

M O S E L E Y

S h o p f r o n t

DESIGN·GUIDE



MOSELEY SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE

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with the support
of Birmingham City Council.

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FORWARD BY JOHN ELKINGTON

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FOREWORD

The publication of this Design Guide is the result of an initiative by the Moseley Society to document good practice for shopfront renovation and maintenance.

The Society is indebted to the principal authors, Susan and Alex McClure, and to Birmingham City Council's Department of Planning and Architecture, for the production of this booklet.

John Elkington, Chairman 1992

1 INTRODUCTION

Many of our high streets have already lost their character and individuality. Interesting architectural details which made buildings attractive have often been stripped away, to make way for boring, off-the-shelf uniformity.

Fortunately, Moseley still has many fine properties and has retained its unique identity. Indeed, it is Birmingham's most intact example of a 19th century suburb, and still has many traces of its ancient rural past. To help preserve and enhance its character it was made a Conservation Area in 1983. Planning requirements are tougher and permission is needed before alterations can be made.

This booklet provides guidance for the design of shopfronts. It highlights best practice and draws attention to features which might jeopardise planning consent. It is not intended to remove the need for skilled professional advice.

Although the drawings are based on real buildings they are merely to illustrate the points made in the text. The shopkeepers' names are invented, and do not refer to any known businesses. No criticism of any real firm is implied.

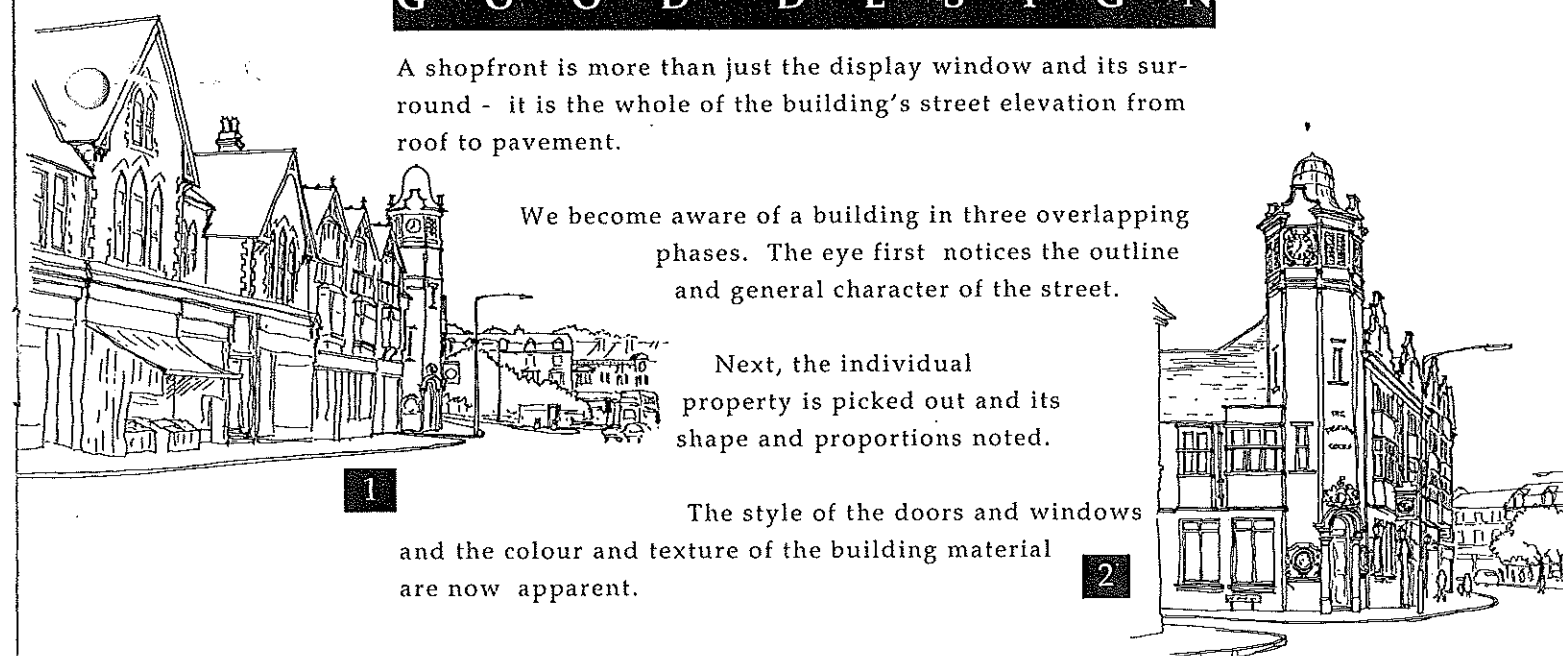
2 ELEMENTS OF GOOD DESIGN

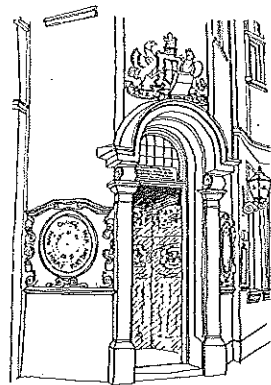
A shopfront is more than just the display window and its surround - it is the whole of the building's street elevation from roof to pavement.

We become aware of a building in three overlapping phases. The eye first notices the outline and general character of the street.

Next, the individual property is picked out and its shape and proportions noted.

The style of the doors and windows and the colour and texture of the building material are now apparent.





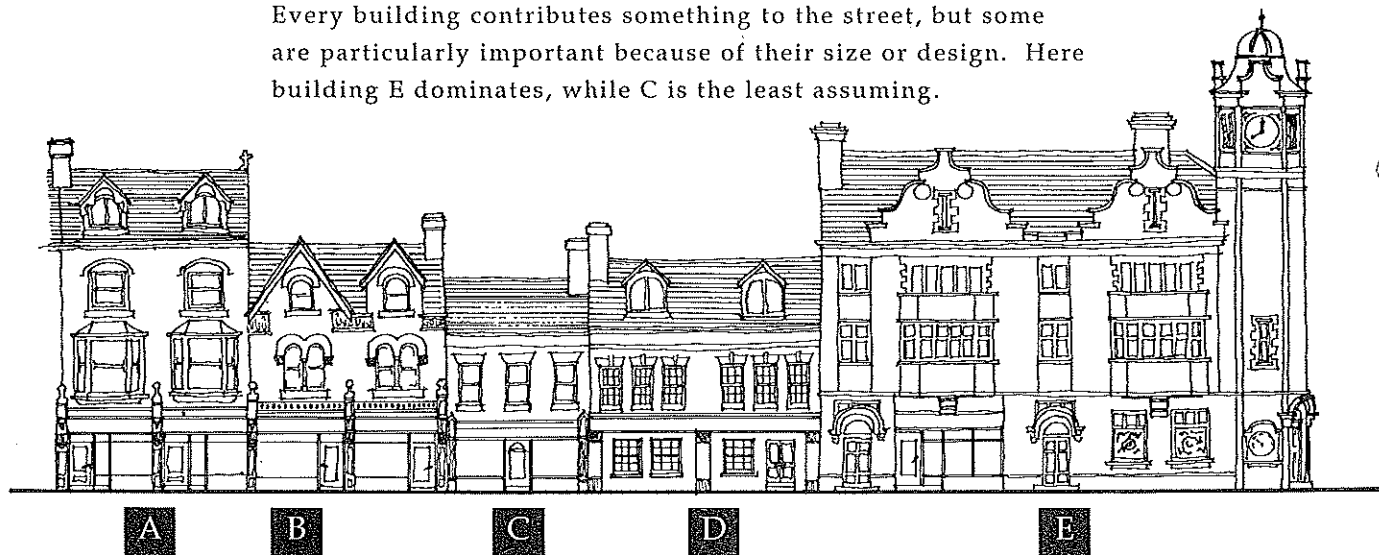
3 Lastly, when the observer gets closer, finer details such as carving or mouldings can be appreciated. Good design provides interest and harmony at every stage.

It may seem obvious, but the shopfront is part of the building and the building is part of the street.

Any alteration to the shopfront should take account of both.

a) Effect on the street

Every building contributes something to the street, but some are particularly important because of their size or design. Here building E dominates, while C is the least assuming.



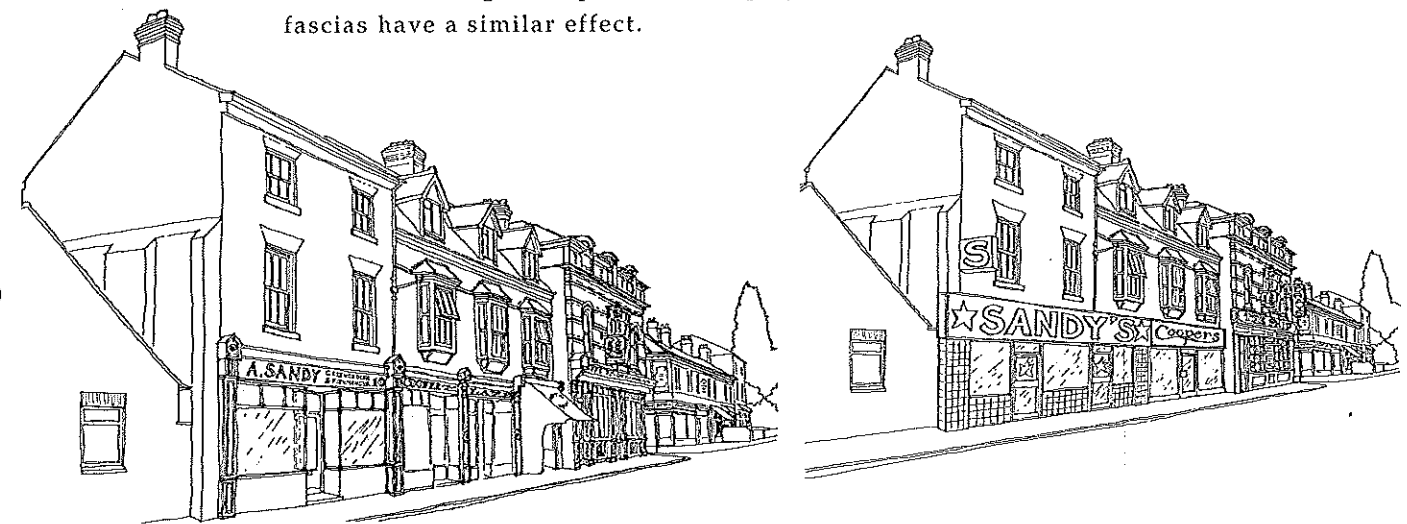
However, the aggressive, attention-seeking alterations to C destroy the balance of the street. The changes to E are equally disappointing since that building no longer meets the responsibility of its position.



There are several such examples in Moseley. As opportunity arises an attempt must be made to restore architectural equilibrium.

Most streets have their own distinct character formed largely by the scale and style of the buildings and by the materials from which they are constructed.

However, when firms with multiple branches try to promote their corporate image by having identical shopfronts in every town, the individuality of the street is reduced. Insensitive alterations using mass-produced display windows or box fascias have a similar effect.



Alterations must be sensitively made

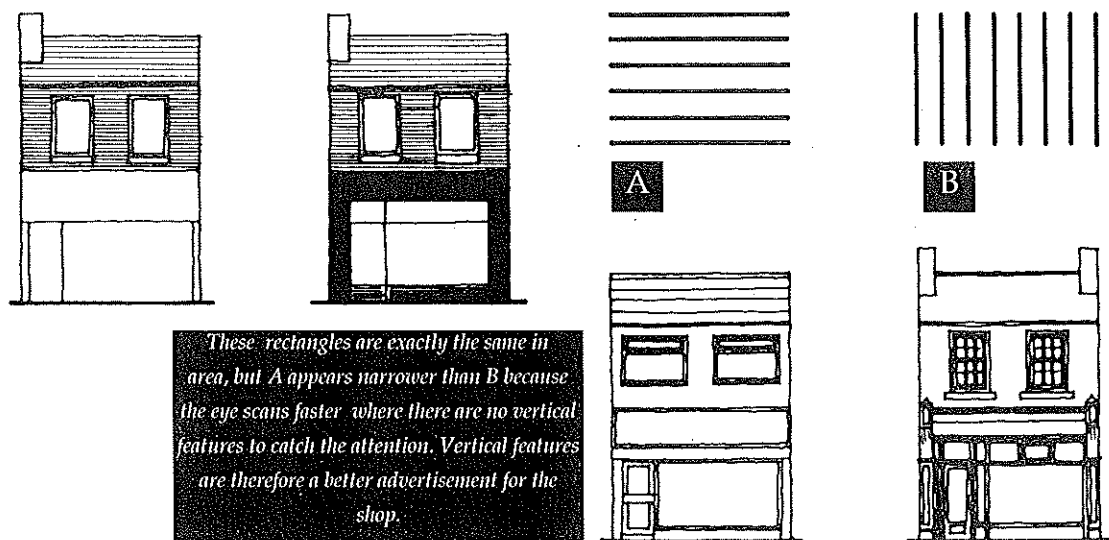
Many of Moseley's shops are in terraces. The original proportions should always be preserved, and where adjacent shops are operated as a single concern, their separate shopfronts should nevertheless be individually expressed. A unified business identity can be maintained through the colour scheme or lettering.



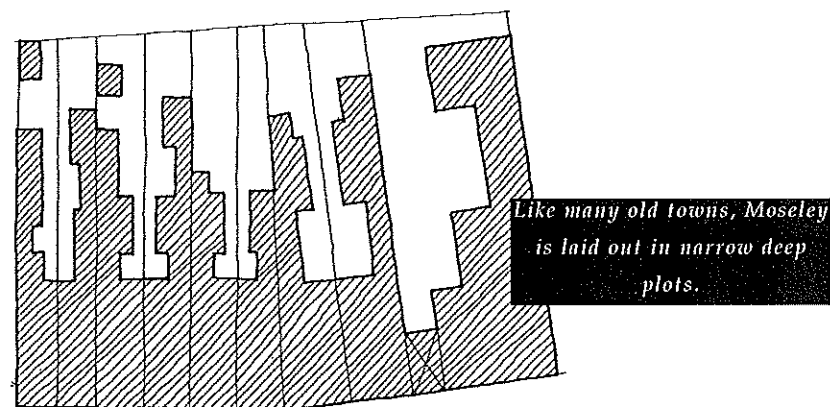
The original proportions should always be preserved

b) Effect on the building

A ground floor should never be altered without considering its impact on the rest of the building. In particular, the upper floors should not seem to rest on a sheet of glass. The display window has to be framed by a visually robust surround.



This also helps maintain vertical emphasis. The eye naturally scans horizontally and designs with prominent upright features retain the observer's attention.



To make best use of the frontages most buildings are fairly tall and the vertical proportions are emphasised by narrow sash windows.

Ready-made replacements rob the street of its appeal and make it less attractive to shoppers.

Wherever possible, original features should be restored (please see illustrations on the opposite page)



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Ready made replacements rob the street of its appeal and make it less attractive to shoppers

c) The Shopfront

The shopfront with its display window:

- 1 advertises the firm's presence and style.
- 2 informs the customer, by means of the window display, of the range of goods for sale
- 3 protects those goods from damage and theft

However, the shopfront is also a barrier between the trader and customer since it sets the boundary between the public space and the private interior.

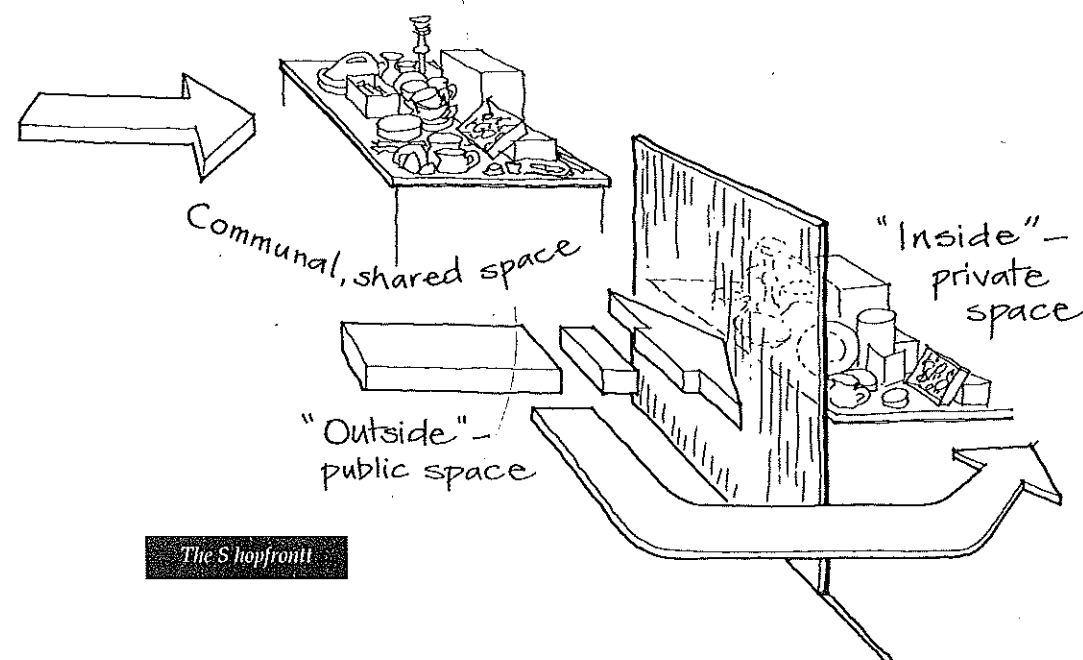
Good shopfront design quietly draws attention to the business premises and subtly encourages customers to come in and buy. The shopfront helps define the trader's reputation.

A skilfully designed, well maintained building is a valuable asset to a business seeking a name for quality.

When all the local traders follow this approach the street is made up of delightful and exciting buildings which are appealing to shoppers.

They are more likely to avoid areas where design standards are low and elegant properties have been ruined by thoughtless alterations.

Good shopfront design is good business.



DETAILS OF GOOD SHOPFRONT DESIGN

a) Technical terms

Moseley's original shopfront designs were based on principles which still apply today. The shop windows and entrance were set off by their surround rather like a frame round a picture. Every element had a visual and practical function:

- 1 the pilasters and corbels mark the division between each shopfront
- 2 the fascia provides information about the shop.

- 3 the cornice gives protection from the weather and separates the shop from the upper floor

- 4 the stallriser creates a strong visual base

All too often modern counterparts fail to pay attention to detail, with ugly results.



Elements of a typical shop front

b) Fascias.

The fascia is the most noticeable element of a shopfront and deserves special care. It must be designed as an integral part of the shop in a manner appropriate to the period of the building.

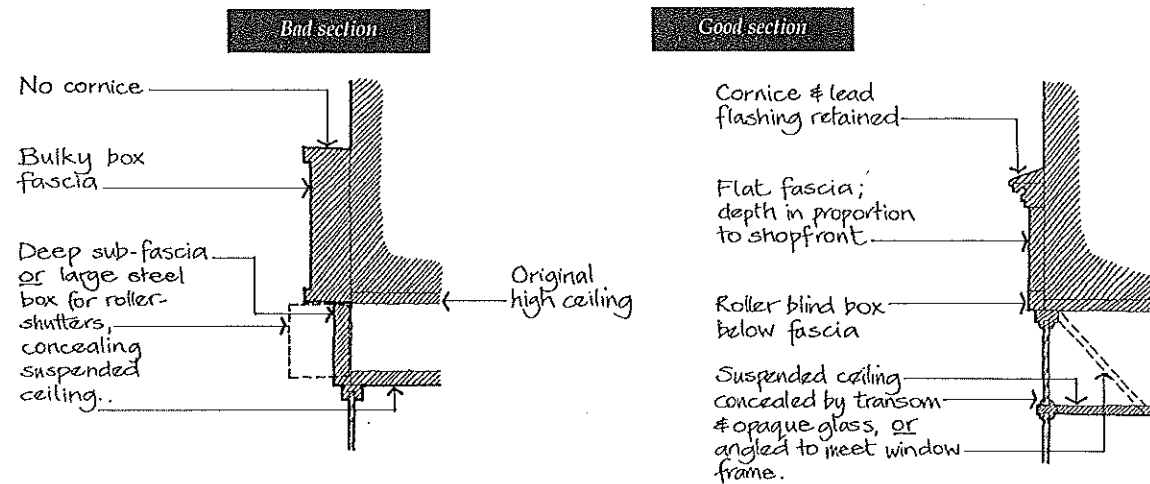
The fascia should not stretch beyond the pilasters or corbels nor should it encroach on or above the window sills on the first floor. Most traditional fascias are less than 15 inches deep (375mm). A good rule is that the depth of the fascia should not exceed one quarter of the height of the shopfront below the fascia. If the shop already has an excessively deep fascia it should be replaced especially if this will expose original features such as cast iron columns or ornamental brackets.

Deep fascias are sometimes used to conceal suspended ceilings. The ceilings can be angled to meet the shopfront or hidden behind opaque glass in the transom.

Fascias should be topped by a moulded cornice, to throw water

clear of the shopfront and prevent rot. Where shop blinds or canopies are permitted they should be retractable.

Modern box fascias, especially those with internal illumination, are not appropriate in Conservation Areas, such as Moseley. Nor should a new fascia be built over an existing one



c) A d v e r t i s e m e n t s

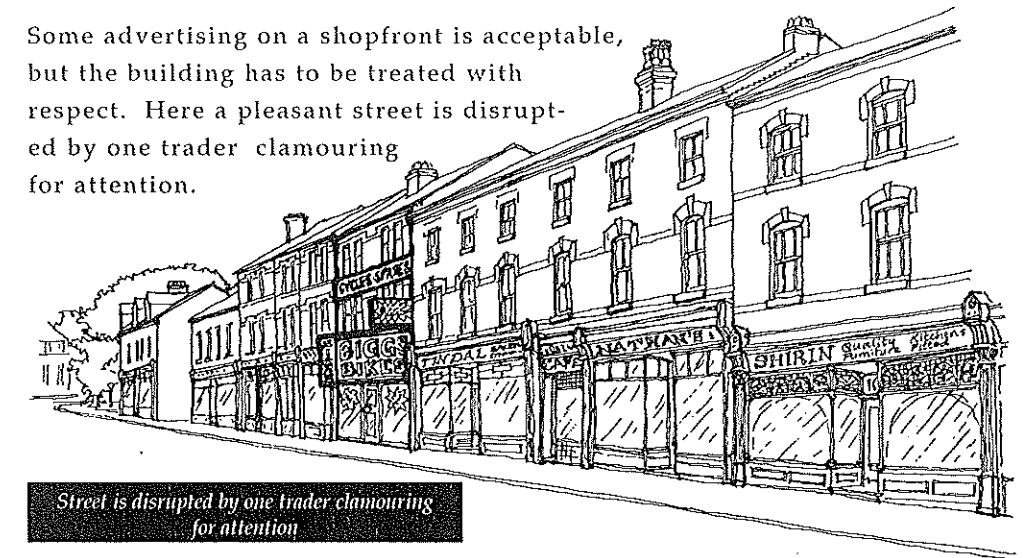
Originally, fascias were hand-painted and this is still the ideal. A simple statement of the shop name is best since extra advertisement is often distracting.

The lettering should be in proportion to the size of the fascia. Gilding or strong tones on a dark background stand out and rich effects can be obtained by shading letters.

It is neither necessary nor desirable to illuminate fascias, except for pubs or restaurants which open late at night. Even then, the best form of lighting is by hooded spotlights.

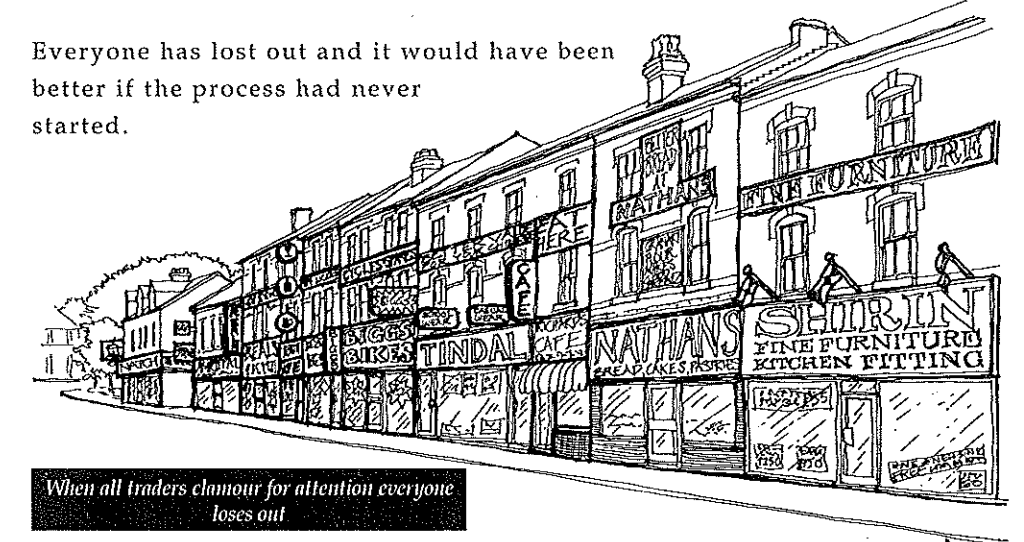
Too many signs on buildings bring confusion and clutter to a street. Traders feel obliged to put up bigger and brighter signs than their neighbours. This over-assertive approach is out of place in a Conservation Area like Moseley.

Some advertising on a shopfront is acceptable, but the building has to be treated with respect. Here a pleasant street is disrupted by one trader clamouring for attention.



This succeeds for a time but when everyone else follows suit no business is prominent. Meanwhile the street has lost its attractive character. It is no longer a pleasant place to shop.

Everyone has lost out and it would have been better if the process had never started.



d) S t a l l r i s e r s

The stallriser is a vital part of the traditional shopfront. It protects the shop window and creates a strong visual base. It also allows the display area inside the window to be raised, to achieve a more impressive display.

Ideally stallrisers should be between about 1'0" - 2'4" high (300 - 700mm), with a moulded projecting cill. They should be made of painted timber panelling or painted render. Mosaic, brick, plastic panels, glossy tiles and textured paint are inappropriate.

e) Security Shutters

Traders are entitled to protect their goods and premises and many feel that this is best achieved by installing security screens. However, roller shutters give the impression that an area is particularly unsafe.

In fact, there is no clear security advantage in using solid shutters and there are other methods which are just as effective. Planning consent will normally be refused in conservation areas such as Moseley for solid type roller shutters but if the authority is satisfied that security shutters are needed, various alternatives must first be considered.

These are:

- 1 Security glazing
- 2 Internal window security grilles
- 3 Removable external window security grilles
- 4 Solid timber shutters
- 5 Punched hole metal shutters

The applicant has to show why each of the preceding alternatives is not appropriate before an application for a solid type of coloured roller shutter can be considered. In all cases, shutter boxes have to be recessed within the building, or disguised behind the fascia.

f) Blinds and Canopies

Dutch blinds, or balloon canopies, are usually erected simply to increase advertising space. They are alien to the design of Moseley's Victorian buildings and planning permission will generally be refused.

Where blinds or canopies are acceptable:

- 1 They must not obscure architectural detail or features
- 2 They may only be sited at ground floor fascia level.
- 3 They should be located between pilasters and should respect the architectural sub-divisions of doors and windows.
- 4 They should not span more than one frontage.

Blinds and canopies of traditional shape and material will be preferred and advertisements are only allowed where existing signs would be hidden.

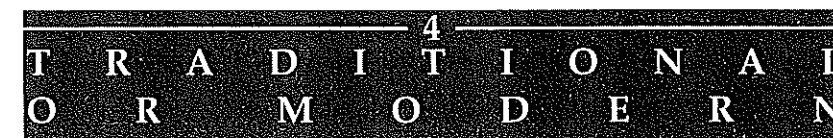
In any event, permission will only be granted for an initial period of three years since the condition of canopies and blinds soon deteriorates.

g) Access to upper floors

Where an existing doorway provides access to separate accommodation on an upper floor, it should be retained.

h) Access for people with disabilities

Alterations and refurbishments of shop fronts should not make it more difficult for people with disabilities to gain access into and through the shop. Where shopfronts are substantially altered, opportunities should be taken to widen doors and to provide ramped access between the public footway and the shop floor level

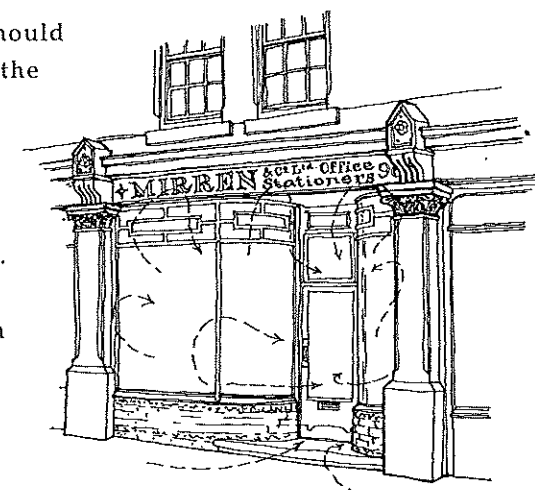


Where an existing shopfront has to be replaced, should the new one be traditional or modern? A well-designed modern building which harmonises with the rest of the street can allow the present generation to add to our continuing heritage.

Traditional Shopfront

However, any new shopfront should respect the period and style of the building into which it is to be fitted. Since most of Moseley's retail premises are Victorian this usually means opting for a traditional design.

In fact, it is hard to improve on a traditional shopfront. It is subtly contrived to attract attention.



The pilasters help frame the property and hold the eye. The decorated corbels and the quietly-stated fascia convey a reassuring message of reliability. The display window is



Modern Factory built
Shopfront

interesting in itself and all angles lead to the door, with its invitation to enter.

Where a traditional shopfront already exists it is often cheaper to restore it than replace it with an inferior ready-made product. On the other hand, the modern factory-built surround is usually out of place.

It is designed for modern buildings and its material and colour are at odds with mellow upper floors. The exaggerated fascia is out of proportion to the rest of the building and the absence of vertical features lets attention slip away. It is drab, and fails to inspire confidence in the business.

a) G o o d P r a c t i c e B a d P r a c t i c e

Bad practice

Chimney removed or reduced.

Unacceptable render and loss of decorative detail.

Unsympathetic alterations to windows.

Aggressive advertising

Internally lit, bulky plastic fascia

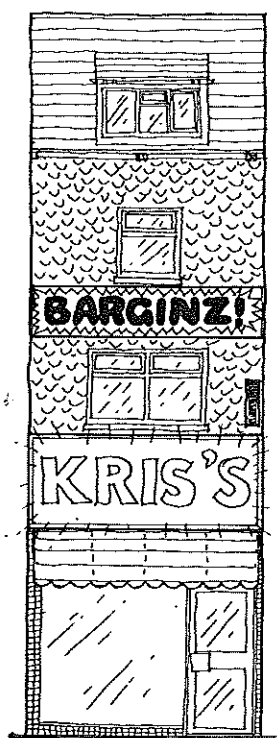
Lettering too big

Corbel removed

Pilaster detailing hidden by tiles.

Overlarge window area

Little or no stallriser



Original roof replaced with concrete tiles or bituminous covering over defective slates.

Unacceptable projecting box sign

Fascia extends too high and too deep

Unacceptable glossy Dutch blind

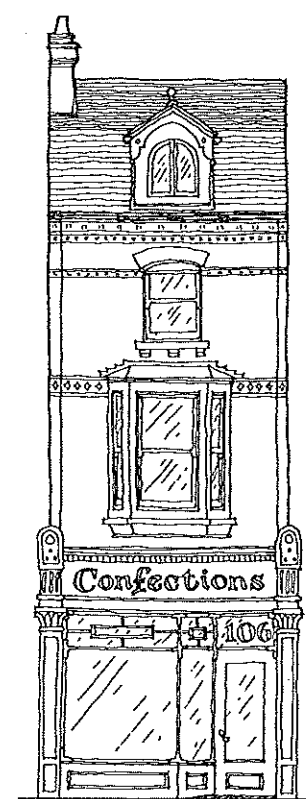
Bland modern shopfront

Silver coloured aluminium door and window frames

No pilaster on one or both sides

High threshold - inaccessible to disabled people.

Good practice



Chimney repaired or restored

Original shopfront repaired and restored

Box for retractable cloth canopy below fascia

Robust and decorative pilasters and corbels

Well-proportioned display window with timber frame.

Stallriser and door in proportion.

Roof repaired in tile or slate

Sympathetic restoration of original windows & decorative details

Advertising minimal

Gap between window and fascia

Well-designed and proportioned lettering

Original sub-divided window panels.

Recessed entrance and ramp - accessible to disabled people.

5 P L A N N I N G R E G U L A T I O N S

Most alterations to shopfronts need consent under the Planning Acts or Advertisement Regulations, or both. If in doubt consult THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE, PO BOX 28, BASKERVILLE HOUSE, BROAD STREET, BIRMINGHAM, B1 2NA, OR TELEPHONE: 021-235-3157

You may need planning permission before starting work which changes the external appearance of your property. For instance:

- 1 replacing the shop door with one of a different design or material, or altering its size or position;
- 2 changing the size or the window area, or altering the glazing bars;
- 3 modifying the size of the fascia
- 4 installing reflective or obscured glass, a blind or security shutters

- 5 applying stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tile cladding
- 6 changing the frontage line;

Local Authority has published Policy Guidelines for

- 1 Shopfront design;
- 2 The use and design of roller shutters
- 3 Shop canopies
- 4 Illuminated and projecting signs

They can also give advice on providing access for the disabled. Applications which follow these guidelines are more likely to be accepted. If you alter your shopfront without getting planning consent, the local authority can take enforcement action. At the very least this will cause disruption and expense. When in doubt consult the Planning Department.

ਧਹ ਗਾਇਡ ਮੋਜ਼ਲੇ ਵਿਲੇਜ਼ ਕੇ ਓਨ ਵਪਾਰੀਓਂ ਕੇ ਲਿਓ ਜਾਨਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਔਰ ਸਲਾਹ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਤੀ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਸ਼ਾੱਪ ਫ਼ਰੰਟ ਕੀ ਇੰਪ੍ਰੁਵਮੈਂਟ ਕਾ ਕਾਮ ਕਰਾਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੈਂ । ਧਦਿ ਆਪ ਕੋ ਕੋਈ ਟਿੱਪਣੀ ਦੇਨੀ ਹੋ ਧਾ ਅਧਿਕ ਜਾਨਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਚਾਹਿਓਂ ਤੋ ਕ੍ਰਪਧਾ ਨਿਮਨਲਿਖਿਤ ਪਤੇ ਸੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਕੀਜ਼ਿਓ:

ਇਹ ਗਾਈਡ ਮੋਜ਼ਲੇ ਵਿਲੇਜ਼ ਇਲਾਕੇ ਵਿਚ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਪਾਰੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ, ਜਿਹੜੇ ਸ਼ੌਪ ਫਰੰਟ ਦੇ ਇੰਪ੍ਰੁਵਮੈਂਟ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਾਉਣ ਵਿਚ ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀ ਰੱਖਦੇ ਹੋਣ, ਸਲਾਹ ਮਸ਼ਵਰਾ ਅਤੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ । ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੜਚੋਲ ਕਰਨੀ ਜਾਂ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

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The Conservation Team,
Department of Planning and Architecture,
Baskerville House,
Broad Street,
Birmingham,
B1 2NA.

Telephone: 235 2323