

**SHOP FRONTS AND ADVERTISEMENTS  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**REVISED  
MAY 2019**

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## Introduction to the Supplementary Planning Document

0. In most instances the installation or alteration of a shop front would require Planning Permission. In some instances the installation of advertisements on business premises would require Advertisement Consent. This document will guide the District Council in determining relevant applications for Planning Permission or Advertisement Consent.
1. The guidance in the first part of this document supplements national and local planning policies relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, the design of new development generally and the design of shop fronts specifically. These policies are contained in the *National Planning Policy Framework (2019)* and the *NW Leicestershire Local Plan (2017)*:

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)	
Chapter 12	Development should be sympathetic to local character. Development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture. Development should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.
Chapter 16	Development should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

NW Leicestershire Local Plan (2017)	
Policy HE1	Development should demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its wider context.
Policy HE2	Development should retain existing historic shop fronts and features of architectural and historic interest. Development should respect the character of the building and (where appropriate) adjoining buildings and the wider street scene.

- 1a. This document takes account of chapter 4.4 of the *Ashby-de-la-Zouch neighbourhood plan (2018)* including sections D and G ('shop frontages in the town centre' and 'signage and lighting') and policies TC2 and TC4 ('shop frontages' and 'legible signage').
2. This document takes account of cancelled policy guidance contained in PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994) and PPG19 *Outdoor Advertisement Control* (1992). An annex to PPG15 contains *Guidance on Alterations to Listed Buildings*. While these policy guidance notes have been cancelled, the guidance that they contain still reflects best practice.
3. This document contains guidance on inclusive access that reflects the guidance in Approved Document M *Access to and use of buildings – Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings* (2015).

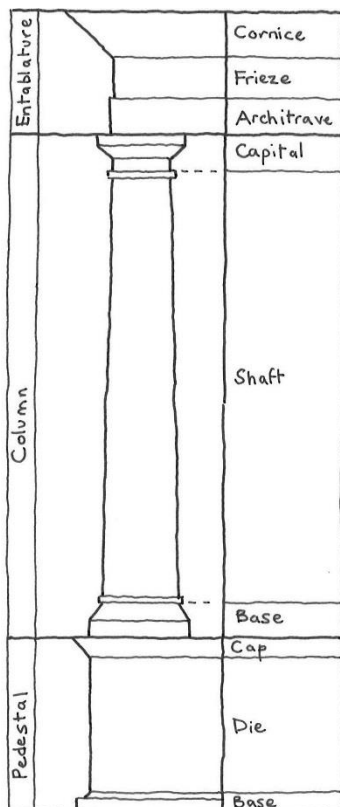
## Part 1: Shop fronts

### Why are shop fronts important?

4. A shop front serves a number of purposes – to provide an attractive frame for the goods displayed, to advertise the presence of the shop and to project an image for the business inside.
5. Poor quality and tatty shop fronts suggest that the goods and services offered inside will be much the same. This can also reflect on the town or village as a whole. A town centre full of well designed, well-maintained shop fronts would project an impression of quality that would attract visitors and provide a nice environment for the residents.
6. The towns and villages of NW Leicestershire have some very good examples of old shop fronts but there are many others that are rather poor. Others could be much improved with just a little effort.
7. This guidance is offered to help understand the historic development of shop fronts, to illustrate the nuances and subtleties of their design, and to explain some basic principles that should inform the design of new shop fronts.
8. Where a new shop front is to be created, the designer is faced with a choice of using a contemporary or traditional design approach. This document is mainly aimed at traditional shop fronts but the basic principles which underpin good shop front design are common to both.

### Glossary

Traditional shop fronts use elements borrowed from classical architecture. This is reflected in the terms that we use to describe the elements of a shop front.



Cornice

Fascia

Capital

Pilaster

Pedestal and  
stall riser



### The shop front, piece by piece

9. **The fascia:** The fascia is equivalent to the classical *frieze* and *architrave*. A fascia is supported at either end by a pilaster and in turn it supports the cornice. A fascia is bounded at either end by a bracket. The fascia should be in scale with the shop front and the building as a whole. As a rule of thumb, the height of the fascia and cornice should be no more than one sixth of the height of the shop front overall.
10. The fascia is used to display an advertisement. The colour of the advertisement should reflect the character of the building. As a general rule, rich dark colours may be appropriate. The illumination of the advertisement should also reflect the character of the building. As a general rule, a flush fitted 'strip' or 'trough' light may be appropriate. Internally illuminated signs are **rarely appropriate** in conservation areas.
11. **The cornice:** The cornice is equivalent to the classical *cornice*. A cornice is supported by the fascia and at either end by a bracket. A shop front should incorporate a cornice to enclose the fascia and offer visual support for the upper part of the premises.
12. **The bracket:** The bracket is equivalent to the classical *console*. A bracket supports either end of the cornice and bounds either end of the fascia. A shop front should incorporate brackets to enclose the fascia.
13. **The pilaster:** The pilaster is equivalent to the classical *column* or *pilaster*. A pilaster is supported by a pedestal and in turn it supports either end of the fascia. A shop front should incorporate pilasters to offer visual support for the upper part of the premises.
14. **The pedestal:** The pedestal is equivalent to the classical *pedestal*. A pedestal supports a pilaster and bounds either end of the stall riser. The pedestal is best executed in durable materials; timber **should be avoided**.
15. **The stall riser:** The stall riser is equivalent to the classical *podium*. A stall riser supports the shop window. A stall riser is bounded at either end by a pedestal. A shop front should incorporate a stall riser to minimise the risk of people colliding with transparent glazing. The stall riser is best executed in durable materials; timber **should be avoided**.
16. The stall riser is topped by a sill. Care should be taken to ensure that the sill is fairly deep and chunky rather than under sized (a common mistake in modern shops).
17. **The shop window:** The shop window may be subdivided with mullions, transoms and glazing bars. The subdivision of the shop window should reflect the proportions of the building and its vertical or horizontal emphasis. The subdivision of the shop window also has the advantage of reducing the amount of glass that has to be replaced in the event of breakage.
18. **The threshold:** The threshold should be level (i.e. it should offer a slope no greater than 1:20) and the route across the threshold should provide weather protection. A recessed entrance provides weather protection and may account for a sloping threshold. It also offers additional space for advertisement and shop window display.
19. **The entrance door:** The entrance door should be accessible to all. The entrance door should be wide enough to allow unrestricted passage for a variety of users including wheelchair users. An entrance door with powered operation is the most satisfactory solution for most people. The entrance door should be glazed to allow people to see others approaching from the opposite direction.

## Historic development of shop fronts

### Shop fronts before c.1850

20. The earliest surviving complete shop fronts date from the mid-eighteenth century; shop fronts from this period are rare. Late Georgian shop fronts are slightly more common and form one of the pleasures of the English urban scene. By about 1850 the ground floor shop was a standard feature of most high streets.
21. The classical architecture of the Roman Empire provided the inspiration for much Georgian architecture and the new shop fronts used elements borrowed from the same source.
22. A glazed shop front would typically consist of big windows with small panes, sometimes bowed, set between pilasters beneath a classical *frieze* and cornice; a *podium* known as a stall riser would support the display windows.



*89 Bondgate, Castle Donington. Mid nineteenth century; note the small panes.*

### Shop fronts between c.1850 and c.1910

23. Around 1850, technological developments led to a wave of shop window replacement. Large shop windows became possible with the introduction of cast iron piers. Large windows allowed more room for display and let more light into the shop itself. Both qualities were enhanced by plate glass. By about 1850 it was possible to get sheets of plate glass at less than one-tenth of the eighteenth century cost.
24. The trend towards larger windows continued through the nineteenth century and on into the early twentieth century. The advent of these new plate-glass windows introduced a different scale to the design of shop fronts, with the stall riser at the base of the window virtually disappearing, and the front being carried much higher up, thereby increasing the natural internal light. The fascia also grew and was often canted outward so that the face of the board faced towards the onlooker. This also resulted in larger brackets at the end of the fascia.



*53 Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch. Shop front installed shortly after 1880.*



*76 Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch. Shop front installed shortly after 1902.*



### Shop fronts after c.1910

25. Early twentieth century shop fronts (such as those with Art Nouveau or early Art Deco details) can be as unusual as eighteenth or nineteenth century examples.
26. New materials<sup>1</sup> and styles appeared in the 20th century. Despite their modernity in the use of materials and however stripped down the architectural treatment may be, such shop fronts still have stall risers, pilasters and fascias.



*34a Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch.  
Shop front installed c.1930 for Melias Ltd.*



*Left: Detail of a typical shop front of the period before c.1850 (51 Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch). A fluted pilaster with capital supports a shallow classical frieze and cornice. Note the absence of a bracket. The shop window is bowed and divided into small panes.*



*Right: Detail of a typical shop front of the period after c.1850 (76 Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch). A panelled pilaster supports a deep canted fascia and cornice. The fascia is bounded by a bracket. The shop window is flat and contains plate glass; note the narrow overlight.*

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<sup>1</sup> For example, 'Vitrolite' (pigmented structural glass) was manufactured in the UK by Pilkington Bros and was widely used in the years preceding the Second World War. The shop frontage at 8 and 10 Market Street, Ashby (c.1940) is a fine and unaltered example of the use of 'Vitrolite' in Leicestershire.

## Retaining shop fronts and features of significance

*Please note that the guidance in paragraphs 27 to 32 applies to 'historic' buildings, i.e. generally to buildings erected before the end of the Second World War.*

<b>NPPF #16</b>	Development should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
<b>HE2</b>	Development should retain existing historic shop fronts and features of architectural and historic significance.

27. **Wherever shop fronts of significance survive, they should be retained.** Removal of historic shop fronts may damage the significance of both the building and the wider conservation area.
28. **New shop fronts should retain and incorporate features of significance.** For instance, retractable apron blinds covered in canvas are often characteristic features of historic shop fronts. Old shop signs are also part of the history of a building. Shop fronts should not extend into the storey above or alter the proportions of first floor windows.

<b>HE1</b>	Development should demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its wider context.
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29. **Premises where works to shop fronts are proposed should always be inspected and the possible survival of old features checked.**

Features of value such as blinds in blind boxes, shutters in shutter boxes against an upright and stall risers are often concealed beneath later facings.

### Intact ground floors

30. The introduction of a new shop front to an historic building, where there is none at present, may damage the significance of both the building and the wider conservation area. Hence **existing openings should be retained wherever possible; if alteration is necessary it should only be to the minimum extent required.**



*16 High Street, Coalville. Features of value were concealed beneath later facings.*

### Restoration

31. It may be proposed to restore a shop front that has been lost but appears in (e.g.) old photographs. In these cases, **restoration is likely to be acceptable if the work proposed is justified by compelling evidence of the evolution of the heritage asset** (and provided that the work is executed in accordance with that evidence).



32. It may be proposed to remove a shop front to restore an elevation to its previous appearance (e.g. matching the rest of a terrace). In these cases, **restoration can usually be encouraged, but should be viewed with caution in cases where the shop front is of significance in itself**. Generally restoration is likely to be acceptable if the significance of the elements that would be restored decisively outweighs the significance of those that would be lost.

### Designing in character

33. **New shop fronts should be designed to respect the character of the building of which they form part and the wider street scene.** As a general rule, development should respond to local character. The NPPF (2010) advised that “design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail” and should concentrate instead upon guiding the overall characteristics of development. These include:

- Layout and the “traditional pattern of frontages”;
- Size, proportions and “vertical or horizontal emphasis”;
- Materials and finishes.

34. Standard corporate shop fronts **should be avoided in historic contexts**; designers should be prepared to compromise on matters of corporate design where it is unsuitable in a particularly sensitive area.

### Layout and scale

<b>NPPF #12</b>	Development should <b>be sympathetic</b> to local character.
<b>HE2</b>	Development should respect the <b>scale and proportions</b> of the building and (where appropriate) adjoining buildings and the wider street scene.

35. **Shop fronts should respect the layout of the street scene and the traditional pattern of frontages.** It is particularly important that, when shops have spread from one building into the adjoining one, the treatment of the shop front respects the original division.

36. **Shop fronts should respect the size of the building.** The size of the building clearly influences the size of the shop front. Smaller buildings will have shop fronts that are smaller (and in most cases simpler) than tall buildings. The fascia should be in scale with the shop front and the building as a whole. As a rule of thumb, the height of the fascia and cornice should be no more than one sixth of the height of the shop front overall.



*6 Marlborough Square, Coalville. The shop front fails to respect the ‘original division’.*

37. **Shop fronts should reflect the proportions of the building and its vertical or horizontal emphasis.** For instance consider the way that mullions, transoms and glazing bars are used to subdivide the shop window. The subdivision of the shop window also has the advantage of reducing the amount of glass that has to be replaced in the event of breakage.

### The shop window display

- 37a. The Council would encourage an active shop window display and would discourage the use of opaque 'window film' to obscure the shop window. **For listed buildings it is rarely acceptable to use opaque 'window film' to obscure the shop window.**

### Materials and finishes

<b>NPPF #12</b>	Development should <b>be sympathetic</b> to local character.
<b>HE2</b>	Development should respect the materials of the building and (where appropriate) adjoining buildings and the wider street scene.

38. **Shop fronts should respect the materials of the building.** The shop front should usually be constructed of painted timber, because this would reflect the use of painted timber in the upper floor windows. Timber can be finely detailed, moulded to different profiles, is durable and repairable, and can be freshened up with a coat of paint. Modern materials such as plastics **are rarely acceptable** as facings.
39. Being close to the ground, the stall riser is vulnerable to damage and attack by water and salts. As a result, stall risers are probably best executed in durable materials, often brickwork; a late tradition of using glazed bricks in different colours can be very attractive. Many modern shop fronts have used applied timber panels on the stall riser. These decay and become unattractive very quickly and **should be avoided**.
40. **Shop fronts should respect the finishes of the building.** The colour of a shop front can have a strong influence on the impact of any shop front. It should usually contrast with the wall in which it sits.
41. Rich dark colours (blue, green or maroon for example) provide a greater depth and lustre than light colours and give a visual 'strength' to the frame. White or light colours may be suitable on smaller shop fronts where areas of walling already extend from the upper floors to the ground.
42. A single colour is often the best choice although, with care, a second colour can be used to pick out decorative elements.



*51 Market Street, Ashby. Black gives visual 'strength' to the main frame elements but white has been used to pick out other elements. The use of black and white respects the finishes of the building.*

## Shop fronts and 'good architecture'

<b>NPPF #12</b>	Development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture.
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43. **Shop fronts should reflect the building's characteristic symmetry.** The shop front and its elements should be designed to reinforce the symmetry (or asymmetry) of the upper floors.
44. **Shop fronts should offer visual support for the upper part of the premises.** Traditionally the sides of the frame are formed by pilasters, which support the fascia and the cornice. The size of the cornice should be adequate to offer visual support; its size is often inadequate in modern designs.
45. **The fascia should usually be finished with brackets and a cornice or other capping.** This is the traditional treatment for shop fronts. The cornice provides an architectural division between the modern shop front and the older upper floors. It also helps to throw rainwater away from the window.
46. Mullions and transoms should have an elegant, rather than chunky, profile. The strength to support modern glass should be obtained from depth rather than width. The point where they join the main frame, known as a spandrel, is often used to incorporate decorative elements.



*65 Market Street, Ashby.  
The shop front reinforces the  
symmetry of the building;  
the cornice provides a proper  
'architectural division'.*

## Ancillary features

<b>NPPF #12</b>	Development should create <b>places that are safe.</b>
<b>NPPF #16</b>	Development should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

- 46a. Ancillary features include security provisions, blinds and illumination. **Ancillary features should be well integrated into the shop front.** For more guidance on illumination refer to paragraphs 75ff below.
47. **In historic contexts, external steel roller shutters are rarely acceptable.** Laminated glass and internal chain-link screens are likely to be more appropriate alternatives in most instances.
48. **Security provisions should permit natural (or passive) surveillance.** Internal chain-link screens are preferable; internal perforated shutters may be appropriate. Where this is not possible, external open grille shutters of a similar design to allow surveillance should be used.
49. Traditional timber shutters give reasonable protection. Stall risers are an effective deterrent to 'ram raiders'; so are small shop windows between masonry piers.

50. The cornice is usually the best place to incorporate a blind. Blinds should be fully retractable, roller blinds and made of canvas rather than plastic. ‘Dutch’ plastic canopies are rarely acceptable.

*Right: 12B Belvoir Road, Coalville.  
An unacceptable ‘Dutch’ canopy. 12C  
Belvoir Road has a canvas roller blind.*



### Inclusive access

<b>NPPF #12</b>	Development should create places that are inclusive and accessible.
<b>NPPF #16</b>	Development should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

51. A physical feature may put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person who is not disabled. The Equality Act 2010 imposes a legal duty to take reasonable steps “to avoid the disadvantage” by “removing the physical feature in question, altering it or providing a reasonable means of avoiding it”<sup>2</sup>. However, the Equality Act does not override other legislation such as listed building or planning legislation.

52. **Shop fronts should achieve an appropriate balance between historic building conservation and accessibility.** Reasonable provision must be made for people to gain access to a building and its facilities. The Building Regulations recognise “the need to conserve the special characteristics of historic buildings”, because “they are a finite resource with cultural importance”. Hence “the aim should be to improve accessibility where and to the extent that it is practicably possible, always provided that the work does not prejudice the character of the historic building or increase the risk of long-term deterioration to the building fabric or fittings”.



53. **The threshold should be level** (i.e. it should offer a slope no greater than 1:20), as long as this would be ‘reasonable’ and would not prejudice the character of the historic building. Sometimes a restricted site makes it impossible for the principal entrance to be accessible, in which case an alternative accessible entrance may be necessary.

*71 Market Street, Ashby.  
It may be ‘unreasonable’ to  
make the principal entrance  
accessible, but an alternative  
entrance may be possible.*

<sup>2</sup> Equality Act 2010, sections 20(4) and 20(9).

54. Accessible entrances should be clearly signposted and easily recognisable. The route from the exterior across the threshold should provide weather protection.
55. **The door to a principal entrance (or an alternative accessible entrance) should be accessible to all**, as long as this would be ‘reasonable’ and would not prejudice the character of the historic building.
56. Once open, all doors to accessible entrances should be wide enough to allow unrestricted passage for a variety of users including wheelchair users. Doors should offer a minimum effective clear width of 1000mm (new buildings) or 775mm (existing buildings).
57. An entrance door with powered operation is the most satisfactory solution for most people. Approved Document M offers further guidance on the design of doors with non-powered operation (2.14) and powered operation (2.18).
58. A door to an accessible entrance should allow people to see others approaching from the opposite direction and thereby allow sufficient reaction time to avoid a collision.
59. **Transparent glazing should incorporate features that make it apparent.** The Building Regulations identify a risk of collision where people are likely to come into contact with transparent glazing. This risk is at its greatest “when the building and its immediate surroundings are at the same level but separated by transparent glazing”. In this instance “people may think they can walk from one part to the other”. A shop front should incorporate a stall riser to minimise this risk.

#### **Vacant premises over shops**

<b>NPPF #7</b>	Policies should recognise that residential development <b>often plays</b> an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres.
<b>EC10</b>	We will support the residential use of the upper floors of properties within defined Primary Shopping Areas.

60. **Separate access to the upper floors should always be retained.** The provision of access should be carefully considered in any new design where the use of the upper floors is separate from the shop.

## Part 2: Advertisements

### Introduction

61. The display of outdoor advertising is regulated by the Town & Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. The regulations permit the Local Planning Authority to control outdoor advertising in the interests of amenity and public safety.
62. All outdoor advertisements affect the appearance of the building or the neighbourhood where they are displayed. The main purpose of the advertisement control system is to help everyone involved in the display of outdoor advertising to contribute positively to the appearance of an attractive and cared-for environment.
63. Outdoor advertising is essential to commercial activity in a free and diverse economy. The success of local businesses will usually help owners and tenants of commercial premises to maintain buildings in good repair and attractive appearance.
64. The appearance of a good building can easily be spoiled by a poorly or insensitively placed sign or advertisement, or by a choice of advertisement materials, colour, proportion or illumination which is alien to the building's design or fabric. Too often, outdoor advertisements seem to have been added to a building as an afterthought, so that they appear brash, over-dominant or incongruous.

### Consideration of 'amenity'

65. In assessing an advertisement's impact on 'amenity', the council shall have regard to its effect on the appearance of the building or on visual amenity in the immediate neighbourhood where it is to be displayed. The council shall consider what impact the advertisement (including its cumulative impact) would have on its surroundings. The general characteristics of the locality and the presence of any features of architectural or historic interest are factors relevant to 'amenity'<sup>3</sup>.
66. Where there is a group of buildings, relevant considerations will include the scale and massing of buildings, the pattern of land use (both existing and proposed) and the presence of listed buildings or a conservation area. For instance, a large and brightly illuminated sign, which would appear appropriate on a department store and contribute colour, interest and vitality to some High Street shopping areas, may well be unacceptable on a corner shop in an otherwise residential locality.

### Advertisements in conservation areas

67. In the exercise of its planning functions, the council has a duty to pay "special attention" to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area<sup>4</sup>. The council's planning functions include the control of outdoor advertisements.

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<sup>3</sup> Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, section 3(2).

<sup>4</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72(1).



68. Many conservation areas are thriving commercial centres where the normal range of advertisements on commercial premises is to be expected, provided they do not detract from visual amenity. More exacting standards of advertisement control will prevail in conservation areas. The council shall scrutinise applications for express consent closely to ensure that proposals do not compromise the aims of the area's special designation.

### **The importance of signage**

69. **New signs and advertisements should be carefully designed and positioned.** Signs should be seen as an element within the design rather than an afterthought applied without any consideration for the shop front. Businesses are obviously keen to advertise their presence and the goods and services that they offer. Imaginative, well-executed signage can be an attractive component of a shop front in its own right and should be considered as an integral element in the design process.

70. **The materials of an advertisement should reflect the character of the building.** Painted lettering has a depth and quality that shiny plastic lettering and boards cannot match. It should always be painted directly onto the shop front rather than on a board which is then stuck on to the shop front.

71. **The colour of an advertisement should reflect the character of the building.** In the case of fascia signs, rich dark colours (blue, green or maroon for example) provide a greater depth and lustre than light colours and give a visual 'strength' to the frame. White or light colours may be suitable on smaller shop fronts where areas of walling already extend from the upper floors to the ground. For more guidance on appropriate colours for shop fronts, see [paragraphs 38ff](#) above.

72. **The proportions of an advertisement should reflect the character of the building.** The fascia should be in scale with the shop front and the building as a whole. As a rule of thumb, the height of the fascia and cornice should be no more than one sixth of the height of the shop front overall. Rectangular hanging signs are best when they are 'portrait' in shape and when they reflect the 'golden ratio' (1:1.618).



*72 Market Street, Ashby.  
Poor signage devalues this  
nineteenth century shop front.*

73. New signs and advertisements should use appropriate fixings that will not damage the building.
74. Where there is no fascia, consider applying lettering to the shop window or to the upper floors. Well executed signage applied directly to the building has a long historical pedigree and can be very attractive. Signs on buildings can also be much bigger than might be expected and help a business make a big impact in an attractive way.

*Right: 77 High Street, Measham.  
The shop front has a narrow decorative frieze so lettering has been applied to the shop window.*



### **The importance of illumination**

75. Careful thought should be given to the need for any illumination of signs. In well-lit streets, lights are rarely required and they clutter the building during the day.
76. For buildings which operate at night time (pubs, restaurants, chemists etc.) the need for lights may be more obvious but they should be provided in as discrete a manner as possible so that they are not too prominent during the day.
77. **The illumination of an advertisement should reflect the character of the building.** Where a new shop front is being installed, a light unit can be accommodated within or under the cornice, allowing the light to wash down over the sign.
78. For existing shop fronts, a strip light set flush to the fascia or shallow trough lighting may be acceptable. They should be coloured to match the fascia. Another possibility is to illuminate the building rather than the sign; this can be achieved with light units tucked under the eaves, allowing the light to wash down the building.
79. **For shop fronts that adopt a contemporary design approach, 'fret cut' internal illumination may be acceptable.** In historic contexts, internally illuminated fascia boxes or signs **are rarely acceptable.** In historic contexts, 'swan neck' lights and other projecting lights **are rarely acceptable.**



*25 Market Street, Ashby.  
The cornice of this new shop front accommodates a light.*

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