

GUIDELINES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

8. SHOP FRONTS AND SECURITY SCREENS AND SHUTTERS

- 8.1 A major element of the character of a town centre is quality of shop front design. The Borough Council wishes to encourage shop front refurbishment but is concerned that this is not always undertaken sensitively enough. **Shopping Proposal 16 in the Local Plan** requires that replacement shop fronts should be designed to relate well to the rest of the buildings facade and character and that regard should also be had for the overall character of the street scene.

In Blaby Road, South Wigston the buildings are mostly Victorian in character and the attractiveness of this shopping centre could be enhanced if the shop fronts themselves were designed with this in mind. In the other shopping centres a number of vernacular buildings remain and these also give an individual character to the individual town centres. The Borough Council also considers that the use of multi pane windows should be encouraged particularly as this would have the benefit of reducing the cost of window breakages.

Where new or replacement shop fronts are proposed it is very important to ensure that access to the shop for people with mobility problems is considered at an early stage in the design. The Borough Council will not accept that a stepped entry should be approved where level access was previously available.

The question of shop security should also be considered at an early stage in shop front design. External security grills and shutters will normally require planning permission because of the impact on the external appearance of the buildings. When a new shop front is being provided the opportunity should be taken to ensure that shutter boxes and the side channels are fitted inside the shop front. Retrospective applications to have projecting shutter boxes are unlikely to be acceptable when the shop front has been replaced recently.

Where it becomes necessary to consider the provision of roller shutters to an existing shop front because of security problems, the Council will wish to ensure that the appearance of the shopping area is not detrimentally affected when all the shutters are in use. **Shopping Proposal 17 in the Local Plan** will be relevant to these applications.

The adverse effects of these security measures stems from the quality of the design and fitting and the appearance of the premises when the systems are in use. Unpainted metal is intrinsically unattractive. When it is thoughtlessly applied to an existing shop with little regard to the existing form and design of the building it is likely to harm the appearance of the street scene and the premises.

The other major concern is the creation of dead frontages with a considerable reduction in the attraction of a shopping area after business hours - for example for "Window Shopping" at night or on Sundays. The loss of light and the blank appearance of the frontages is unlikely to promote a feeling of well-being and may encourage other forms of personal crime. Visibility into the shop can also ensure that passers-by can help keep the premises under surveillance. The relevant points to consider when making a planning application are set out below:

- new buildings and major alterations to shop frontages should provide for the installation of roller shutters behind the front wall of the shop unit.
- if this provision is not made initially the local authority will resist subsequent applications for external shutters.
- shutter boxes and side channels should be fitted inside the shop front, fascia, or sign box wherever possible.

- the use of untreated or galvanised metal will not normally be acceptable.

- shutters and fittings should be durably finished with colour coatings which harmonise with the surrounding shop fittings.
- where roller shutters are appropriate the use of lattice or pierced or punched slats with transparent glazing will be encouraged.
- the area covered by shutters should be limited as far as possible to the glazed area of the shop fitting.