



City of Westminster

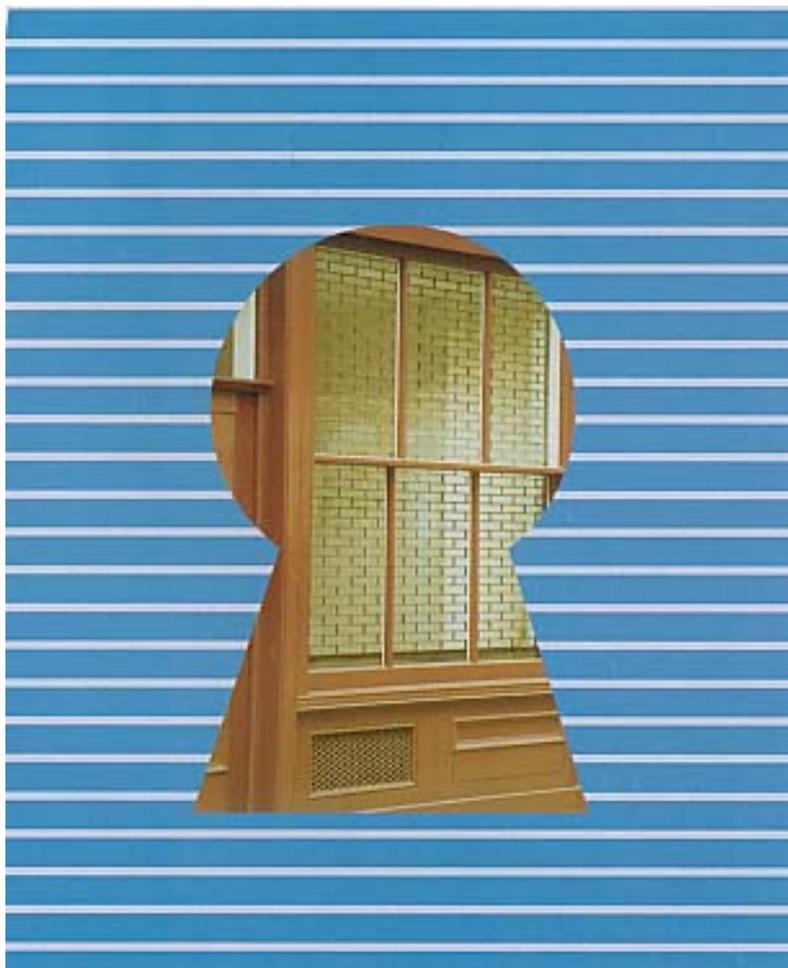
PLEASE NOTE

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies and planning, building control and other legislation and regulations referred to in the text of this guide were current at the time of publication. Because this guidance is an electronic version of the printed guidance as approved and adopted, these references have NOT been changed. For ease of contact; names, telephone numbers and locations have been regarded as non-material editorial changes and have been updated.

As UDP policies and government legislation may have changed over time, before carrying out any work, it is recommended that you consult the current UDP

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/planningandlicensing/udp/index.cfm> for policy revisions and you may wish to check with planning and/or building control officers about your proposals.

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SHOPFRONT SECURITY



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Background

This document has been produced by the Department of Planning and City Development, Westminster City Council. It sets out the Council's current policies and design guidelines for shopfront security. These guidelines supplement advice contained in *Shopfronts, Blinds, and Signs - A Guide to their Design* published by Westminster City Council in December 1990.

These guidelines provide advice on the most appropriate means of providing shopfront security while maintaining the visual amenity of a building and area. It is not possible to foresee all circumstances which may exist for every premises. When planning permission or listed building consent is required, each proposal will be assessed on its merits.

However, these guidelines offer useful advice on preferred options, aiming to ensure sufficient security protection in most cases, whilst causing minimal impact to the appearance of the shopfront and the street scene.

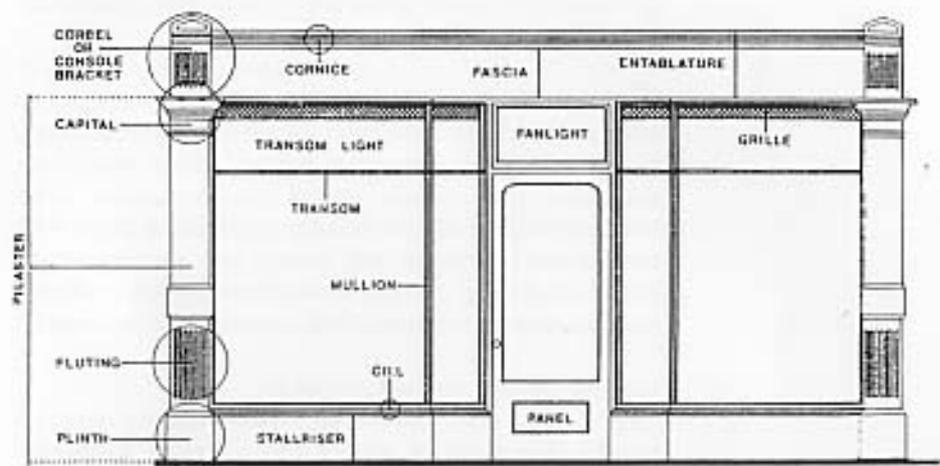
1. Introduction

Shopfronts are significant elements in the design and appearance of many buildings and the shopping frontage often dictates the character and appearance of a whole street. For this reason, the City Council attaches considerable importance to suitably designed shopfronts, not only to preserve the character of buildings, but also to retain the overall attractiveness of shopping streets and to maintain their commercial viability. **If inappropriate alterations to shopfronts are carried out they can have a severe and detrimental effect on the building and street scene of which they form part.**

In recent years, shopfront security has become an increasingly important issue. In order to combat the rising threat of theft and vandalism, number of measures have been introduced to existing and replacement shopfronts. Other criminal acts, including terrorism and racial attacks, have also had a bearing on the level of security necessary. Unfortunately, the use of certain security measures particularly solid roller shutters, can have a serious detrimental impact on the appearance of many buildings and on the character of streets within the City.

Most break-ins occur at the rear of shops where they are often more vulnerable, with poor physical security and little, if any, lighting. Some security measures may actually increase the risks of theft by obstructing views through shop windows. Shopfront security should therefore be seen as part of an overall approach to the security of premises, and should take into consideration the use of alarms and internal closed Circuit Television, as well as the reduction of stock within reach of a thief and the use of dummy stock.

Crime prevention is a material consideration. When planning applications are considered, the City Council will adopt a balanced approach to proposed shopfront security which attempts to reconcile the need for crime prevention with the need to protect the visual quality of the built environment. In all cases, the shopfront security should be realistic and commensurate to the risk.



The figure illustrates and names the parts that are found most commonly on shopfronts.



Solid roller shutters create a fortress-like atmosphere which have an adverse effect on the environment and are vulnerable to graffiti. They can deter the public from using an area, thus losing the benefit of passive surveillance.

2. Legislation

Planning Permission

Planning permission is required for alteration, which would materially alter the external appearance of a building. While the installation of external grilles or shutters normally requires planning permission, the installation of internal grilles or reinforced glass would normally, unless it results in an alteration to the external appearance of a shopfront.

Listed Building Consent

The installation of shopfront security measures in listed buildings, such as external or internal grilles, shutters or laminated glass, would almost always require listed building consent. **Owners are reminded that it is a criminal offence to carry out works to a listed building which would materially affect its character, without first receiving consent.**

Conservation Area Consent

Conservation area consent would normally be required for the demolition or partial demolition of shopfronts which are located within a designated conservation area.

Building Control

The provision of security measures may also require the benefit of separate permission in accordance with Building Regulations. You are therefore advised to contact the Westminster District Surveyors Service, if your proposal involves alterations to the building or affects a means of escape in case of fire. In addition, the London Building Acts (Amendments) 1939 requires that a street number be displayed on the premises at all times. Any security methods should not obscure the street number of the premises concerned at any time.

Planning Policies

The mounting of security equipment such as alarm boxes shutters and TV cameras on the facades of buildings can detract from their character and architectural integrity and may have a wider impact where security measures are installed on a building in a street of residential character and function. It is often possible to reduce the impact of security measures by sensitive design and location and to integrate them with the existing building.

There are 53 conservation areas in the City of Westminster. In such areas special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character and appearance.

The City Council's current policies relating to shopfront security contained in the City of Westminster Draft Unitary Development Plan (as agreed for Deposit November 1991) are as follows:



A traditional shop frontage which is not spoilt by insensitive security measures. Attractive shopping streets attract customers, even when closed.

DES 5 - Alterations and extensions throughout the City

(iii) (c) all new shopfronts, etc. should be designed and detailed so that the ground floor relates satisfactorily to the elevational design of the upper parts of the building and allow for the access needs of persons with disabilities; solid security shutters will not normally be permitted; preference will be given to security glass and fret work shutters where necessary. Solid security shutters on domestic properties will not normally be permitted.

DES 7 - Conservation Area: Preservation and Enhancement

(i) The City Council will seek to secure the preservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of conservation areas, including, where appropriate the use of powers to enforce the carrying out of necessary repairs to unlisted buildings in cases where the Secretary of State has so directed. From time to time the City Council will formulate and publish special guidance for the preservation, protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

(xii) In most cases the City Council will expect new development or alterations and extensions to buildings in conservation areas to use traditional or other durable natural materials which preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Shopfronts form an important part of the character and appearance of many conservation areas within the City of Westminster.

DES 8 - Protection of Listed Buildings

(vi) The Council will need to be satisfied that all aspects of proposals are necessary and are in no way detrimental to the architectural or historic integrity and detailing of the exterior of the buildings and to valuable interiors and that they are entirely in accord with the period, style and detailing of the building. Wherever possible existing detailing and the contemporary features of the building should be preserved, repaired or if missing, replaced. All works, whether they be repairs or alterations will be required to be carried out in a correct scholarly manner, under proper supervision, by specialist labour where appropriate. The original plan form of listed buildings should be preserved and their integrity should not be compromised. Policy DES 5 will also apply.

Shopfronts may form part of a building listed for its special architectural or historic interest.



3. SECURITY OPTIONS

Anti shatter film

Anti shatter film is tough, transparent and relatively easy to apply to existing glazing. It is cheaper than replacing windows with laminated or toughened glass (see below). Its main benefit is in holding shards of glass together when a window is broken by a blast and it also adds some resistance which may help to foil smash-and-grab raids.

Security glass

There are two types of glass which combine safety and security: laminated and toughened glass

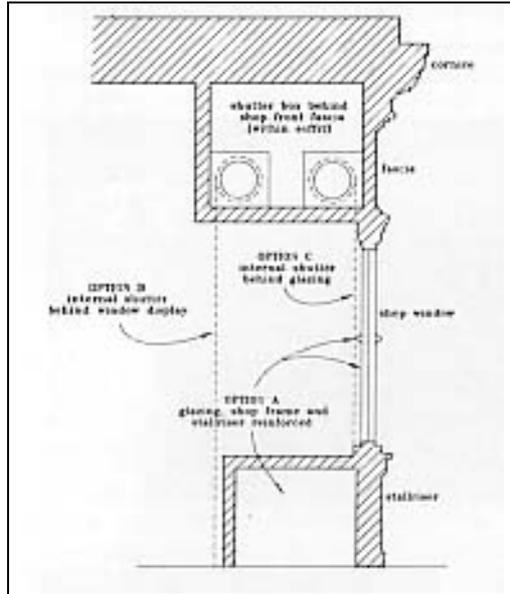
Toughened glass is heat treated and can be up to 5 times stronger than ordinary glass - but cannot be cut or drilled on site.

Laminated glass is produced by combining two or more sheets of float glass with one or more layers of polyvinyl butyral (PVB). The performance of laminated glass varies according to the thickness of glass and PVB layers - 7.6mm is considered adequate for security purposes.

Shopfronts which contain high risk goods, e.g. jewellery and electrical items, may require a greater thickness of laminated glass or toughened laminate. Where 11.3mm 5-ply laminated glass is used, the resistance to attack is increased significantly.

Traditional shopfronts with smaller panes of glass can be more difficult to break into than modern extensive areas of glazing. The introduction or reinstatement of glazing bars and stallrisers provides greater strength to a shop window or door and, when used in conjunction with strengthened glass, this can provide sufficient protection for most shopfronts.

Where appropriate, window mullions can be strengthened with metal T-sections. Inserting additional glazing bars or stallrisers also strengthen an existing shopfront. It is always advisable to contact the City Council before carrying out such works, which may require planning permission or listed building consent.



This figure illustrates preferred options for security measures and their location within a typical shopfront.



Traditional shopfronts often provide sufficient physical barriers if strengthened. Toughened glass and T-bar reinforcement adds invisible security to existing shopfronts.

Many traditional shopfronts can have fine architectural details which should not be obscured by obtrusive security measures.



The use of laminated glass in shopfront windows and doors should be the first option as this has the least impact on the appearance of the shopfront and would not normally require permission (unless the size or position of the glazing frame is altered). However, in cases where historic glass (Crown Glass) survives in the shopfront window of a listed building, consent would be required for its replacement with modern glass.



Solid timber shutters may be appropriate in certain circumstances on Georgian or Victorian shopfronts.

Solid Timber Shutters

In certain circumstances, the use of lift-off wooden window or door shutters may be an appropriate means of providing protection to traditional shopfronts. The use of well designed timber shutters might apply to Georgian or Victorian shopfronts, particularly where there is evidence that such shutters existed previously.

Internal Lattice and 'Brick Bond' Grilles

If it is considered necessary to install a physical barrier within the shopfront, the most appropriate option is an internal lattice or brick bond grille. Internal grilles have a limited impact on the appearance of the shopfront and do not normally require planning permission. The installation of internal grilles or shutters requires listed building consent and would not be acceptable where the alterations detrimentally affect the character of a building, for example, when there would be an impact on the original/historic internal features.

Lattice or brick bond grilles also enable window shopping or 'passive surveillance' of the premises from the street and lights left on within the shop can act as a further security deterrent. The grilles can be linked to an integrated alarm system if required.

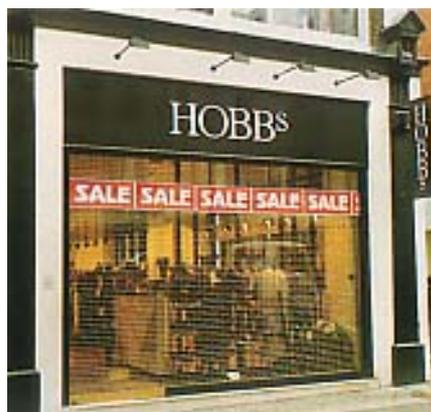
The size and location of grilles must be determined by the shop window opening. They may be retracted during opening hours into box housings, which can usually be located discreetly within or behind the window soffit.

*Security grilles
maybe located
behind a
window display
of 'dummy'
goods.*



*Some shopfronts
have large window
openings which do
not permit shutters
immediately behind
the glazing. In this
case, shutters can
be incorporated in a
soffit behind the
display.*

A combination of strengthened glass, traditional shopfront details and internal grilles offers the most acceptable solution to the problem of providing security measures to a shopfront, while maintaining its external appearance and the visual quality of the street scene. These security measures will, therefore, be encouraged by the City Council as the **preferred options** in all but exceptional cases.



*Brick bond shutters located
behind the glazing provide
security without detracting
from the appearance of
traditional or more
contemporary shopfronts,*

External Lattice and 'Brick Bond' Grilles

The installation of external lattice or brick bond grilles requires planning permission and will only be considered acceptable when laminated glass and/or internal grilles are not feasible. Applicants may be required to provide evidence of exceptional circumstances, for example, where goods are viewed as carrying a high risk.

In particular, the installation of any external grilles or shutters will not normally be acceptable on listed buildings or buildings which make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

In limited circumstances, where external lattice grilles are considered to be acceptable in principle, careful consideration must be given to the location of the box housing and guide channels, which should be contained within the shopfront (for example, set behind the fascia panel or pilasters). Grilles should be set within the architectural framing of the shopfront, covering the glazed areas and doors only and should not obscure features such as pilasters, cornices or consoles. External grilles, guide channels and box housings should be painted to match the existing shopfront and should be properly maintained. Where grilles are retained by edge channels, the enclosed depth should be at least 50mm. This may have an impact on the external appearance of the building. Some traditional 19th and early 20th century buildings retain original external shutters within recessed housing, which may be still functional.



External shutters should be set within the architectural framing of a shopfront, and should not obscure features such as pilasters, cornices or consoles.

In cases where box housing cannot be accommodated within the fascia, consideration should be given to the use of side hung scissor-type shutters or gates (see doorways, below). Consideration should also be given to restoring and reusing traditional shutters where they exist.



External lattice and Brick Bond grilles, set between the existing architectural details of a shopfront.

External Mesh Grilles

The fixing of mesh or removable grilles which are manually placed in front of the shop windows or doors may be an alternative to external lattice grilles when a box housing cannot be accommodated within an existing shopfront. In such cases, fixings should be discretely located and must not harm architectural features or mouldings.

The installation of non-retractable external grilles is not considered acceptable by the City Council.

Doorways

Shop doors, particularly if glazed and recessed, are often the point of entry for burglars. The installation of lattice grilles is again the preferred option in most cases. Recessed doors may, where appropriate, be protected by collapsible iron gates. The gates should be retractable to a discrete position when not in use.

The use of lighting can also act as a deterrent in recessed doorways.



Doorways may be protected by collapsible iron gates or lattice grilles.

Solid Roller Shutters

When closed, solid roller shutters detract from the visual appearance of individual buildings and produce 'dead frontage' within a street, creating a threatening, fortress-like effect. The use of solid external shutters offers opportunities for fly-posting and graffiti which detract further from the amenity of an area. **Planning permission is required for the installation of external solid shutters and will not normally be granted.**

Perforated roller shutters with viewing panels, cut-outs or holes have a visual impact similar to solid shutters and will be considered by the City Council in the same way.



Solid roller shutters will not normally be granted planning permission.

4. RAM RAIDING

There has been an increased request from shopkeepers for greater protection in the form of bollards or other physical obstruction to prevent ram raiders (often as a result of insurer's requirements).

Ram raiding is more common with certain types of goods and shop premises than others. Often existing circumstances within a shopping street, such as high kerbs, existing planters, lamp posts, bus stops, bollards, electricity boxes etc. reduces the risk of ram raids and additional precautions may not be necessary.

The provision of additional planters or bollards on the public foot path requires consent from the City Council as the Highways Authority; permission will not normally be given where the structure constitutes an obstruction. The proliferation of street furniture of irregular designs and location may also detract from the visual appearance of streets. As an alternative to the use of bollards, traditional stallrisers may be reinforced with blockwork behind timber panels.

You are advised to discuss proposals for ram raiding deterrents with the City Council's design and highway officers before installing bollards or other physical obstructions.



Decorative railings and basement lightwells can provide a physical barrier to shop window displays which do not obstruct visibility of goods behind. They may also reduce the risk of ram raiding.

5. EXTERNAL ALARM BOXES/FOIL STRIPS

Shopfront security should be seen as part of an overall approach to improving security for a retail unit and consideration should be given to the installation of alarm systems, internal CCTVs and foil strips (which alarm when the electrical continuity is broken.)

The erection of an external alarm box would not normally require planning permission but consent may be required in the case of a listed building. An alarm box should be carefully sited, where it does not obscure or damage architectural detailing and should be painted to match the existing surface (see separate Design Guide for external CCTV cameras).

Statutory requirements relating to alarm boxes

- duration of alarm
- decibel level
- flashing lights
- tests and certification
- contact telephone numbers



Alarm boxes should normally be located on the fascia and painted to match the adjacent surface.

Reliability and Maintenance

The reliability of any security equipment or system depends upon clear specifications and good design, installation, commissioning against appropriate performance criteria and maintenance. A planned preventative maintenance regime should ensure that equipment and systems continue to perform to the standard intended. Intruder detection systems should be maintained in accordance with BS4737.

6. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Where commercial premises are located in residential areas (particularly where flats are located above shops), consideration should be given to the amenity of residents. External shutters and alarms can cause considerable disturbance (particularly at night or early morning), if not properly maintained and consideration should be given to the use of electronic shutters when residential amenity is an issue.

7. CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

CLICK HERE FOR LINK TO
WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL
CONTACTS LIST

English Heritage (London Region)
23 Savile Row
London W1X 1AB
Tel: (020) 7973 3000

Association of British Insurers
51 Gresham Street
London EC2 7HQ
Tel: (020) 7600 3333

Other sources of information:

Circular 5/94 - Planning Out Crime
HMSO publications, February 1994.

Retail Security - A Beat Officers Guide:
Home Office Crime Prevention Centre, 1992.

Book of Details and Good Practice in Shopfront Design
English Historic Towns Forum, 1993.

Shopfront Security Report
Shopfront Security Group, January 1994.

Guidelines on Shopfront Protection
Institute of British Insurers, September 1991.

Development Planning Services, Department of Planning and City Development, March 1995