

# BROCKLEY SOCIETY



Charity No. 1004245

April 2015

## Shop Fronts Why better design is needed!

Next time you walk around Brockley take a look at the shop fronts. Have you noticed that they are getting bigger, bolder, brighter? Do you like the designs? Are they having a negative impact on your neighbourhood? And would you know if planning consent was required?

In this simple, easy to read guide we want to explore how better design and a few subtle changes can improve the whole appearance and ambience of Brockley.

### Issues and Concerns

On 11 January 2015 the Brockley Society's Planning Group walked around the shopping parades of Lewisham Way and Brockley Road and noticed that shop frontage and public realm improvements could be the catalyst to:

- Improve the street scene and the overall look of the Conservation Area
- Create a better sense of wellbeing
- Encourage pedestrians to stop and buy
- Halt environmental erosion
- Slow down economic decline



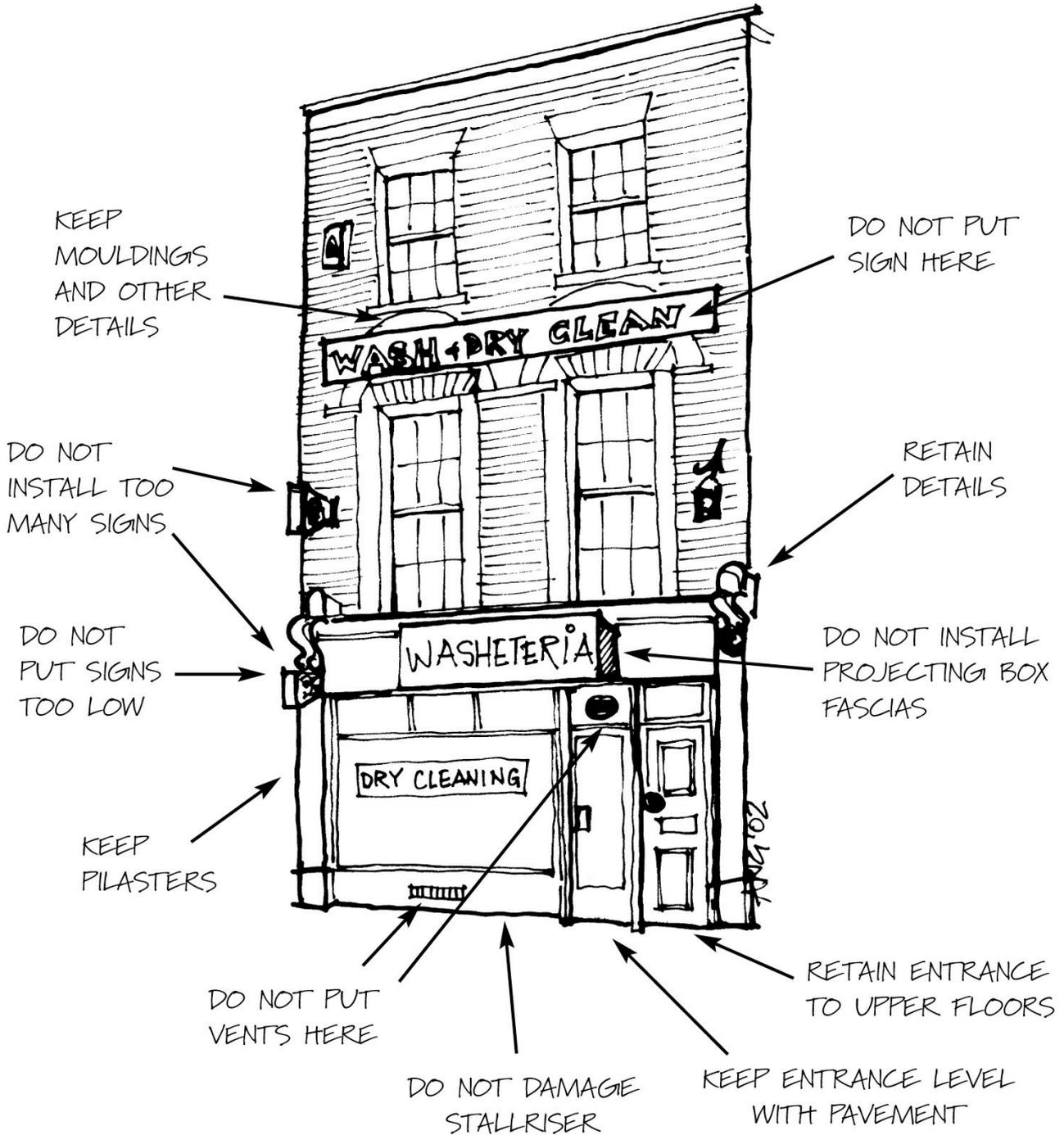
**Lewisham Way**

### Ways Forward

So what improvements can we make?

- Avoid poor, careless and unsympathetic alterations
- Challenge the use of poor materials, lettering and standardised shop front designs
- Reduce some of the more attention grabbing corporate signs
- Create more distinct, well designed signs
- Use this leaflet to discover the principles of good design, planning consents required and where to go to seek further help and guidance
- Work with LB Lewisham's Planners to educate and ensure agreed standards are maintained and enforced

THE SHOPFRONT AND THE BUILDING  
LIST OF DO'S AND DO NOT'S



**In detail** we need to:

1. Learn from the Past and the typical forms of our Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts:



2. Recognise Planning Permissions and Building Control Consents may be required:
  - a. to alter or change anything that materially affects the building's appearance eg: via
    - replacement shopfronts or frames
    - new fascias
    - illuminated signs
    - external security shutters and grilles
    - removing the stallriser
    - new doors
    - awnings and canopies
  - b. to change the business use eg from retail to non-retail or to domestic use
  - c. to obtain Conservation Area Consent to remove or demolish a shopfront
  - d. to obtain Listed Building Consent if the shopfront or building is statutorily listed
  - e. to obtain Advertisement Consent for illuminated signs including flags, banners and poles

In these cases, whilst not exhaustive it is always best to consult Lewisham Planners on [planning@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:planning@lewisham.gov.uk) or on 020 8314 7400

3. Assess Basic Design Considerations – take into account:
  - a. the impact on the street and the rest of the immediate area
  - b. how it visually fits with the building and impacts on adjoining shopfronts
  - c. original feature details, use of colour and relationship with entrances
  - d. access for people with disabilities or visual impairment and parents with pushchairs
4. Consider the implications of Good and Bad Design:
  - a. poor design uses cheap materials, bad workmanship and lacks imagination
  - b. poor design fails to recognise the original shopfront's heritage and acknowledge the value, integrity and visual importance of this history
  - c. good design, whether modern or traditional, seamlessly matches the visual qualities of the building with the business aspirations of the shop owners
  - d. good design seeks to make a positive impact on the building, street scene or retail operation



**Good Design**



**Bad Design**

5. Establish clear Design Principles:

- a. consider why a new shop front or improvement is needed
- b. appraise your premises carefully by asking questions in relation to:
  - o the character and quality of your shopfront and how it fits with the streetscene
  - o how will the style affect the adjoining building?
  - o architectural elements eg pilasters, corbels, cornices, friezes, entablatures and stallrisers etc
  - o types and suitability of materials, lettering and glazing
- c. seek advice from experienced designers/architects used to working on Conservation schemes as well as Lewisham Planners
- d. all planning applications will require a Heritage Statement to evaluate the merits of repair or replacement and whether a traditional design or more modern approach is suitable and acceptable



**Good Traditional Design**



**Good Modern Design**

- e. this process will identify how to deal with the most sensitive areas such as:
  - **Fascias and Signs** are usually a dominant feature and to avoid clutter they should:
    - be in scale and harmony with other elements of the building
    - ensure the depth of the fascia does not exceed one quarter of the height from the pavement level to the underside of the fascia
    - not extend below the head of the pilaster nor above the perceived floor level below the first floor windows and be contained by corbels which if missing should be reinstated
    - not obscure, alter or deface existing windows, architectural details, projecting signs and advertisements
    - avoid the use of large areas of acrylic or shiny material in favour of painted timber and lettering
    - avoid the use of box fascias which project beyond the fascia panel as these are unsympathetic to the style of most buildings
    - opt for clear and simple forms of lettering in the interest of legibility; standard designs offered and used by national retail chains may not always be suitable



**Good Design**



**Bad Design**

## Corporate Styles and Branding

- Company logos, signs and standardised shop front designs may not always be suitable – occasionally it may be worth considering changing corporate house style to fit in with the overall appearance of the building and area
- Planning Applications must demonstrate evidence of this

## Signage on Glazing

- Shop signs can be painted or etched onto the glazing
- Avoid excessive clutter
- Effective safety measures will be required to prevent accidents from large areas of glazing and glass doors

## Projecting or Hanging Signs

- Projecting or hanging signs should provide a minimum clearance of 2.4m from ground level, be located at fascia level and should not obscure architectural details nor vie with adjoining features or signs
- Avoid box signs. Non-internally illuminated hanging signs are preferred for their traditional appearance and simplicity

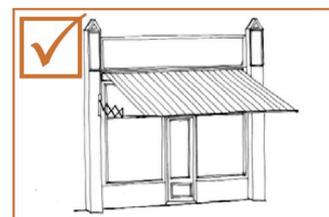


## Lettering

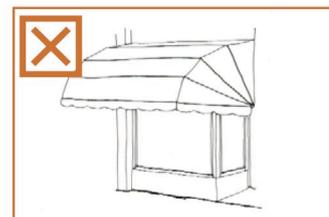
- Lettering should be part of the shopfront design and should respect the character of the building and the street
- Size of lettering is determined by the need for reasonable legibility and not be so large as to swamp the fascia or the shopfront
- Style should be carefully selected to convey the image of the shop and to avoid conflict with other elements of the building
- Street numbers should be clearly displayed and positioned on fascias or above doors
- Care will be needed for upper floor occupiers' details to be displayed if applied to windows or access doorways. A suitable size and style need not despoil elevations.

## Canopies and Blinds

- Canopies and Blinds are a strong link with Brockley's heritage and can enhance the streetscene provided they are integrated as part of each shopfront and confined within it.
- Care should therefore be taken to learn how their size, shape and position relates to the character of our buildings without swamping key architectural details
- Colour and material selection should be in keeping with the style and materials of each shopfront and building
- Retracting blinds should always retract fully into the fascia and provide safe and adequate ground clearance (2.4m)
- Continental 'Dutch' Canopies (non-retractable) in shiny plastic are considered inappropriate; straight sheet canvas rolling canopies are more suitable and can be best adorned with lettering or artwork if required



Canvas blinds or canopies of the traditional flat type are usually appropriate.



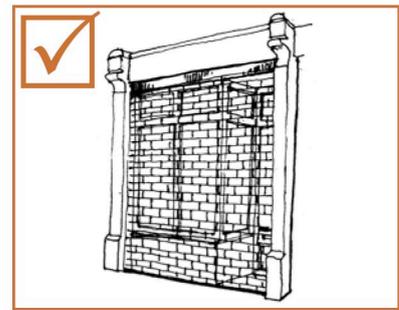
Dutch blinds are not acceptable in a historic location.

## Illumination

- Modest and subtle lighting can enhance a lively and safe night time environment but all too often illuminated signs are bulky, poorly designed, badly located and add clutter to shopfronts
- Careful lighting is the key to avoid adversely affecting the character of a building and its surroundings. Instead of box signs, use the more subtle forms of backlit lighting, individual halo letters and cold cathode tubes where only the lettering and not the background is illuminated
- Concealed external solutions which are carefully directed to only highlight the fascia, avoid glare and overt light pollution are preferred. 'Swan-neck' fittings should be avoided.

## Security Shutters and Grilles

- Solid aluminium shutters should be avoided on long stretches of retail parades as they cut off night time light from within, may create an intimidating atmosphere and prevent the observance of break-ins and attract graffiti.
- External shutters often retract into external boxes below the fascia with vertical runners attached to pilasters. These severely diminish the qualitative visual appearance of shopping streetscapes
- However, other alternatives should be considered:
- **Security Glass** – toughened and laminated glass can give very high levels of security without effect on the appearance of shopfronts. Standards range from 7mm laminated to bullet proof glass
- **Internal Grilles** should give clear views into shops by avoiding the need for any external grilles
- **Removable External Shutters** can be acceptable if they suit the shop's design and character and do not inhibit day-to-day operations if supplementary steel frame mesh grilles are needed
- **External Roller Shutters** can be used in exceptional circumstances provided that they are carefully fitted, are of the open grille type or have concealed housings with integrated runners built into frames
- **Solid External Roller Shutters** are only acceptable to open shopfronts without glazing (eg butchers and fishmongers or greengrocers); these may use transparent facings to allow light to penetrate.



Open-grille shutters are a visible form of security that does not compromise the external appearance of the shop.



Solid external security shutters of the metal roller type, which obscure shopfronts, will not be acceptable.

## Choice of Materials and Finishes

- Restrict the number of types used and select to harmonise with the character of buildings. Choose materials which are durable and easy to maintain but try to avoid shiny reflective materials in lurid colours
- **Traditional materials** such as painted timber, glass, steel, render, stone, brick and glazed tiles are still the most commonly used and available. Use of timber with natural or varnished finishes or tropical hardwoods are not favoured
- **Powder coated aluminium** may be acceptable as a cheaper alternative to steel and where a modern design and colour choice is appropriate. Avoid natural or anodised aluminum as it weathers badly
- **Colour** should be used carefully to emphasise important design elements and pick out significant details such as mouldings, lettering etc as well as to better define surface changes for the visually impaired

## Access for Wheelchair Users and Parents with Pushchairs

- Entrances must provide a clearly defined, unobstructed and level approach from pavements
- If this is not possible a non-slip ramp with a maximum gradient of 1 in 12 must be provided to allow access for people with limited mobility, including the elderly and shoppers with pushchairs
- Doors should have a minimum clear opening width of 900mm with a clear space of 300mm adjacent to the opening side of the door. Where these dimensions cannot be achieved a minimum door opening width of 750mm may be considered
- Where space is limited automatic doors may be helpful as well as power-assisted doors with pushplates. Manual doors should be light, well hung with self-closing force kept to an operable minimum. Revolving doors are not acceptable



- If access is via unavoidable steps these should be made to be of easy rise with handrails to each side along with contrasting step nosings
- Many traditional shops have recessed entrances and add variety to the street scene; they will need to be well lit at night time

### Conversions

- Many shops have been converted to other uses eg residential
- Pressure to meet housing accommodation means care is required to ensure the most appropriate approach is adopted to suit the needs of the property as well as occupiers
- If a shopfront is still in its original condition, it is often possible to retain or enhance the existing external features without compromising the new use
- Privacy can be achieved via use of frosted glass, internal blinds or traditional timber panel shutters.



**Before**



**After**

**In conclusion** and to remind you of the key points raised here is a graphic summary of **Do's and Don'ts**:



**Good Design**



**Bad Design**

### References:

LB Lewisham's Shopfront Design Guide, a supplementary planning document:  
<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/my services/planning/policy/Documents/ShopfrontDesignGuideSPD.pdf>

LB Islington's Shopfront Design Guide and to which we attribute use of their text and graphic illustrations:  
[http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/planning/plan\\_conserve/documents\\_and\\_guidance/Pages/shopfront\\_design\\_guide.aspx](http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/planning/plan_conserve/documents_and_guidance/Pages/shopfront_design_guide.aspx)

LB Sydenham Society's Shopfront Design Guide and to which we attribute use of their text and graphic illustrations:  
<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/my services/planning/policy/LDF/SPDs/Documents/SydenhamShopfrontGuide.pdf>

The Lettering Centre, useful for information and services on quality lettering:  
<http://www.lettering-centre.com/>

Traditional Signwriting:  
 Nick Garretts  
<http://www.nickgarrettsignwriter.com>

**Gallery:**

The shop fronts below are just a few of the good examples found in Brockley.



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