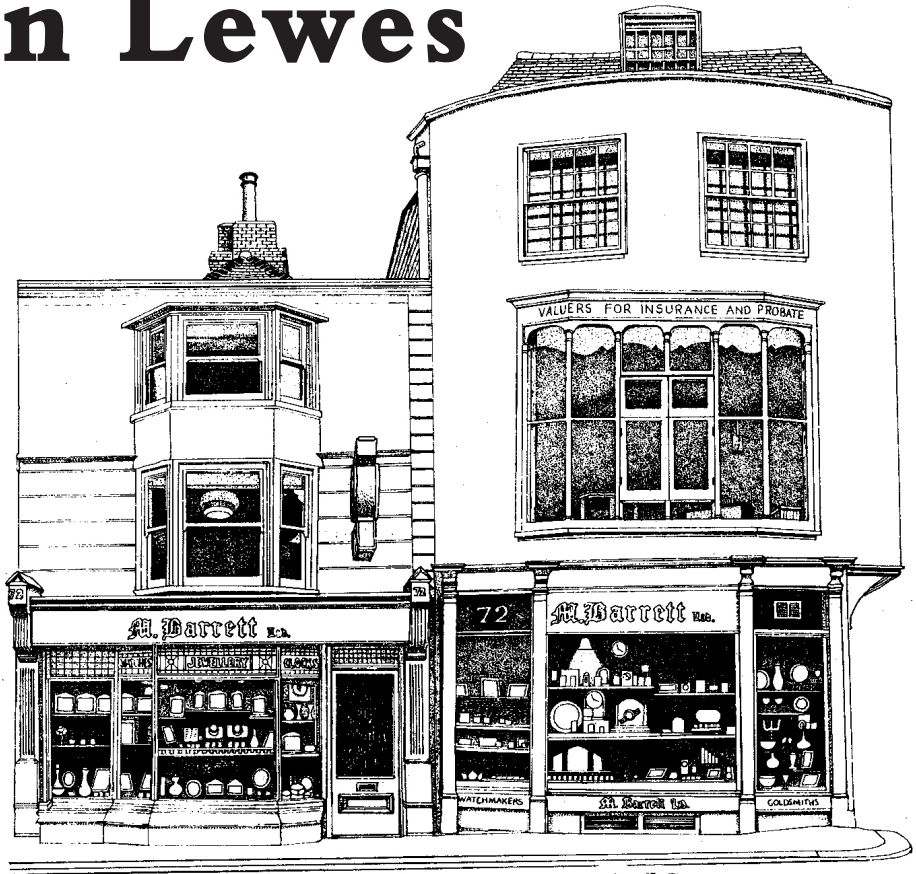


# Shopfronts and Advertisements in Lewes



## Planning Advice Note



Lewes District Council  
[www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk)

# CONTENTS

SHOPFRONTS	3
ADVERTISEMENTS	13
FURTHER INFORMATION	19

Illustrations by Marietta Van Dyck

## INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is intended to be of assistance to local traders, owners and developers in Lewes who anticipate undertaking work to shop fronts or erecting signs and advertisements.

The quality and character of the townscape in Lewes is unique, and this is recognised in its inclusion in a list of 51 towns in Great Britain which 'are so splendid and precious that ultimate responsibility for them should be a national concern'. The historic core of the town has also been designated a Conservation Area.

Shopfronts and advertisements form a major and crucial element in the street scene both individually and collectively. In many places the installation of modern shopfronts and advertisements has proved harmful both to individual buildings and to the character of the area as a whole.

This leaflet seeks to encourage a high standard of shopfront and advertisement design. The District Council will use these guidelines to judge planning applications and indicate the high standard of shopfront and advertisement design required in Lewes.

# SHOPFRONTS

## Introduction

The design of shopfronts can present many problems and there are invariably many conflicting factors to take into account. The most important factors are likely to be:

- the character of the street as a whole
- the relationship to neighbouring properties
- the character of the individual building

## Scale and Character of the Building

The essential requirement of good shop front design is invariably that the shopfront should respect the scale and character of the building as a whole.

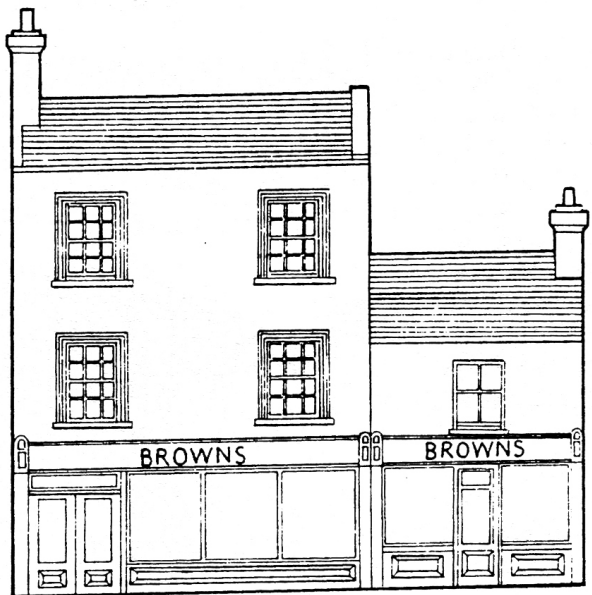
The shopfront should reflect the structural logic of the building above and support for the upper floors should be expressed in the design. The uncomfortable impression of a heavy upper structure poised on a flimsy sheet of glass below should be avoided. A display window framed by a visually robust surround gives visual support to the upper part of the building. Columns and pilasters should be used to emphasise the width of each plot and emphasise support for the upper floors. Large glazed areas should be broken by the use of mullions.

Where a shop embraces two (or more) plot widths, the character and identity of each individual elevation should be respected by a change in fascia detail, a setback or separate shopfronts.

*This design is unsympathetic to the individual buildings. The fascia covers first floor windows and the upper floors are not supported by the ground floor design*



*The individual shopfronts respect the scale and character of the buildings above*



Clearly from an owner's point of view continuity is desirable to indicate that the shops form part of the same business concern, but this should not override the need to respect individual properties on upper floors. The visual continuity of ownership can be emphasised by using the same fascia colour and lettering type, and similar window displays. However, where there are a number of shops within the same terrace or building, then the design of the individual units should relate to each other and maintain a coherence of design.

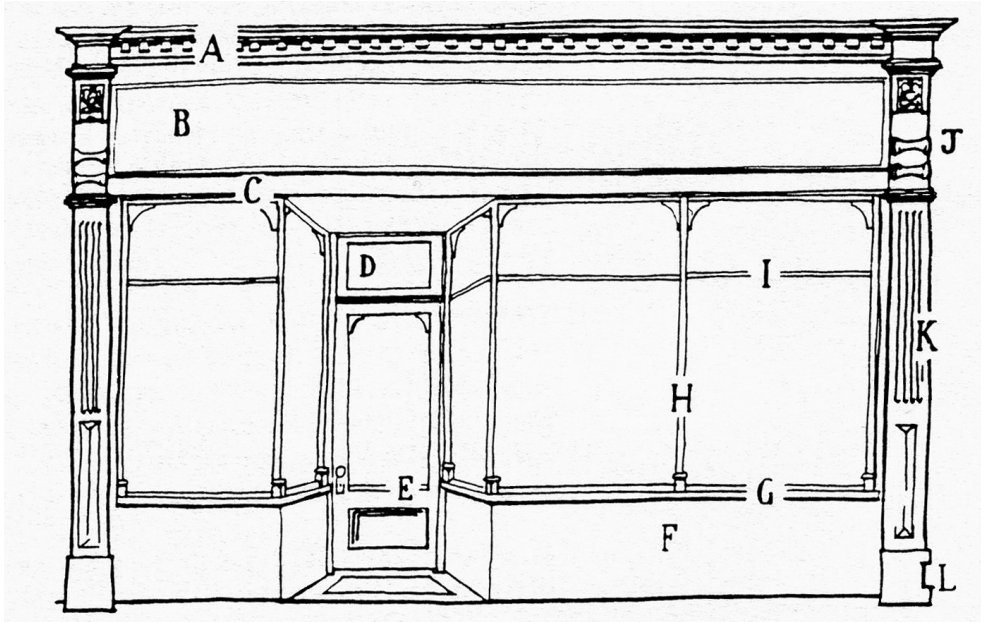
Where it is agreed that the building is of little architectural merit and it would be inappropriate to pay attention to its style when considering a shopfront design, the general character of other shopfronts in the street should be followed. The fascia, for example, should follow the general design and height of others in the street. However, many buildings in the Lewes town centre are of special architectural merit or of a traditional design, and a traditional shopfront design will invariably be appropriate.

## **The Traditional Shopfront**

The design of many traditional shopfronts evolved from the market stall, inserted into the ground floor of buildings and developed to the very elaborate designs of the last century.

Many houses were converted into shops, with the retail and workshop elements on the ground floor and living accommodation above. The owner lived on the premises, and pride was taken in the appearance of the whole building frontage. The result was a consistent treatment, colour scheme, and use of materials.

Often these converted premises comprised two and three-storey buildings on a narrow plot width, creating a strong vertical emphasis. This vertical emphasis subsequently became an important characteristic of shopfront design.



Elements of a Traditional Shopfront

A Cornice	E Panelled Door	I Transom
B Fascia	F Stallriser	J Pilaster & Corbel
C Blind Box	G Cill	K Fluted Pilaster
D Fanlight	H. Mullion	L Plinth/Base

### The Frame

The visual solidity of the frame should give the appearance of structural strength and solidity to support the mass of the upper floors as well as provide a decorative detail around the window display.

Similarly the mullions and door frame reinforce the verticality and structural logic of the lower floor but provide attractive detailing around the display. This form of detailing is enhanced by pilasters, corbelling, recessed doorways and glazing bars providing visual interest in depth to attract the eye to the display.

## The Stallriser

The stallriser raises the display to a convenient level for display and protects the base of the window from damage. Stallrisers can form an important characteristic of a group of shops, particularly in Conservation Areas and ought to be incorporated in any traditional shopfront design.

In Conservation Areas the stallrisers should normally be no less than 500mm (1'6") in height and constructed of solid, traditional materials and suited to their context. Mosaics, standard laminates, facing bricks and marbles are rarely appropriate materials for stallrisers.

## The Fascia

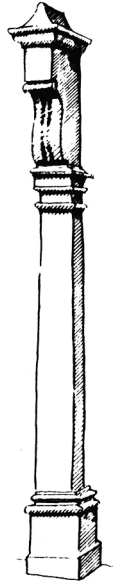
Original fascias should always be retained since they are part of the shopfront. Where these are obscured by modern fascias, the removal of the more modern work is encouraged.

The fascia and signage should be of a scale relative to other elements of the building. Generally, the depth of fascia should not exceed a quarter of the shopfront height.

The fascia should not exceed first floor height and should not overlap first floor windows or obscure architectural details such as string courses, frieze or cornice. A deep cornice is particularly important in reinforcing the robustness of the frame and terminating the shopfront design.

## The Façade

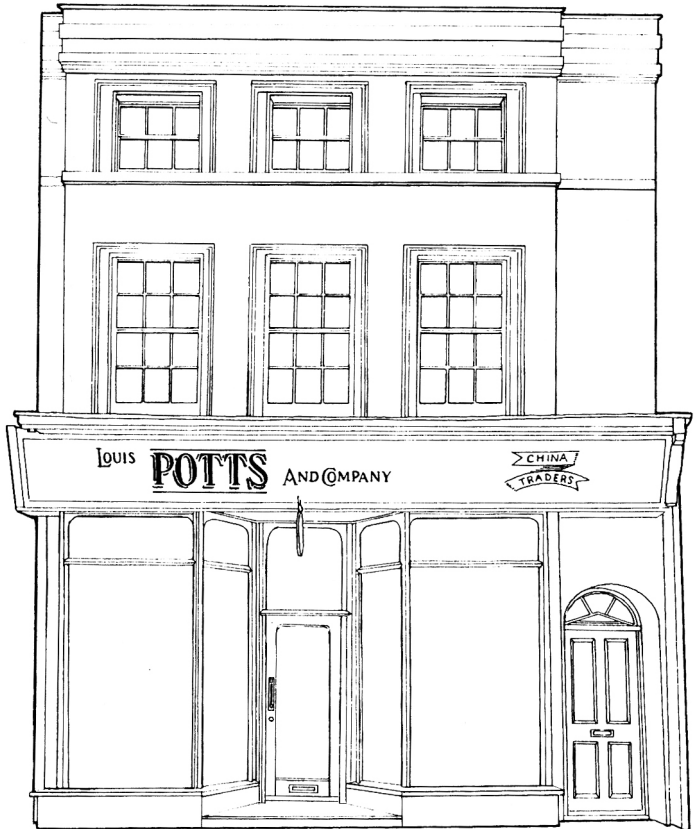
The scheme for external decoration for the shopfront should also take into account the remainder of the facade. If the upper floors of the building are poorly maintained, this will affect the appearance and attractiveness of the shopfront below. Therefore a programme of tidying-up, cleaning and painting is advisable.



*A typical Lewes pilaster*

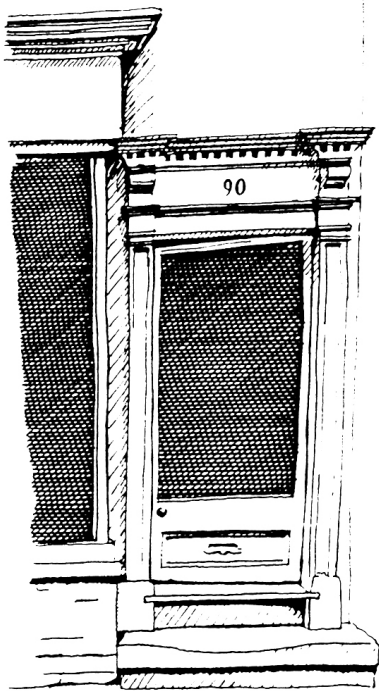
Redundant wires and brackets should be removed, plaster and woodwork repainted, the facade washed down and brickwork repointed. Brickwork should not be painted, as all the colour and texture of the brick is lost and is very difficult to restore later. Original sash windows and glazing bars should be retained.

Burglar and fire alarms, although necessary, should be discreetly sited. Automatic till machines should be located on the side of the main display and treated in a similar vein as a recessed doorway, creating relief to the facade and forming a distinct element in the overall display.



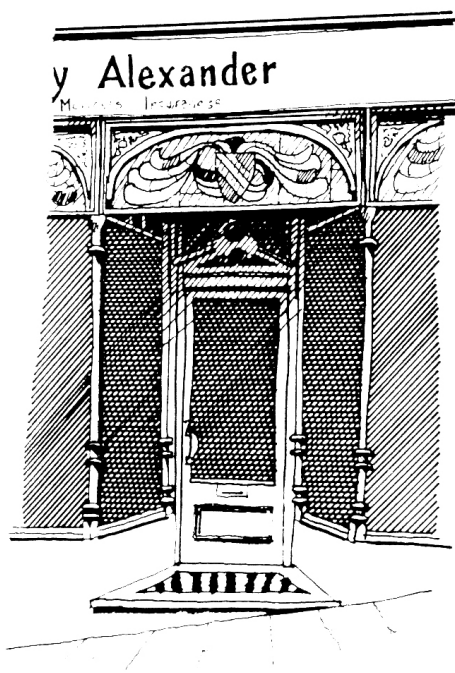
*No 43 Cliffe High Street is a modern shopfront inserted in a traditional building but incorporates traditional features*





*Lewes has a wealth of fine traditional doorways which form attractive features in the street and an important element in shopfront design*

*Existing features of interest should be retained including colour mosaic entrances, door-cases, fanlights, cast iron ventilation grilles, stained or etched glass, or hardwood mouldings*



## Traditional Shopfronts in Lewes

There will be a presumption against the loss of traditional shopfronts in Lewes and any traditional shopfront details and features. Any traditional details such as pilasters, consoles, cornices, brackets, etc. should be retained and incorporated in the overall design of the new shop front. Also existing features of interest should be retained including coloured mosaic entrances, doorcases, fanlights, cast iron ventilation grilles, stained or etched glass or hardwood mouldings.

A well designed modern building should take into account the criteria for shopfront design. Standardised components should only be used where they are the best design for the building. Standardising regardless of need or location should be avoided.

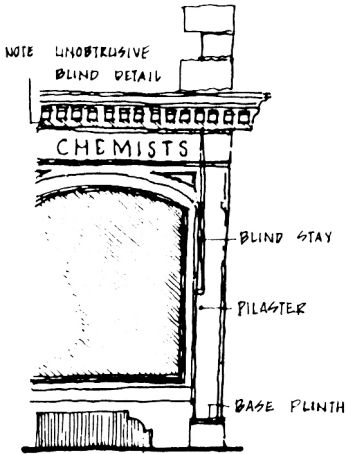
Encouragement will be given to the replacement of modern shopfronts by traditional designs which respect the character of the building and the street scene. However, where modern buildings contain shopfronts of a high standard of modern design, these should be valued and retained.

### Colour

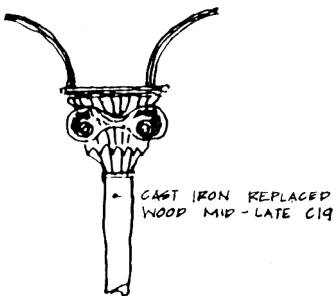
The shop should be painted to harmonise with the upper floors of the building and reinforce the overall effect of unity. Pilasters and fascias painted in the same basic colour can emphasise the structural logic of the facade. Variations in the theme can pick out details. The colours used in fascias and shopfronts should not clash with, nor be unsympathetic to, the colours of adjacent shopfronts.

### Materials

Timber is the most suitable material for shopfronts. It can be worked to any profile, it is durable and repainting can freshen up or change the appearance of a shopfront at minimum cost. Occasionally the use of polished mahogany or oak are appropriate but in most cases the use of tropical hardwoods is strongly discouraged.



*No 178 High Street*



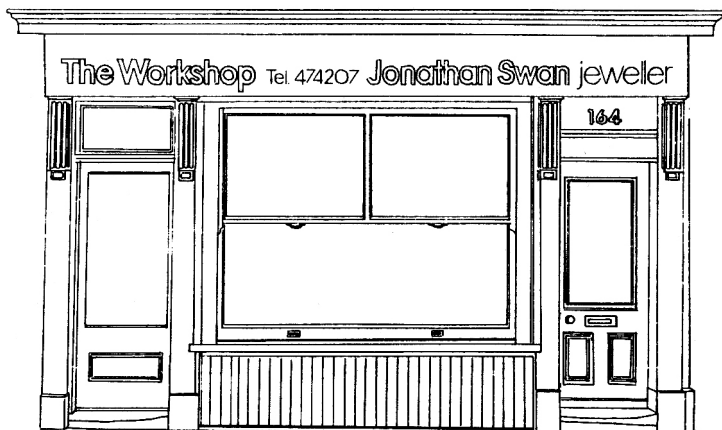
*Decorative mullion  
at No 24 High  
Street*

## Shutters

The use of roller shutters is discouraged as these tend to give a depressed appearance. Roller shutters of the open lattice type should be hidden within the structure of the shopfront and preferably close down within the glass.

Traditional roller blinds (A-set blinds) incorporated into the shopfront design can add character to a shopfront. However, the introduction of dutch blinds are not generally acceptable as the assembly tends to obscure the fascia and details of the shopfront.

The use of plastics, 'wet-look' or stretch blind fascias are strongly discouraged.



*Retention of traditional shopfront  
164a High Street*

## **Access for Disabled People**

The Disability Discrimination Act requires service providers such as shops, cafes and pubs to provide access for disabled people. Therefore proposals to alter a shopfront should where reasonable ensure that the premises are accessible to disabled people.

The minimum clear opening width for the entrance door is 800mm, though 850mm is desirable for electric wheelchair users and twin buggies.

Raised thresholds can be hazardous to all customers and are an obstacle to wheelchair users. Where unavoidable, they must be clearly defined by the use of colour contrast and be no higher than 13mm. External or internal doormats should be close fitting and recessed to lie flush with the adjacent floor surface.

Entrance doors should be lightweight and slow closing to allow time for wheelchair passage. Glazed panels, at a maximum height of 900-1500mm from floor level, should be incorporated to allow wheelchair users to see, and be seen by others, on approach. In fully glazed doors a permanent means of identifying glass to be provided at 1400-1500mm from floor level to minimise risk of people colliding with them.

Handles should be large and robust and placed 1040mm approximately above floor level. Lever handles should be provided where the door is latched and a pull handle where the door is not self-closing. Kicking plates, at least 400mm in height, are advisable to minimise wear and tear to the door.

Tills, cash points, letter boxes, etc should be accessible to wheelchair users. Controls, such as card slots and dispensers, should be placed at a height of approximately 1000mm, but no higher than 1400mm.

Further information on access for disabled people is available from the Access Officer at the District Council, tel: 01273 484409, email: [sue.dunkley@lewes.gov.uk](mailto:sue.dunkley@lewes.gov.uk)

# ADVERTISEMENTS

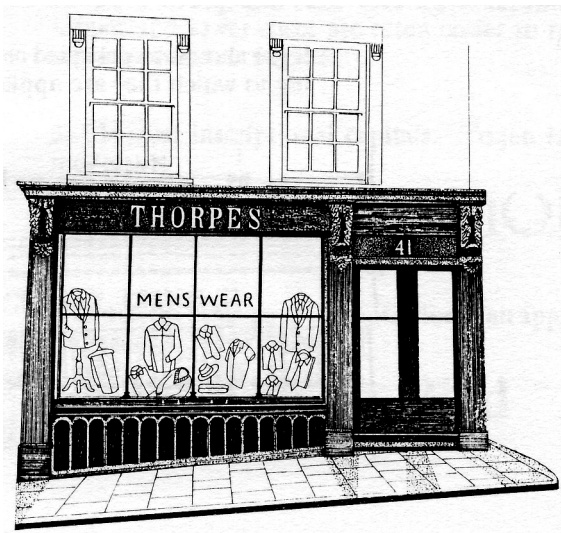
## Introduction

The design and location of signs in Lewes is most important. Well designed signs coupled with pleasing shop fronts can greatly enhance the environmental quality of the street scene, whereas poor design will detract from it. Even small signs if badly designed can have a detrimental effect over a large area.

A multiplicity of signs either on the same elevation or duplicated on flank elevations results in a confused and cluttered appearance which detracts from the character and appearance of the area and often smothers the architectural quality of the building. They are also self-defeating in their efficacy as advertisements.

## The Window Display

Whilst the traditional role of the shopfront was to frame the window display, the role of the window display was to advertise goods and services on offer. In the Conservation Area this remains the most appropriate and attractive means of advertising.



The window display can tell the shopper far more about the goods on offer than fascia or hanging signs. It also brings interest and variety to the street scene. An internally lit display especially after closing hours, can render a shop particularly attractive and can brighten a drab or dark street scene.

The role of signs and advertisements should be seen in this appropriate traditional context, as subservient to the window display.

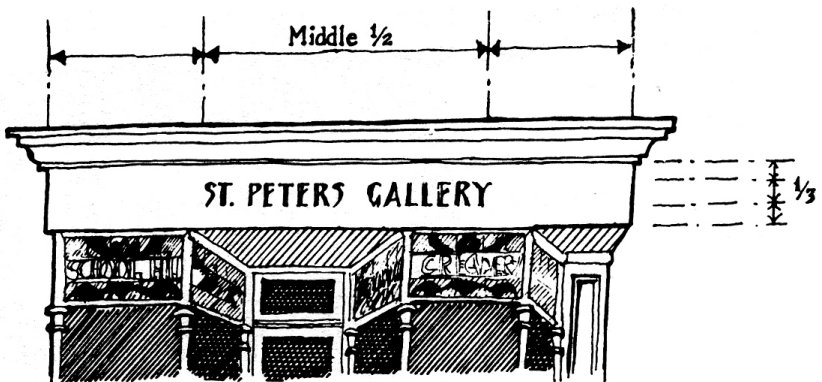
### **Designs of Signs and Fascias**

The information on a sign should state only the name or trade of the shop or business and not be cluttered with extraneous advertisements or duplication of information.

Large nationally known shops should be prepared to dispense with their standard or corporate signage if it is considered out of character with the building or the street scene.

### **Design**

Signs should be designed as integral parts of the building to which they are applied (see shopfronts guide).



The height at which it is applied and the design of the sign should be related to the architectural detailing, scale and character of the building and its setting.

### **Fascia Signs**

Removal of existing fascia boxes will be encouraged. New fascias should not be added over the top of existing fascias and signwriting should always be applied direct to the fascia. Box fascias and particularly those that are internally illuminated are unacceptable.

Reflective acrylic sheeting, mosaic and bright metal finishes are not considered suitable for the Conservation Area. Over dominant acrylic fascias are also unacceptable. Painted timber or other materials with a matt finish are preferred. The colours should not clash with adjacent shop fronts. The use of fluorescent materials or garish colours is inappropriate in traditional shopfronts and signage.

The colour of signs and fascias should be seen as contributory to the overall appearance of the building, and not detracting from it.

### **Lettering**

Lettering should be legible and ideally in character with the shop uses, e.g. a fine elegant face for dress shops, a strong and solid face for a hardware shop. Upper and lower cases are often easier to read than solely upper case (capitals).

1 Classical inscriptional capitals. Trajan is a good model.

**ANTIQUES**

2 Old style Roman and italic. Caslon is an appropriate choice.

**Bird** *Bill*

3 Modern Roman. Bodoni Bold would be successful.

**JOHN**

4 Latin Victorian style lettering: bold and expanded.

**SMITH**

5 Painted lettering with a shadow was popular with the Victorians, but it can look gaudy unless restrained in colour.

**KIND**

6 Victorian decorated letters are a superb example of the signwriter's art.

**FRUIT**

7 Slab serif letters are bold and readable. Suitable for hardware shops, not florists'. Models: Egyptian and Rockwell type.

**TRUG**

The use of hand painted lettering of a good standard is a well established tradition in the town and will be encouraged. Applied or individually mounted lettering offers interesting variations. However, a multiplicity of type faces should be avoided.

The layout of lettering is important and should be in proper proportion to the size of the fascia. It is normally more readable if the main shop name is restricted to half the fascia width with sufficient margins to the top and bottom as well as the sides. Lettering should not normally exceed 0.3m in height.



## Projecting Signs

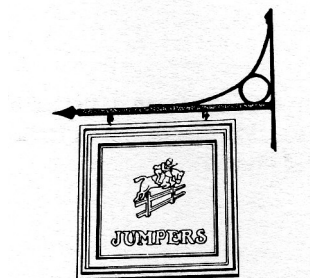
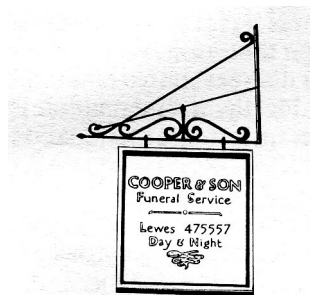
Traditionally, projecting signs have been associated with certain trades, for example, public houses. However, a proliferation of projecting signs can destroy the visual harmony of a street and lead to a cluttered appearance. Where it is considered appropriate, the sign should be a traditional painted hanging sign with appropriate lettering or symbols.

Projecting signs can add interest to the commercial areas and be helpful to shoppers. However, competition between traders for recognition tends to result in signs becoming larger, more prominent and more numerous reducing effectiveness and spoiling the street scene.

It is particularly important to avoid the clutter of hanging signs in Lewes, where vistas along the main shopping streets to the South Downs and open countryside make a special contribution to the character of the town.

Well designed and co-ordinated projecting signs will be the main determinants of the acceptability of projecting signs. In general, they should be fixed at a level (usually fascia level) which relates to the basic architectural features of the building normally not being displayed above fascia height and not exceeding 0.35 sq.metres in area.

Trade symbols, such as the chemist's pestle and mortar are welcome and generally preferred to projecting signs. Simple symbols such as a boot, a book or a fish can be imaginative and effective means of advertising a trade premises.



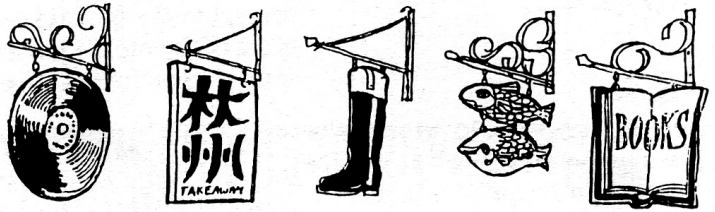
## **Illumination**

Illuminated projecting or fascia signs are unacceptable to the District Council. Night time users, such as pubs and chemists, should have a discreet source of illumination for external signs. Ideally, if illumination is required all users should rely on internal illumination of the window display.

Internally illuminated box fascias or internally illuminated hanging signs will be unacceptable. Spotlights are only acceptable where they can be discreetly located. Illuminated signs within windows are also unacceptable.

## **Upper Floors**

Signs for upper floors should take the form of discreet lettering applied directly to window panes. Even then, care should be taken to avoid clutter.



## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The District Council is keen to encourage better design of shop fronts and advertisements in Lewes and design advice is available to traders, developers or agents intending to undertake changes to retail premises.

These guidelines are also intended to act as a basis on which to determine planning, listed building and advertisement consent applications where appropriate. The District Council welcomes pre-application discussion and will give assistance and advice in all cases.

For more details contact the Design & Conservation Officer, 01273 484413 or the Design & Conservation Assistant, 01273 484349

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audiotape, disk or in another language upon request. Please telephone **01273 484141** or email [lewesdc@lewes.gov.uk](mailto:lewesdc@lewes.gov.uk)



**Lewes District Council**  
[www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk)