

GIBRALTAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DESIGN GUIDE OLD TOWN



2009

Approved by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the Hon P R Caruana, QC, 25th September 2009.

Town Planning Division
Department of Development and Enterprise
Suite 631
Europort
Gibraltar



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1 INTRODUCTION

General

- 1.0 This guide forms part of the Gibraltar Development Plan and is therefore one of a suite of documents that together form the framework for the future planning of Gibraltar.
- 1.1 Proposals for development shall be expected to reflect the guidance contained in this document. It therefore follows that applications for development are more likely to be approved where they reflect the contents of this guidance, subject to compliance with other Development Plan policies. Conversely, proposals that do not reflect this guidance are unlikely to be approved. Only in exceptional cases will proposals that do not comply with this guidance be permitted and the applicant will need to fully justify the reason for the deviation.

Applicability

- 1.2 This document is primarily aimed at development within the Old Town where there is a concentration of historic buildings and which, in spatial terms, is a relatively identifiable and cohesive area. However, there should be no doubt that the guidance may equally apply elsewhere where the context so allows.

Precedence

- 1.3 The aim of this guide, together with the policies of the Development Plan generally is to raise the standard of design of new development. Whilst there may be many examples of developments that have taken place throughout Gibraltar that are of poor quality design this will not be seen as a reason for perpetuating poor quality design. This issue of precedence has been clearly set out in the Introduction to Part I of the Plan but it is worth emphasising here.
- 1.4 As a matter of policy, there is to be a greater emphasis on design to try and achieve a better quality product in the interest of Gibraltar as a whole. This policy equally applies to both large and small-scale development. It is to permeate through all aspects of the development process.

2 GOOD DESIGN

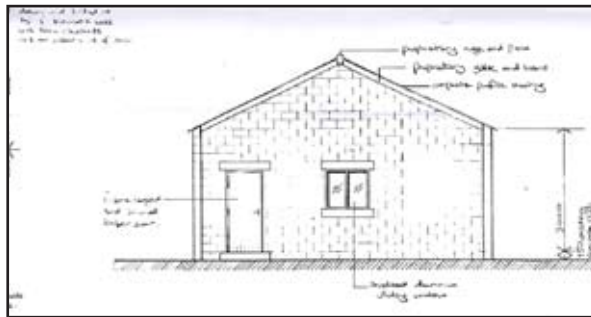
- 2.0 It is recognised that the quality of design and environment is important to the community. Buildings and spaces are the backdrop to peoples' lives and the creation of positive environments are a practical means of improving the quality of life for our community and generally assist in achieving social, economic and environmental goals.
- 2.1 In the past insufficient emphasis has been placed on the design of new buildings and spaces. As a result opportunities have been lost and the quality of the eventual output has not been of a sufficiently high standard. The Development and Planning Commission is therefore committed to achieving an improvement in the standard of design for all types of development. It is important to recognise that good design is equally applicable to small-scale developments as it is to major projects. Indeed the cumulative impact of minor developments that have had insufficient consideration given to their design can have a major visual impact.
- 2.2 If the stated objective of achieving higher design standards is to be achieved, all the key players in the development process need to be pulling in the same direction, from the client/applicant, to the design team and eventually to the Development and Planning Commission, the decision making body.
- 2.3 Good design is a means of achieving aims and adding value. The advantages of good design include:
- Adding value to the investment that any development scheme represents;
 - Creating places that work – people will use and value such places supporting regeneration and bringing long-term economic benefits.
 - Reducing the long-term costs of energy, maintenance, management and security.
 - Establishing and maintaining a distinct identity, to the benefit of users and investors;
 - Improving investor confidence resulting in economic benefits.

3 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 3.0 When considering new development proposals within the Old Town the following general design principles will apply:
- The context of the proposed development must be taken into account in formulating its design;
 - The scale and massing of the proposed development must be sympathetic to its setting;
 - Architectural detailing may be used to reinforce the character required by the design and its location;
 - The use of external materials must be appropriate in terms of visual impact and the setting of the proposed development;
 - The fenestration is to be well proportioned and related within the elevation. The style and positioning of openings must be sympathetic to adjacent buildings;
 - The use of hard and soft landscaping must form an integral part of the design and should be sympathetic to the setting. Existing planting that makes a significant contribution to the character of the area should be retained within the design.
- 3.1 Buildings, structures and other elements that contribute towards the character of the area should be retained and conserved.
- 3.2 The following sections provide detailed guidance on specific design issues.

4 BUILDING IN CONTEXT

- 4.0 A fundamental principle of good design is to understand and respond to, the context into which the proposed building is to be placed. All too frequently applications are submitted which pay no regard to the context or setting into which they are to be placed. The Development and Planning Commission wishes to emphasise the need for designers to consider this aspect at the outset of the development process, and in so doing hopefully avoid delays in obtaining planning permission. In this respect it is important that when details are submitted to the Development and Planning Commission, sufficient illustrative material is included which clearly shows both the existing and the proposed development in the wider context and allows the Commission to fully appreciate the impact of the proposed development. An elevation showing a proposed development whether it is a new building, a proposed shopfront or an extension, in total isolation and without any reference to the wider context will not be acceptable.



Example of proposed building shown out of context



Proposed building is shown in context

5 SCALE AND MASSING

5.0 Building height varies within the Old Town generally from single storey to five storeys, with a few isolated examples of taller buildings. However, the majority of buildings are of three or four storeys. Due to differences in floor to ceiling height and construction thickness, together with the many different ways in which buildings are terminated in the vertical plane, there is no general uniformity throughout the Old Town.



5.1 This juxtaposition of buildings of varying heights is part of the character of the Old Town and is fundamental to the overall townscape.

5.2 Proposals for new development within The Old Town, including vertical extensions will need to pay regard to the height of existing buildings in the vicinity. It will not always be necessary to match exactly the height of adjacent buildings, nor will proposals always need to be lower than that existing. In certain cases, particularly at focal points, such as important corner plots, a taller building may be justified. However, significantly taller buildings will not normally be permitted. What is important is that the proposals sit comfortably within the streetscene.

5.3 In this respect the massing of the proposed development is also important and therefore the size and form of the new building should relate to the surrounding buildings and the spaces between them.



5.4 It is vital that when submitting applications, drawings are included which illustrate the proposal in the context of surrounding buildings and the streetscape generally. Applications without this information will not be accepted as it is considered that this level of information is vital to enable the Development and Planning Commission to be able to fully assess the proposal in relation to its setting.

6 MATERIALS AND COLOUR

General

- 6.0 Building materials and colour are an important part of the character of the Old Town and part of the vernacular architecture. This architecture has clear Andalucian, Genoese and British influences.
- 6.1 Developments in building material technology, the ease of transport and opening up of markets on a global scale, together with the development of new construction methods, has, to a certain level, diluted the vernacular architecture.
- 6.2 Modern materials and methods may be appropriate in certain cases, but where traditional forms of construction are proposed for new build or extensions, and where existing buildings are to be refurbished, it is important to ensure the use of appropriate materials.

Render

- 6.3 Render is a material that is characteristic of most Mediterranean countries and is the style that is widely evident in the Old Town.



Typical rendered and painted finish.



Unpainted render at first floor

- 6.4 Prior to the 20th Century when Portland cement became the common material for renders, lime was the preferred material. Normal lime renders were a mixture of putty and sand with the colour of the render (prior to painting) being dependent on the colour of the sand.
- 6.5 Most renders were designed to be limewashed. The limewash was frequently coloured although the range of colours was limited. Lime washing was important in protecting the render from the weather.
- 6.6 When refurbishing the exteriors of old buildings an appropriate lime/sand mix should be used and then preferably lime washed in traditional colours. Portland cement should be avoided as it can cause serious problems, in particular by trapping moisture behind the render. The use of modern plastic paints should also be avoided for the same reason.

Mortar

- 6.7 Although this building material is not normally given much consideration the use of an inappropriate mortar mix on older buildings can have severe consequences. Traditional mortar mixes used in Gibraltar contained lime and these behave differently to modern Portland cement. The most crucial difference in the context of repairs to old buildings is that whereas the lime mortar is relatively porous and therefore allows water within the fabric of the building to escape via the joints, Portland cement is more impervious than brick or stone and consequently prevents drying out through the joint. As a result it causes moisture to either enter the building or evaporate through the brick or stone, thereby accelerating the decay of the actual building fabric.
- 6.8 When carrying out repairs to old buildings it is therefore normally recommendable to use a lime mortar.

Painting

- 6.9 The use of appropriate paint schemes can enhance the significance and understanding of a place or building. The application of colour to buildings and their specific features was often part of the architectural design and intended to highlight the architectural qualities of the exterior.
- 6.10 Inappropriate use of paint colours on a historic building can create a false impression of history. The most common mistakes among historic building owners are the use of too many colours, the use of the right colours in the wrong places, or the picking out of features such as mouldings, which were never historically treated in this way.



Inappropriate painting of original stone features

- 6.11 The painting of originally unpainted surfaces such as brickwork, stonework, timber and rare or unusual surface treatments (e.g. limewash) in most situations should be avoided.
- 6.12 Strident and bright colours are not traditional to the Old Town and will not normally be approved. Such colours are often proposed because they represent a corporate colour scheme, this is particularly the case in relation to retail units. Applicants should be clear that such arguments will not outweigh compliance with policies of the Plan.

External ceramics

- 6.13 Ceramic tiled facades can be seen in the Old Town area. The removal of such finishings will not normally be permitted with the preferred option being the repair of such facades. Where lost or damaged tiles are being replaced careful attention needs to be taken to ensure that the style and colour of the replacement tiles matches closely that of the existing. Only in exceptional cases will the removal of a tiled façade be permitted in which case the preferred replacement finish will be an appropriate and carefully applied render.



Roof coverings

- 6.14 Roofs are important historic and visual elements that can be a major feature of an architectural style and contribute to a building's character and particularly to the historic quality of a specific area or townscape. Like other architectural components their form varies according to fashion. The roof form, colour, texture and shape, all play an important role in the overall style of the building and area.
- 6.15 Due to Gibraltar's topology the roofscape of the Old Town makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Town, giving it more importance than otherwise may be attributed to it. Virtually the entire Old Town can be viewed from the Upper Rock and indeed the vistas from many parts of the Upper Town are dominated by the roofscape of the lower parts of the Town. As a consequence, changes in the form, colour and cladding material of roofs can have a major impact on the architectural quality of a building and the appearance of the Old Town generally.



Traditional Arabic roof tiles

6.16 Traditionally pitched roofs in Gibraltar have been finished with ‘Arabic’ tiles or in some cases, mainly on military buildings, with natural slate. Flat roofs were traditionally finished in a red clay tile.

6.17 Proposals for re-roofing should therefore replace ‘like with like’ in terms of roof profile and cladding. The exception will be where an existing roof covering comprises corrugated sheeting, of which there are many examples in the Old Town, where more modern roof coverings may be permitted, such as profiled roof sheets or blue/black fibre cement slates. Where it is not possible to use traditional materials, new products should be chosen that would be in harmony with traditional materials.



Natural slate roof tiles

6.18 In many old properties the structure of the roof may be in a poor condition and the easiest and possibly cheaper option is to remove existing clay tiles and replace these with lightweight roof sheets. Whilst this may be the case, the economic justification for replacing with an alternative roof covering will not be sufficient to outweigh the policy objection to such a proposal.

Fenestration

6.19 Fenestration and shutters will have a marked impact on the final appearance of a building. The proportion and disposition of window and door openings can modify the building and give visual strength and balance to the elevation.

6.20 The fenestration is to be well proportioned and well related within the elevation and be sympathetic to adjacent buildings. A common mistake in proposals for vertical extensions is to ignore the relationship between the windows of the new extension and those in the remainder of the building. As a result the new windows do not align with those existing, resulting in an unsatisfactory elevation to the building.



- 6.21 To give repose, openings should be related in such a way as to allow the eye to move comfortably from one elevational element to the next without effort, unlike the example shown here.



- 6.22 Simple horizontal and vertical 'grid' relationships are the most obvious answer. Limiting the number of window types is also important.



- 6.23 With load bearing external walls, over large or badly proportioned window openings can visually weaken the appearance of the elevation, as in this example.



Shutters and window proportions

- 6.24 The traditional Genoese style painted timber shutter is an integral part of the physical fabric of Gibraltar. The shutters incorporate slats for ventilation and are externally fixed, side hung and outward opening. The leaves can be held open against the external wall by simple metal restrainers. The unit also features a top hinged lower section that can be kept open by a prop or stay.



- 6.25 Traditionally, windows were vertical sliding sashes or casements, with each 'sash' divided into a number of panes through the use of thin glazing bars. The window is fixed behind rebated brick reveals and therefore appears in partial shadow emphasising the 'hole in the wall' quality. In addition, the effect of reflections from the different planes of upper and lower sashes contributes to the character of traditional sash windows.



6.26 The loss of traditional windows and shutters can have a major impact on the architectural character of a building and on the townscape generally and the aim therefore is to retain existing windows and shutters wherever possible. Where it is not possible to repair existing timber windows or shutters then the preferred option is to replace these ensuring that the replacement units match the original in terms of style, material, detailing and dimensions.



6.27 Where permitted by Development Plan policy, aluminium, upvc or pvc windows and shutters must be sympathetic to the original in terms of style, detailing, proportions and profile.

Doors

6.28 Doors can play an important role in the overall appearance of a building. The replacement of timber doors with aluminium or upvc doors is rarely satisfactory and should be avoided. Similarly, the removal of door surrounds (fanlights, pilasters, sidelights) is unacceptable. Such features must be retained and the replacement door should be designed to fit within the available opening without the need for any enlargement of this opening. Similarly, the introduction of side panels where non previously existed, to accommodate a door narrower than the existing door opening should be avoided. Replacement doors must therefore be similar to the existing in terms of style, detailing, proportion and material.



Examples showing the difference between sympathetic and unsympathetic treatment of historic doorways

7 BUILDING SERVICES

General

- 7.0 Building services may include water and electrical supplies, soil stacks, TV aerials and satellite dishes, flues and air condition units. The inappropriate positioning of such services on a building can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of that building and the streetscape generally. It is essential therefore that proper consideration is given to the provision of such services so as to minimise their impact.

TV aerial and satellite systems

- 7.1 The proliferation of TV aerials and satellite dishes can have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of individual buildings and the townscape generally. Such aerials and dishes are frequently silhouetted against the skyline and consequently are unduly intrusive in the streetscene. Where placed on balconies and other parts of a building's elevation they are equally intrusive, and where there is a proliferation of such apparatus on a building the impact is even more severe. The use of communal systems whereby individual households share a common system with a single dish or aerial is strongly encouraged.



- 7.2 Where dishes or aerials are to be erected they should be positioned such that they are not readily visible from public view and certainly not on the front or other prominent elevation.



Services and utilities

- 7.3 Services such as water supplies, electrical supplies, soil stacks and telephone cables can all have a negative impact on the character and appearance of a building and the streetscape, unless careful consideration is given to their placement. Indiscriminate placement of services in the past can be seen on many buildings in the Old Town and the objective is to avoid such practices in the future and to encourage the improvement of existing unsatisfactory situations in any proposed refurbishment or other development works.



7.4 New electrical, water and telephone services should be installed in an inconspicuous location, e.g. behind existing features, or concealed within the fabric of the building.

Pipe and cable runs should not interfere with cornices and decorative plasterwork and where services are chased



into walls, plasterwork must be reinstated to original. All redundant surface pipe work and cabling must be removed and the surfaces made good and painted to match existing.

7.5 Flues are often required where an existing or proposed use involves a catering element. Such flues, if placed on a front or conspicuous elevation can have an extremely detrimental impact on both the building and the streetscene. Encouragement will be given to the positioning of flues within internal patios or on inconspicuous elevations. Even then it may be necessary to 'box in' such structures with the use of an appropriate boxing material and finished to match existing. 'Boxing in' will not be permitted where the box itself would have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the building.



Air condition units

7.6 The use of internal courtyards, shutters and natural through-ventilation are all features of traditional buildings aimed at keeping the interiors cool during hot weather. Increasingly however, reliance is being placed on the use of air condition units to cool building interiors.

7.7 At the global level the use of air condition units contributes towards green house gas emissions and consequent global warming whilst in terms of visual impact the placement of external air condition units on old buildings can be very problematical. Their use should therefore be seen as a last resort and alternative natural and traditional forms of ventilation should be considered wherever possible. In any event the indiscriminate placement of air condition units on the external surfaces of buildings, with their consequent intrusion on the townscape, will not be accepted.

7.8 It is therefore a requirement that these units be concealed from public view. It is preferable that the units be placed at roof level behind a parapet wall, within internal patios or to the rear of a building but only where these are not readily visible to the general public.

7.9 Alternatively, provision may be made within the design to conceal the unit from the main street that the building faces. For example:

- Units could be recessed in an area beneath a window with an appropriate screen to the frontage.
- Units could be placed on a balcony where the existing (or proposed) decorative ironwork conceals the unit.
- Units could be recessed in an elevation and screened by a shop fascia or signage.
- It is sometimes possible to place units behind the ironwork of a door fanlight.



Air condition units concealed behind shutters.

7.10 The placement of a unit directly onto the façade of a building with a shop fascia or sign constructed around it will not be acceptable. There may be cases where there are no acceptable options for the placement of air condition units. In such cases, it may simply not be possible to install air conditioning and more traditional ventilation methods may be necessary. It is therefore important that applicants seek early discussions with the Town Planning office. A common mistake is for applicants to purchase a unit only to find that their proposed location is not acceptable and that an alternative location that would be acceptable is not practical due to the specifications of the unit already purchased. Such a situation will not be considered a valid argument for relaxing the policy on the positioning of air condition units.



Air condition units recessed within elevation.



Air condition units concealed behind fanlight.

- 7.11 Planning permission is required for the replacement of existing air condition units. The guidance stipulated above will be equally applicable to such proposals. Where the replacement is for an existing unit that does not comply with the above, then permission is unlikely to be forthcoming unless the positioning of the replacement conforms to this guidance.
- 7.12 In new and existing multi-unit complexes, such as apartment blocks, offices, etc, consideration should be given to providing a central air condition unit with communal ducting discharging at roof level in order to reduce the visual impact to the streetscene. Proposals for new development shall in any case, be expected to clearly illustrate the provision made for existing and future air condition requirements.

Ironwork

7.13 Cast and wrought iron were very popular in the 19th century and can be found in the form of balconies, gates, verandah balustrades, and in door fanlights on many Victorian buildings.



7.14 Some ironwork patterns are very fine and intricate, others are almost solid. Whatever their design, distinctive patterns should be carefully studied before any new ironwork scheme is prepared.

7.15 Original cast and wrought iron elements should be conserved wherever possible.

7.16 Damaged cast iron should be repaired where possible rather than replaced.

7.17 The colour of original ironwork would have been dark green, black or (in exceptional cases) gilded or part gilded. Black is preferable but the other colours referred to above would be acceptable.



8 SHOPFRONTS AND SIGNAGE

General

- 8.0 Shopfronts and signage play an important part in contributing towards the character of the Old Town in particular, where the majority of shops are concentrated. They are at the human, pedestrian scale and are almost always designed to attract. Shopfronts and signage that are unsympathetically designed have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- 8.1 Shopfronts and signage undergo regular changes sometimes as a result of the existing occupier wishing to refurbish his property, sometimes due to changes in ownership, sometimes due to changes in the nature of the goods sold or the requirements of a shops' major supplier.
- 8.2 The major investment that has taken place in the form of the environmental improvement of Main Street and many of its side streets has acted as a catalyst in individual owners wishing to refurbish their shopfronts. However, too often not enough consideration has been given to designing a shopfront that is sympathetic to its context. This guidance aims to assist in achieving high quality shopfronts that are sympathetic to their surroundings.

Retention of existing shopfronts

- 8.3 Original or period shopfronts should be retained and restored wherever the opportunity arises. In restoring original or period shopfronts careful attention should be paid to the detail and materials should generally match the old.

- 8.4 Sometimes original details such as stone arches, pilasters, cornices or fascias survive hidden under later work. These should be exposed and restored wherever possible. Even if an old shopfront is not of sufficient quality to merit complete retention, then where still intact, the pilasters and cornices should be retained as this helps to visually link the new work with the old building.



Signs of original arches hidden by modern frontage.

- 8.5 There are very few original shopfronts remaining in Main Street and consequently any proposals for these should aim to restore rather than replace. However, in many of the side streets and other secondary shopping areas original shopfronts still remain,

mainly because such areas were not prime retail locations and therefore there has been less pressure for change. Nowadays, even the secondary shopping areas are under pressure and, in order to avoid the situation of Main Street where original shopfronts have virtually been eliminated, proposals for shopfronts in these areas will be critically assessed with a view to minimising the loss of such shopfronts.



The replacement of shopfronts

8.6 In certain cases the retention of an existing shopfront may not be possible, and indeed sometimes it may be preferable to replace an existing shopfront. Many modern shopfronts do not incorporate the traditional features of shopfront fascias, unsuitable materials such as facing bricks, polished wall tiles, will normally detract from the character of the building and streetscene. However, good quality modern designs do exist and should be valued, especially where they occur in modern buildings.



8.7 Irrespective of whether the replacement is to be of a traditional or contemporary design, the important principle is that the shopfront should not be designed in isolation but should be considered as part of the architectural composition of the building as a whole. The design should therefore respect the period and style of the building in which it is located.

Polished granite and similar cladding, and coloured aluminium framing should be avoided.

The Street

8.8 The design of the shopfront should not only respect the architectural composition of the building itself but should also take into account the rhythm and characteristics of the street. Aspects such as the plot width and relative strength of horizontal and vertical elements need to be carefully considered. Building proportions and rhythms should not be disrupted. The amalgamation of shopfronts encompassing two buildings with separate identities needs careful attention if disruption to the vertical rhythm of the facades above is to be avoided.

The Building

8.9 The design of the shopfront should take into account the age and architectural design of the building and should treat the building as a whole. The shopfront should not attempt to divorce the ground floor from the rest of the building.

Signs and Advertisements

8.10 Advertisements can make a significant contribution to the character of the area, but poorly designed incongruous signs can detract from this character. A proliferation of signs can create clutter and confusion in the streetscene.



8.11 The following will be taken into account when considering applications:

- Existing signs that suit the character of their surroundings should not unnecessarily be replaced.
- It is often beneficial for neighbouring firms in the same building or shopping centre to co-ordinate the display of signs.
- Original fascias should always be retained as they form part of the design of the shopfront. Where an original fascia exists beneath a later one it is often beneficial to reveal the original to reinstate the traditional shopfront.
- Fascia advertisements and projecting and hanging signs should be designed to complement the design of the building and the shopfront. Too many advertisements will detract from the building and be less effective in attracting attention.
- To avoid clutter only one front facing and one hanging or projecting sign is recommended. Where premises have frontages to more than one street then each frontage may have one front facing and one projecting/hanging sign.
- Where consent is granted, only one brand advertising sign will be permitted per



Shared signage

- shopfront to avoid clutter of details.
- Brand advertising as part of signs with shop names will be discouraged. However where permitted:
 - only one brand advertisement to be permitted so as to avoid clutter of details;
 - where permitted within the shop name fascia the advert would need to be restricted to 2/5ths of the fascia board.
- Advertising will be restricted to products sold within the premises.

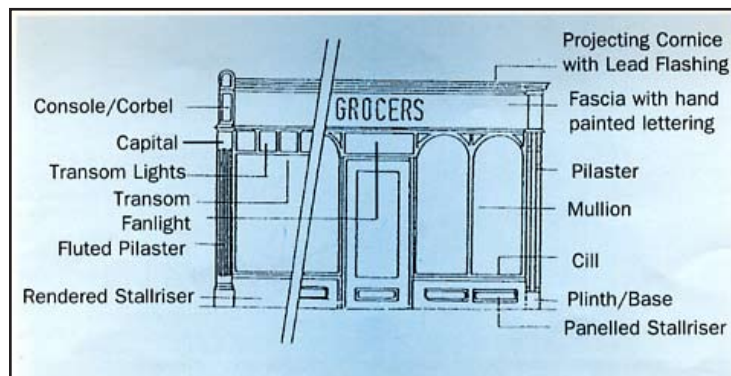
Good shopfront design

General

8.12 The main purpose of the shopfront is to display goods for sale. It also has an important role to play in projecting the shop's image. A shopfront that is of poor quality construction and materials or discordant in its colour scheme will not project a good image nor enhance the display of goods for sale.

8.13 In shopfront design it is important to achieve a satisfactory relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole. Various design elements can assist in achieving this and traditionally these include the pilasters, fascia, cornice and stall riser. Each has its own visual and practical function. The pilasters identify the vertical division between the shopfronts; the fascia provides the space for advertising; the cornice gives a strong line at the top of the shopfront and protection from the weather; the stall riser gives protection at ground level and provides a solid base. All these elements form a frame that suggests, visually, a method of support for the building façade above.

8.14 Modern shopfront design should involve the creative interpretation of these traditional elements in formulating individual solutions for different premises.



Fascias and fascia design

8.15 The choice of material for fascias and shop signs should be sympathetic with the materials used elsewhere in the shopfront and the building as a whole. As a general rule shiny perspex and other similar materials should be avoided.

8.16 Harsh or garish colours should be avoided. Appropriate colours can be used to emphasise important elements of design, and to highlight structural details such as gildings or mouldings.



Sensitively designed shopfront

8.17 Fascias should not be excessively deep. The scale and design should be in proportion to the design of the shopfront and the height of the building as a whole. The fascia should be kept well below the level of the first floor window sills with a decorative moulded cornice projecting in-between to create a suitable margin. The function of the cornice is to terminate the shopfront as well as to protect the shopfront from rainfall. The bottom of the fascia should not extend too far down but should respect the shop proportions. In any case the depth of the fascia should not be greater than one-fifth of the height of the shopfront measured from the cornice to the pavement. The existence of a former unsuitable fascia should not be allowed to influence the design of the replacement. Where a false ceiling is being inserted it will not be appropriate to incorporate a deeper fascia to conceal this. Instead other methods should be considered such as setting back and forming a splayed bulkhead or in the detailing of the transom.



Fascia is out of proportion to shopfront, pays no regard to the cornice and is made of unsympathetic material.

8.18 The fascia should contain lettering conveying the essential message of the retailer, i.e. the name, established date, street number and nature of business, e.g. Butchers, Jewellers, etc. Traditional shopfronts normally had hand painted timber fascias. Additional advertising and garish lettering and colours only add to confusion and detract from the shopfront. Further signage should be kept to an absolute minimum, possibly applied to the glass.

8.19 Modern boxed fascias that project from the face of the building will not be acceptable. It is always better to integrate the fascia into the shopfront and apply individual lettering in a traditional manner.



Lettering

8.20 The image of a shopfront is affected by the style of lettering. The size used should relate to the proportions of the shop area.

8.21 It is important that the lettering invokes interest and clearly portrays the message. This is to a great extent determined by the choice of lettering and illustration. Dark backgrounds with gilding or strong tones reflect light and are clearly visible at night. Rich effects may be achieved by shading and blocking of letters.

8.22 Shopfronts with no fascia may use individual letters attached to the natural fabric of the building. Simple solid shapes will normally be appropriate.



Materials

8.23 The materials with which most buildings are faced with are mostly matt and non-reflective. Finishes involving glossy surfaces such as polished granite, acrylic sheeting and perspex, aluminium or plastic shopfronts will not normally be permitted.

8.24 Suitable materials will include timber, natural stone cladding with an appropriate choice of stone that respects the character of the building, or a simple rendered and painted finish.



Inappropriate use of cladding material



Awnings/Canopies

- 8.25 The primary purpose of awnings is to protect displayed goods from damage by sunlight. However, they are also used to protect the shopfront from rainfall and to provide shelter for shoppers in rainy weather to enable them to view, in comfort, the goods displayed in windows. They should always be retractable so that the fascia is not permanently obscured and may be opened when required.
- 8.26 Dutch blinds or balloon canopies are usually erected as a means of increasing advertising space. Their structure tends to obscure the fascia, and introduces a dominant shape that is out of character with the street.
- 8.27 The use of plastics, wet-look or stretch fabrics for awnings/canopies are strongly discouraged.
- 8.28 Where awnings and canopies project over a footpath there must be a minimum clearance of 2.5 metres between the level of the footpath and the lowest part of the awning/canopy. No part of the structure will be permitted to extend beyond the width of the footpath. Where such a structure is to be placed over a carriageway, the minimum clearance required is 4.2 metres above the level of the carriageway. These requirements will apply even in areas that are fully or partially pedestrianised. The rationale for this is that service and emergency vehicles may still need to access these areas and it is therefore important to ensure that there are no obstacles or potential hindrances to the movement, including manoeuvring, of such vehicles. There are also times when vehicles need to access these areas on special occasions. Where it is considered justified there may be some relaxation of the requirement, by permitting an awning/canopy provided that a 2.5 metre clearance is achieved and subject to the structure being retractable and kept in the up position whenever the premises are closed.

8.29 As with all elements of shopfront design early thought must be given as to how best the awning housing can be integrated within the overall design. Incorporation within the fascia cornice is normally the most appropriate solution.

8.30 Reasonable advertising on awnings/canopies may be acceptable subject to the following:

- The adverts should not exceed 2/5ths of the signage area and the shop name occupies the rest;
- Generally advertising should be restricted to the product logo, and limited to one product only which must be sold within the premises;
- The advert must be restricted to the pelmet or fringes;
- The advertisement's corporate colours should match the awning/canopy and shopfront colour schemes.



Awning housing has been sensitively incorporated into shopfront

Security shutters

8.31 Security shutters can have a marked impact on the character and appearance of a building and the street scene. Solid shutters have an extremely deadening effect on the character of the shopping street and will not be permitted.

8.32 Where security is considered a problem there are more acceptable ways of safeguarding the contents of the shop by the use of security glazing or internal lattice grills. Traditionally, removable lattice shutters or concertina grilles were used and in appropriate circumstances these could be considered. Small panelled windows are less of a temptation to wilful damage than large sheets of plate glass.

8.33 Permission may be granted for the fitting of an external shutter provided that:



Solid shutters have a 'deadening' effect on the streetscene

- The shutter is an open lattice type, or
- The shutter incorporates open slats (with or without polycarbonate inserts) that extend across at least 4/5th of the width of the shutter, and the full height of the shutter (although a maximum solid kickboard section of 500mm will be allowed); and
- The shutter housings are recessed behind the fascia or otherwise hidden.



Modern shutter incorporating open slats with polycarbonate inserts

- 8.34 Solid shutters or punched shutters (shutters with many small perforations) will not be permitted.



Punched shutters can have a similar deadening effect to solid shutters

Projecting signs

- 8.35 Traditional hanging signs are the most appropriate projecting sign within the Old Town. They should take the form of a swinging sign hung from a wrought iron bracket. Where an existing traditional bracket remains this should be re-used. Signboards should preferably be of timber and should be of a high quality design and relate to the size and scale of the building façade. They should not be over-intrusive nor ridiculously small.

8.36 Projecting box signs will not normally be appropriate.

8.37 The positioning of projecting signs is important and should take into account the architectural design of the building. Normally projecting signs should be attached to fascias or be level with them. In some cases it may be appropriate to position signs above the level of the fascia, but never above the level of the first floor window sill.



Air Condition Units

8.38 Nowadays, most retail units will incorporate an air condition system. Guidance on the placement of external air condition units has been set out in Section 7 'Building Services' and reference should be made to this. However, it is emphasised that:

- Early consideration should be given to air condition requirements and these should form an integral part of the design as opposed to an afterthought;
- External air condition units must normally be positioned so as not to be visible to the general public;
- External units placed on the face of a building will not normally be permitted;
- In some cases the installation of external air condition units may not be acceptable due to the impact of the units on the character and appearance of the building and the street scene. In such cases, the retailer may simply not be able to have an air condition system.



Air condition units placed on shop facades can be very obtrusive.

8.39 Before considering the use of air conditioning serious consideration should be given to providing ventilation by natural methods.

Illumination of signs and shopfronts

8.40 Illuminated signs and illumination of shopfronts can easily ruin the appearance of an area. In the main shopping streets the level of street lighting and the light from shop windows will

normally be sufficient for trade. However, where illumination is treated as an integrated part of the overall design and not merely as a means of drawing attention, then it may make a positive contribution to the street scene. Illumination will be expected to be discreet, and not involve harsh or garish colours. The source of the illumination should be discreet in nature and preferably hidden on suitable parts of the building. Where such illumination is acceptable in principle then only static light sources will be permitted (i.e. no intermittent light sources).

Access for the disabled

8.41 New shopfronts should be designed to accommodate the needs of disabled people. As a general principle, steps should be avoided and doors should be capable of being opened by people in wheelchairs.



9 EXTENSIONS

- 9.0 The vertical extension of buildings within the Old Town is a common occurrence and there are many examples where additional storeys have been added to a building. As a matter of policy, some limit will be imposed on the extent to which a property may be increased in size or altered in character. In addition to the policy context an important consideration is the capability of the existing structure to sustain additional storeys. Many of the Old Town buildings are constructed with random rubble walls and sometimes these are unable to sustain additional loads. It is therefore important to assess the structural limitations of the existing building at an early stage. A fundamental principle in designing extensions is that it should not dominate over the existing building.
- 9.1 Roof top extensions can be located towards the front plane of the original building where it is designed to continue the architectural treatment of the existing building to the extension through the sympathetic use of materials, the size, proportions, mass, height, texture and detailing. Equally such extensions could be set back from the front plane. However, where an extension is proposed that is of a more contemporary design then it would be preferable for this to be set back. Contemporary designs must also be sympathetic in terms of their size, proportions, materials, colour, massing and height. In all cases careful consideration should be given to the relationship between openings such as windows, doors and solid walls and the continuation of horizontal and vertical elements.



Additional storeys on the front vertical plane need to pay due regard to the architectural treatment of the original building.

10 DETAILS

10.0 Building character is greatly affected by the way in which individual elements are designed. The more affluent buildings had intricate detail around doorways, windows, eaves and other features whereas the simpler buildings avoided unnecessary and expensive details. The majority of buildings that form the character of Gibraltar are relatively simple in detail.



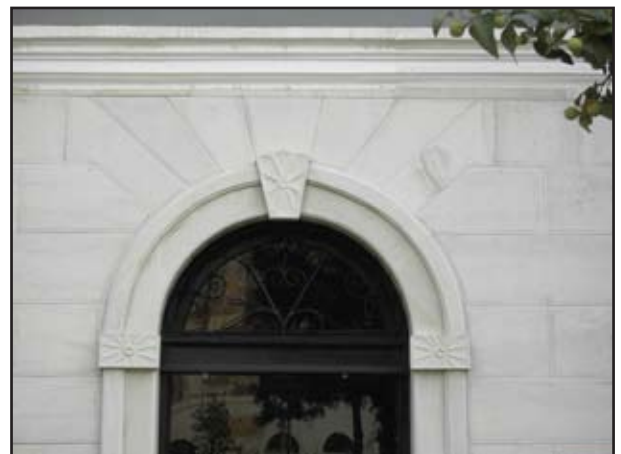
10.1 Even if the form, scale and proportions of an extension are acceptable, detailing can often destroy any satisfactory relationship between the existing building and the extension. Care with detail is vital if the design as a whole is to relate well to the original building.



Not enough attention has been paid to the finishing where the new cladding meets the existing side elevation.



Bevelled edges to this stone cladding results in a more authentic finish



10.2 Where it is proposed to add a building name careful attention should be paid to the design of the signage to ensure that it is sympathetic to the overall character of the building to which it relates. In addition, it should be remembered that all buildings should clearly show on the frontage the street number of the building. In the case of shopfronts this can often be incorporated into the fascia of the shopfront provided that the number is easily distinguishable. Alternatively, individual numbers affixed to the frontage will normally be acceptable.

11 SLOPING SITES

- 11.0 Due to the topography of Gibraltar, particularly in the Upper Town area, there are many sloping sites. While the consideration of spatial enclosure, form and urban character are still relevant, the impact that development on sloping sites has on the landscape is an added factor.
- 11.1 Traditionally, buildings on sloping sites took advantage of changes of level rather than conflict with them. Use is made of varying floor heights within buildings and between one building and the next. The use of retaining walls is inevitable.
- 11.2 On sloping sites the buildings are often more prominent and therefore care in their design assumes greater importance. Proportions and void/solid relationship are those factors that should receive special attention.
- 11.3 With changes in construction technology, cantilevering of buildings on sloping sites is often chosen as a means of dealing with the change in levels. One particular problem that often arises with such designs is the treatment of voids below the cantilevers. When designing cantilevered structures, it is important that early consideration is given to the treatment of the area beneath to ensure that this does not become an empty hole that accumulates dirt and litter and represents an eyesore.

