a scheme that meets your needs, is sympathetic to the building and complement the Design Principles, before submitting a formal application to our managing agents, Rapleys. We're happy to meet you and your architect/agent for preliminary discussions on your proposals.

The Design Principles

The Design Principles outlined in this publication relate to early shop units in the town centre. They are aimed to ensure that shopfront design positively enhances the character of the building and that shops are accessible to all members of the local community.

Using the Design Principles

The Design Principles have been developed to help you plan and implement external alterations to your shopfront.

If you are contemplating making changes to your shopfront, it is important that you review the relevant Design Principles, which generally indicate what will and will not be acceptable. Each case will be considered on its own merits by assessing the impact of your proposals on the character and quality of the premises and its context. You are also invited to submit a Design Statement in support of applications, setting out the design rationale for the proposal.

This guidance does not apply to modern shop premises and the Garden Square Shopping Centre, where we have separate arrangements with the Centre owners.

PLEASE BE AWARE...

The purpose of the Design Principles is to provide assistance for applicants and their agents as to what may or may not be reasonably acceptable in certain circumstances. However, in view of the breadth of styles of premises in the town centre, each case will be carefully considered on the specific circumstances of the premises and its context. In all cases a high quality and considered design will be sought.

General Principles and Promoting Good Design

Shopfronts in the Town Centre vary in age, reflecting the period in which they were built. Many of the buildings in the town centre were constructed in the early 20th Century and have distinctive shopfront styles and design features that were in vogue at the time, including Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and Edwardian.

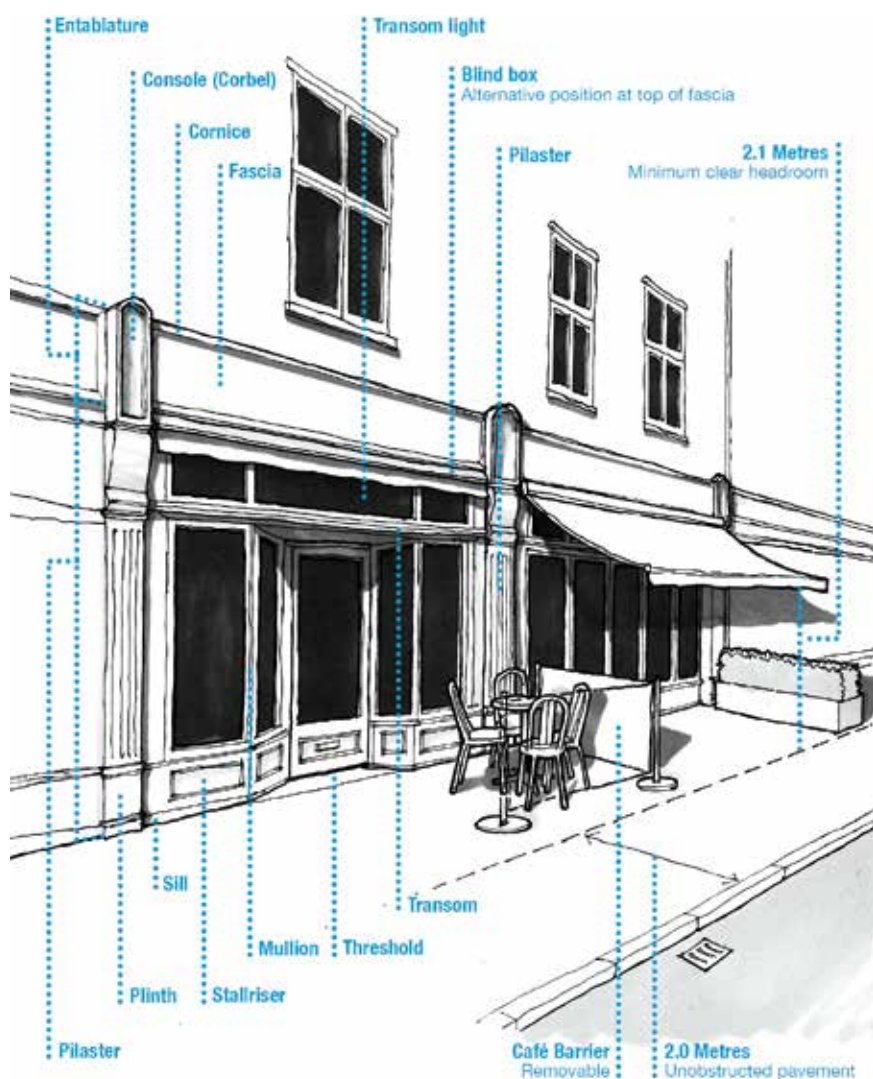
IMPORTANT POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED

- Restoration of an existing shopfront will be preferred.
- If replacement is necessary, the shopfront should normally replicate its original style (we may be able to provide early plans or photographs to assist).
- Original architectural features should be retained and/or restored.
- Consideration must be given to the whole building and street scene.
- Any new shopfront should respect the existing building's proportions and architectural style.
- Sympathetic reflection of, and co-ordination with, the main architectural elements of adjoining units – fascia lines/depths, stall riser heights, bay widths and materials.
- Retain the feel of individual units within a group of properties, particularly where large shops extend across several buildings.
- Maintain a shop front to all street aspects, which is particularly relevant to corner units.
- Avoid 'dead frontages' by dark non translucent glazing or excessive solid areas.
- Ensure approaches and entrances are as inclusive as possible.



Shopfront Components and Terminology

Shopfronts in the Town Centre vary in age, reflecting the period in which they were built. Many of the buildings in the town centre were constructed in the early 20th Century and have distinctive shop front styles and design features that were in vogue at the time, including Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and Edwardian.



Elements of good design

DESIGN DETAIL FOR SHOPFRONT DEVELOPMENTS

Horizontal Features

The size of the cornices, consoles and fascias should be in proportion with the rest of the shopfront and whole building, so that the shopfront is not too dominant. Normally this element would not exceed one fifth of the total height of the shopfront. The fascia should not extend beyond the consoles/pilasters that define the shopfront and, where applicable, not stretch uninterrupted across a number of distinct buildings.

The fascia should be positioned well below the sill of the first floor windows, not obscure any architectural features or decoration, and should be framed by a cornice at the top and console at either end. The fascia should also respect the scale and proportions of neighbouring units.

Shop windows should be divided by horizontal transoms, with transom lights above. Extensive areas of unrelieved glazing or darkened or oblique glazing will not normally be acceptable, as this creates the visual effect of a void at the base of the building.

To maintain a balanced appearance, the stall riser height is usually determined by the fascia depth and should not normally exceed one fifth of the overall height of the shopfront.

Vertical Features

Columns or pilasters define the separation between individual units and should be retained. If they have previously been covered or obscured they should be reinstated to frame the shopfront and maintain a visual support for the building above.

Visual divisions to the shopfront in the form of mullions will be encouraged. Where appropriate, these should be positioned to reflect the vertical divisions of the building as a whole.

Canopies and Sun Blinds

Canopies were a common feature of the original Garden City shopfronts and so retention or replacement of this element will normally be encouraged.

The canopy should be fully retractable and mounted in a box positioned either above or below the fascia. When retracted the face of the "blind box" should be flush with the fascia panel. Fixed canopies will not be permitted.

The canopy should be the same width as the fascia and not obstruct the columns, pilasters or any other architectural feature. They should also be positioned to avoid obscuring in any way traffic signals or signs.

A minimum 2.1m clear headroom above pavement level must be maintained at all times.

Glossy or "wet look" PVC materials are not appropriate and should be avoided. Canvas is the preferred material and it should be in a colour to match or tone with the fascia. Bright garish colours should be avoided.

Lettering or signage on the canopy is permitted but it should be designed to co-ordinate with the rest of the shop front and in particular the fascia sign. Canopies without signage will require planning approval and if they have signage will also require advertisement consent from the Council.

Elements of good design

DESIGN DETAIL FOR SHOPFRONT DEVELOPMENTS

Doors and Access for People with Disabilities

Shop entrances should be fully accessible to all, including people with disabilities and those with prams or pushchairs.

New shopfronts should be designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As well as wheelchair access, consideration should be given to people with limited mobility, people with sight or hearing problems, people who have limited dexterity and people with small children, baby buggies and heavy shopping.

The design and positioning of doors should be seen as an integral part of the design for the shopfront, but as a minimum they must also comply with Building Regulations for the design of shop entrances and British Standard 5566 relating to fire safety. Minimum entrance width should normally be 900mm, with a clear 300mm space adjacent to the opening side of the door. Where there are double doors, there should be a clear opening width of 800mm through at least one of the leaves so that a wheelchair, pushchair or pram can enter through one door, without having to open both doors. Where building constraints make these required widths impossible, the minimum clear opening width should be 750mm.



Elements of good design

DESIGN DETAIL FOR NEW OR REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS

Shops over 350sqm in floor area, which have no other means of escape, will be required to provide doors that open outwards. If this is the case the door swing must not extend beyond the shop demise and obstruct the pavement.

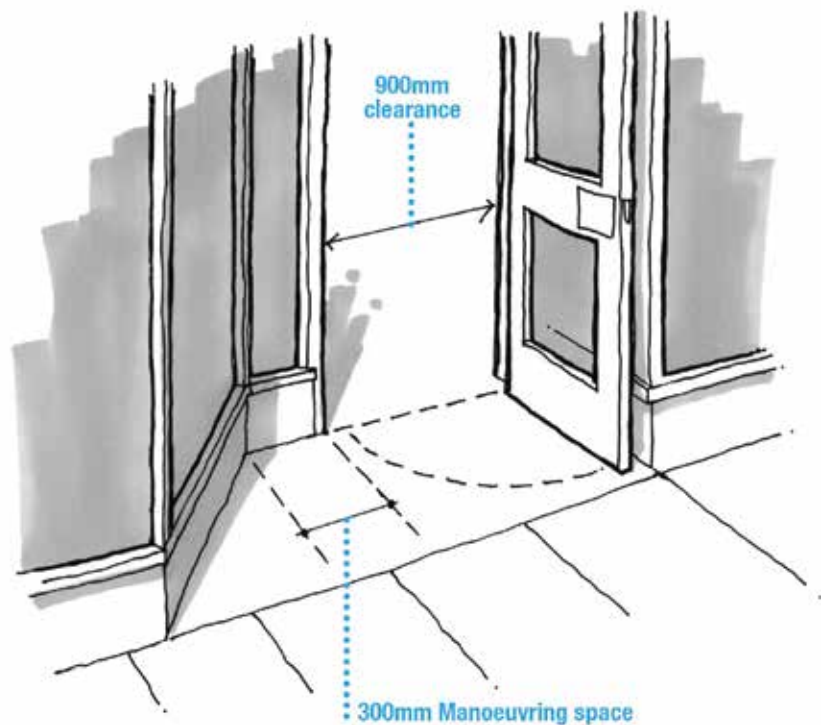
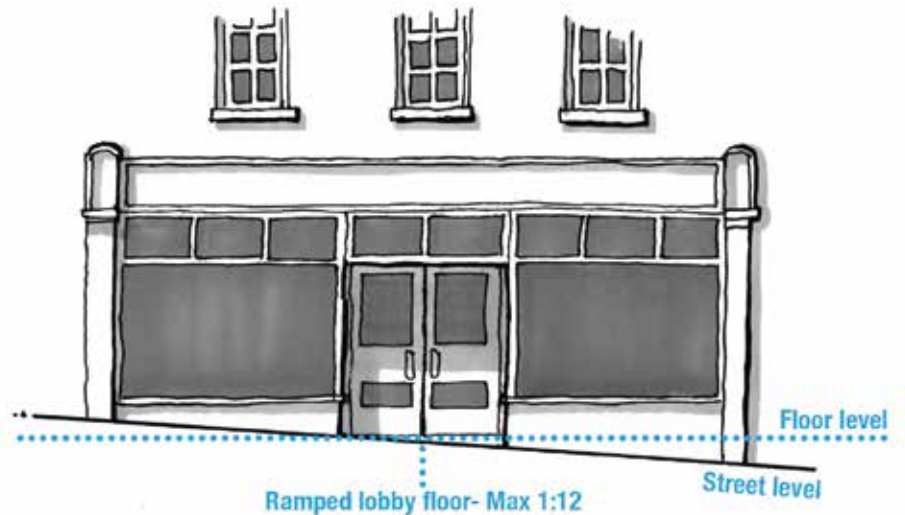
Doors should be made in timber with a clear glass panel and the timber should be painted not stained.

Wherever possible, level access from the foot path into the shop is the preferred option. Where a shop is located on a slope, the entrance should be positioned so that the pavement level and internal shop level are aligned. If a ramp is required, this should have a gradient not exceeding 1:12 [for ramps up to 2m long] and a level landing should be provided to allow a wheelchair user to open the door without having to hold themselves on an incline.

Where there are unavoidable steps, these should be of minimal height, with a handrail on both sides and should be easy to see, by for example, contrasting step nosings.

The entrance door should be clearly visible and easily opened by someone with limited dexterity. In many traditional shopfronts the entrance is recessed. If premises are open at night, they should be adequately lit for safety reasons.

Features such as bells and door handles should ideally be positioned 900mm to 1000mm above floor level. For ease of use, lever handles are preferred to knob handles.



Elements of good design

DESIGN DETAIL FOR NEW OR REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS

Fascia Signage and Illumination

A strong and distinctive brand identity is important for both retailers and shoppers alike. The shop sign should be as simple as possible, but be focused on the name of the shop and, where appropriate, its street number. Unrelated advertisements or unnecessary duplication of a name on a single fascia should be avoided.

Signage on the building above fascia level will not normally be permitted. Traditional hand painted or individually applied fret cut letters on a painted fascia panel are the preferred approach for shop signage.

Letter only internal illumination will be accepted on the understanding that the lettering is flush with the fascia and only the name of the shop illuminated. Generally fascia signs should be lit by means of external illumination, utilising a traditional design.

Lettering height should be appropriate to the depth of the fascia and should not exceed 75% of the depth of the fascia.

Modern factory produced fascias made of plastic or grp, especially if in the form of a projecting box and internally illuminated, are not permitted.



Elements of good design

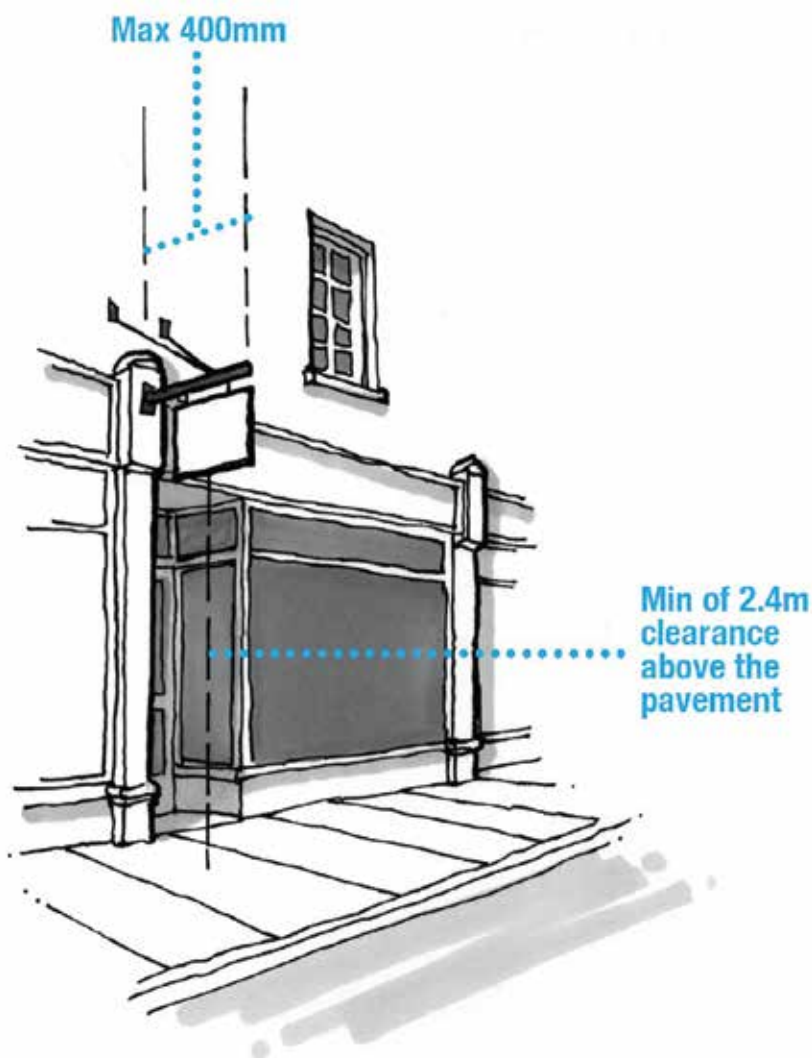
DESIGN DETAIL FOR NEW OR REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS

Projecting Signs

Hanging signs on traditional brackets will be supported if they are of modest proportions, do not protrude more than 400mm from the fascia and do not result in a visual clutter of signage.

The height of this signage should reflect the main fascia of the shopfront and adjoining premises, but should normally be 2.4m clear from ground level.

Internally illuminated projecting box sign signs will not be supported, although external illumination will be accepted, if this respects the character of the building and its setting.



Elements of good design

DESIGN DETAIL FOR NEW OR REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS

Choice of Materials

The use of high quality materials and finish will be required, to ensure a successful shopfront design. Each case will be considered on its own merits, although traditional materials are preferred.

Fascias should be a single panel. Avoid using modern materials such as Perspex and fibreglass.

Generally, materials should be chosen to match original or existing elements of the building. The use of brick, marble, stone and tile is permitted where appropriate for components such as stall risers and thresholds. Fake materials such as imitation marble or stone and plastic laminates should be avoided.

Timber features should normally be painted, not stained.

Obscured or smoked glass is not permitted in shopfronts. Large unbroken areas of glass should be avoided, to avoid an unacceptable appearance and a hazard for visually impaired people.

Use of Colour

Colours can have a dramatic impact not just on the feel and character of your shop, but on the whole street scene.

Whilst it is understood the use of corporate or brand colours in signage is important and clearly acceptable, the use of these same colours on the painted shop front may not always be appropriate.

The most appropriate palette of colours tends to be those that harmonise with the character of the building and its immediate surroundings.

Contrasting colours may be appropriate for fascias, columns, doors and canopies to add interest, but the use of garish contrasts and fluorescent or vivid colours should be avoided. Painted shopfronts are generally preferable to staining.

Shop Security

Security elements will need to be sensitively designed into the shopfront to avoid an unattractive environment not only during shopping hours, but when shops are closed.

The use of toughened or laminated glass is acceptable and encouraged.

The use of external security shutters or grills is discouraged. If there are particular security needs, they should be discussed with the Heritage Foundation and its managing agents.

Burglar alarms should be sensitively located to avoid compromising architectural features and, ideally, positioned discreetly within the fascia.

Help and Advice

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Contemplating development? Call us now on 01462 476017

You are advised to utilise our professional advice when formulating your proposals.

Pre-application advice

The earlier you come to talk to us, the more guidance we can provide.

Whether your plans exist in your head or are hand drawn, we can discuss your ideas and help you develop a scheme that meets your needs, is sympathetic to the building and complement the Design Principles, before submitting a formal application to our managing agents, Rapleys. We're happy to meet you and your architect/agent for preliminary discussions on your proposals.

Obtaining necessary consents

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation owns and/or manages much of the land on which the town is built. As part of our responsibilities we have to ensure that the quality of works carried out on properties within the town enhances rather than detracts from the built environment.

In the Town Centre, the Heritage Foundation's prior written approval is required for alterations to any leasehold property. All leaseholders must apply direct to our managing agents, Rapleys, for Landlord's consent prior to any works being undertaken on site.

Further information is available from –

Rapleys
Falcon Road
Hinchbrooke Business Park
Huntingdon
PE29 6FG

Tel: 0800 988 7021

Or email: helpline@rapleys.co.uk

Please note that Letchworth Garden City is unusual in that it has two separate bodies that control development in the Town – the Foundation, which considers applications for "Landlord's Consent" under the terms of leases, and North Hertfordshire District Council, which is responsible for all applications for planning permission, Listed Building Consent and Advertisement Consent. Before carrying out any works the retailer or agent should also contact North Hertfordshire District Council on 01462 474000 to establish if permission from the Council is required.

Web: www.letchworth.com/designprinciples
Email: home@letchworth.com
Tel: 01462 476017

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
Foundation House, Icknield Way
Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 1GD

Published June 2015



**heritage
foundation**
Letchworth Garden City