

Living Wellswood

Making Wellswood a better place to live, work and play



Wellswood Shopfront Design Guide



Why has this Guidance been produced?

The purpose of this document is to assist local business owners and tenants within the Ilsham Road area – known locally as Wellswood Village – in guiding future investment in their retail frontages while helping maintain and enhance Wellswood's unique character.

Engagement with local residents has found that high value is placed on heritage features within Wellswood Village. The photos on the right, taken almost 120 years apart, clearly illustrate the evolution of the street level facades, and while the inherent building form has been retained the potential opportunity to improve the street scene is clear.

This guidance has been developed following consultation with key stakeholders and should be given due consideration when considering works, repairs or alterations to the shopfronts of Ilsham Road. It does not replace the need for planning or signage applications but will aid a greater understanding of the correct approach within the historic context of the street and assist in streamlining the planning process.

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Above: Ilsham Road 1906



Above: Ilsham Road 2024
Image credit Google Street View

Wellswood Village

While this guidance relates specifically to the shops which line the south side of Ilsham Road, the background analysis extends to an area referred to locally as Wellswood Village – set between St Matthias's Church Road, Kents Lane and Babbacombe Road.

The below maps show the evolution of this part of Ilsham Road from the late nineteenth century to the present day. On the left the 1863 survey shows only the church and edge of Wellswood Park present. By the turn of the century the layout which is still evident today has been created and the contrast in density of the tight terraces around the retail centre surrounded by the larger villa plots, albeit smaller than their counterparts in the Warberrys, can be easily seen.

Below: Unique local street signs, rumoured to be of Minton origin – Herbert Minton being a resident of Wellswood in his retirement



Above: Ordnance Survey 1854 (published 1863)
Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland



Above: Ordnance Survey 1904 (published 1906)
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Above: Aerial image 2024
Google Earth

Historical Context

All the buildings within Wellwood Village still retain their original, planned use. This includes the school, church (Grade II listed), public house and the adjacent shops.

Together they represent a planned development of late nineteenth century facilities, which arose to cater for the growing community that was transitioning from rented villas (for wintering of the upper classes), to privately owned homes in year-round use.


This change was likely initiated after the death of Lawrence Palk, Lord Haldon, in 1883. The estate finances were found to be in disarray necessitating auction sales of his extensive land holdings in the Warberry's and Lincombes.

Built Form

The Ilsham Road shops were designed in two distinctive styles. The upper terrace of shops (highlighted blue and pictured right) retain traditional shopfront features. The lower terrace of paired villas (highlighted green) may have originally been designed for professional businesses (see image of Martins Bank far right) – with tripartite sash windows instead of traditional shopfronts.



Above: 1904 Ordnance Survey reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

 **Key public buildings – school, church & public house**

 **Terraced shops & retail frontage**

 **Semi-detached shops & retail frontage**



Above: Terraced shops of Ilsham Road, 1906



Above: Paired villas retail/professional service businesses of Ilsham Road, c1960

Lincombes

Conservation Area

Wellwood Village and the wider study area lie within the Lincombes Conservation Area, designated in 1985 by Torbay Council for having a definite architectural quality or historic interest.

The draft Lincombes Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) describes this area as follows:

"The Ilsham Road area is different in character and the only part of the Lincombes conservation area of high-density development with most building frontages on or close to the carriageway.

Nos. 1-27 is a c.1890 terrace of shops with twin bracketed eaves between raised gable parapets on kneelers and canted and recessed central doorways. Nos. 29-45 are similar in frontage detail but are semi-detached with hipped roofs, corner pilasters and first floor tripartite sash windows."

While none of the buildings on Ilsham Road are listed, within the draft Lincombes CACA the shops are designated as *"a group of Architectural Importance or one that makes a significant contribution to the townscape"*.

This provides them with an additional level of protection and they should be considered non-designated heritage assets.

The shopping area is also designation as a District, Local or Neighbourhood Shopping Centre under Policy TC2 in the Adopted Local Plan (illustrated below).



Above: Extract of Torbay Adopted Local

Thriving Independent Businesses

The area still retains much of the charm that attracted fashionable Victorians seeking the Riviera (sans travel) and continued to attract well-to-do society throughout most of the twentieth century.

Despite significant changes in the both the tourism and retail markets, today Wellswood village manages to maintain an extremely high level of occupancy and is currently home to a diverse range of splendid independent businesses that serve the local community and beyond. Several of the businesses have been here for many years and include cafés, a bakery, restaurants, post office, estate agents, florist, optician, chemist, barber, wedding boutique, beauticians, hairdressers, local charity shop, travel agents and more.

For these businesses the shopfront is a significant part of the identity of the shop - irrespective of the line of trade it pursues. A well-ordered, tidy, contextual and cared-for appearance will almost always result in better business. It impacts on the way the host building is read, and it contributes to the look and feel of the road as a whole - even when a shop is closed and at night.



Above: Ilsham Road c1980

Right: Appropriate applied signage and colours



Positive Change

This guidance in no way seeks to stifle investment, nor create a museum of traditional shopfronts that are not fit for modern needs. Rather, it looks to support and guide positive change in the historic environment, where the whole can be much more than the sum of its parts.

Despite being designated as buildings of Architectural Importance, the shops of Ilsham road have undergone a number of negative changes. Taken individually these may seem insignificant, but the cumulative effect is harmful to the character of the Conservation Area and diminishes the collective value of the designed street.

The street has evolved with little management as shops change ownership or simply refresh their signage usually moving further and further away from the principles that were so pleasing to the eye. The photos opposite illustrate the dynamic changes of the facades within a six-year period.

This illustrates the opportunity to guide improvements to retail frontages so not only are individual buildings enhanced but so is the wider street.

2012



Google Street View

2015



Google Street View

2018



Google Street View

Elements of a Wellswood Shopfront

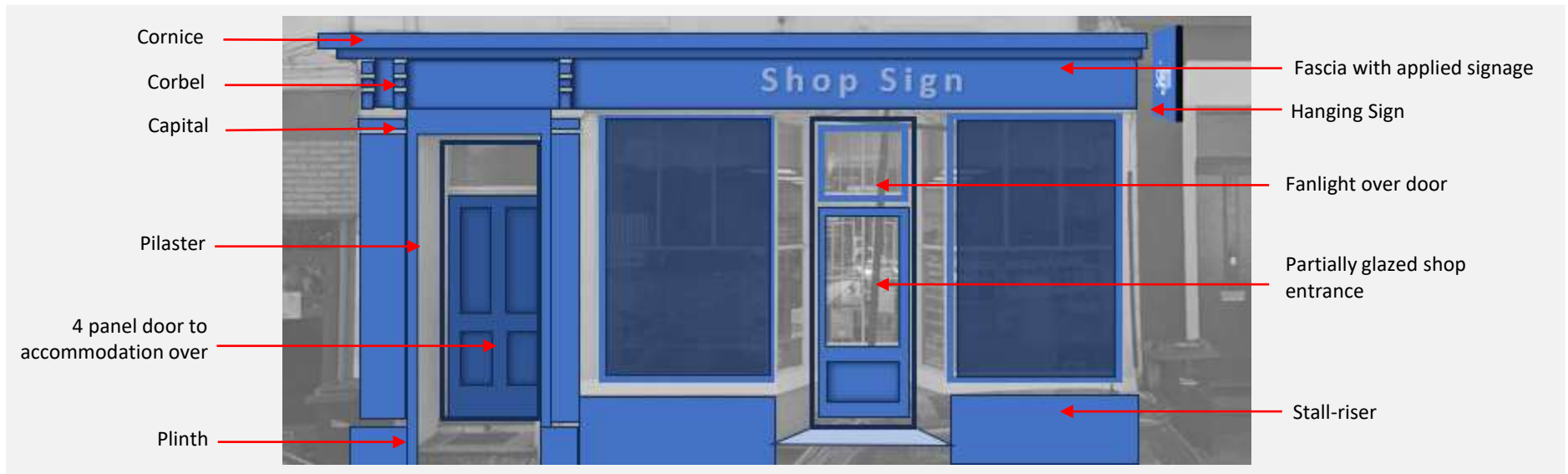
Like many retail premises from the late 19th century, the units on Ilsham Road were designed with integrated shopfronts based on the classical architectural components.

This included Pilasters used for framing and to provide visual support for the fascia which evolved from the classical 'entablature' to include areas of signage.

Console brackets or corbels provide a distinct separation between the shops themselves and the residential access door which created additional vitality to the street and today greatly enhances the attractiveness of living above the shops.

The stallriser gives protection to the base of the shop window and providing the building with a visual anchor to the ground. Recessed door openings also introduce relief to the frontage, add articulation to the street and protection for shoppers and residential visitors.

Below: Diagram of a traditional Wellswood Shopfront and its key features



Proportions of a Wellswood Shopfront

Not only did the visual components of the shopfront consist of classical elements – their positioning and proportion was also based on established classical principles.

Wellswood's terraced shopfronts consist of 4 equally proportioned elements, with the retail frontage taking up three-quarters and the residential one-quarter. The entrance was invariable set centrally within one of the thirds, most usually the middle section (see below).

The introduction of the stallriser and fanlights ensured the glazing follows a similar vertical ratio – matched in proportion to the sash windows over (see below).

While it is not necessary to follow these examples slavishly, it is helpful to understand that by referencing proportions that have been established since antiquity the original builders created a unified facade that is both flexible and appealing to the eye.

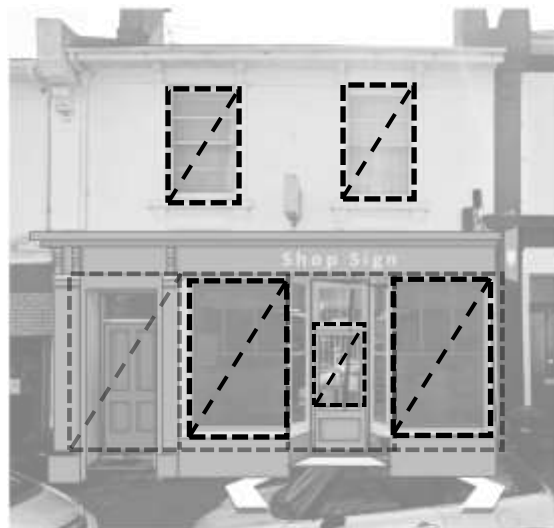
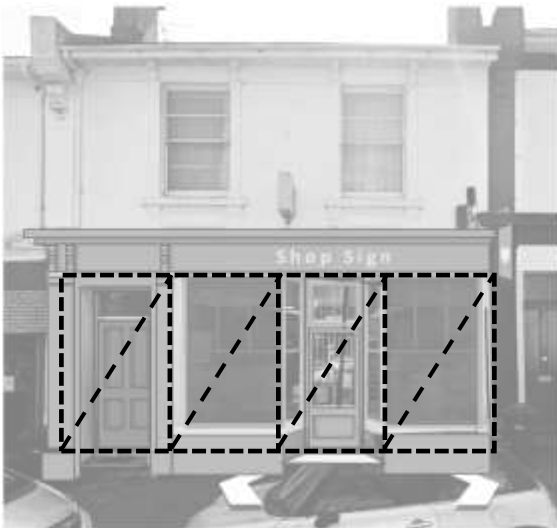
Key Features:

Facia and cornice with applied signage – subdivide by corbels and supported by plasters framing the residential access.

Considered proportions – expressed vertically

Flexibility in door placement to respond to internal layout.

Stall risers and fanlights create a traditional appearance.



What to Avoid & What to Replicate

The images below illustrate how ill-considered changes to the retail frontage can impact the overall appearance of the building.



Modern glass façade and loss of residential door create a strong horizontal emphasis that is at odds with the building over and the wider street.



Oversized fascia conceals original corbels introducing a dominant horizontal element that out of place.



Balanced façade utilising pilasters and corbels to define the residential and retail components – with integrated signage. Stallriser, and traditional doors with fanlights maintain pleasing proportion.

Key Principles

- **Maintain or reinstate pilasters, corbels, fascias and cornicing to original details**
- **Keep designs simple, responding to the original building proportions**
- **Avoid blank areas of frontages and deep facias**
- **Clearly define the entrance and maintain independent access to upper floors from the street.**
- **Provide easy access for people with disabilities, the elderly and parents with pushchairs**
- **Integrate signs, lighting and security measures within the design of the shopfront**
- **Adapt company “house styles” to suit the character the building**
- **Employ a competent designer and use quality materials and craftsmen**

Further Details

Canopies, Blinds and Shutters

Some shopfronts would have originally contained a blind as part of the design, usually in a fully retractable form.

If canopies are required, they should be incorporated into the design of the shopfront with the blind box recessed. Traditional retractable canvas straight blinds are acceptable. Other styles and modern materials can be damaging to the appearance and architectural form of an existing shopfront as well as detracting from the character of the street scene.

Roller shutters deaden the street scene when down and are not permitted. If additional security measures are required (eg for a jewellers) the window may be secured with an open mesh security shutter system located on the inner face of the window between the pilasters.

Burglar and Fire Alarms

Burglar and fire alarms are necessary but can often be unsightly and if possible, should not be placed on the front elevation. The smallest size of alarm box available should be used.

Signage & Colours

Shops often suffer from a proliferation of inappropriate signage and colour schemes.

Signage should be applied to the traditional fascia. Modern colours can look harsh and should be avoided. Colour schemes should be subtle and blend with the area's historic environment.

The use of corporate colours can often appear garish and dominate the façade and under these circumstances the corporate image should be adjusted to suit.

Attention should be paid to neighbouring units, especially when these form part of the same façade.

Materials

The prevailing material for the shop frontage is painted timber. Existing original doors, or traditional panelled doors should be retained. The design of new doors should reflect the character and design of the shopfront. The bottom panel should be of a height to match the stallriser and the door should usually be constructed in the same material as the frame.

Illumination

Illuminated shopfront require specific planning permission and may not require special illumination if the level of street lighting is adequate.

Box fascias with internal illumination are unsightly and should be avoided. Discreet spotlights and house lights may create a more even and pleasing effect.

Any sign to be illuminated should be sufficiently well designed to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area and the scale of the sign should not detract from the appearance of the building or its setting at night.

Applying the Principles

The images opposite illustrate two possible options if all the design recommendations within this guidance were applied to a highly modified frontage (below).



The reinstatement of the 1/4 to 3/4 ratio across the ground floor rebalances the elevation, while the new glazing and door positioning can be adjusted to accommodate the internal layout and proposed retail usage.



Left: Central shop door
Below left: Asymmetrical shop door

