

# CONVERTING SHOPS INTO HOMES



LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

## Introduction

- *This guidance is non statutory planning guidance and is supplementary to the Croydon Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which sets out the Council's policies and proposals for the use of land in the Borough. The UDP was adopted on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1997. The Second Deposit Draft Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan) was published on 30th October 2003. This SPG supplements both the adopted UDP (Policy BE20) and the Second Deposit Draft Replacement Plan (Policy UD3).*
- *The Government advises that supplementary planning guidance may be taken into account as a material consideration, the weight accorded to it being increased if it has been prepared in consultation with the public and has been the subject of a Council Resolution.*
- *This addendum expands on the Council's adopted Shopfronts and signs SPG1.*

## The importance of good design

Good design is key to making useful and attractive places. It should not be reserved for large and expensive building projects. Principles of good design can be applied to every project, whatever its scale and location, and need not necessarily lead to extra expense.

Over recent years, changes in retail patterns and a growing demand for housing have led to the piecemeal change of use of many shops in the London Borough of Croydon from retail to residential. The construction works often associated with these changes in use (usually brick in-fill and standard uPVC windows) often destroy the inherent adaptability of shop units and shopfronts. This can have a detrimental effect on the appearance of many of our streets when works are carried out without design awareness or imagination. Once lively shopping parades can have their character slowly eroded.

The guidance in this document uses a drawing of a hypothetical terrace of 19th Century shops to show examples of good and bad practice. It suggests how principles of good design can be followed when converting shops to residential to help maintain a lively, distinctive and attractive streetscene. The document concentrates on the external appearance of conversions, but an intelligent internal plan is key to a good design.

**The examples in this document do not exhaust the infinite design solutions available to the designer and should not be copied directly. Each case will be unique and the design solution should grow out of a thorough understanding of the particular site, context and brief.**

## What needs Planning Permission?

Planning permission is required to change shops to residential use or to make external alterations which materially affect the appearance of such premises.

Many of Croydon's shop units are part of Main Retail Frontages, Shopping Area Frontages, Secondary Retail Frontages, Local Shopping Parades or they are 'Convenience Shops'. These designations aim to ensure that shops and services are maintained in particular parts of the borough.

A planning application is required to determine whether conversion from shopfront to residential use is acceptable. In the aforementioned designated areas it is likely that changes of use to residential will be resisted. Outside of the designated retail areas the following criteria will be considered:

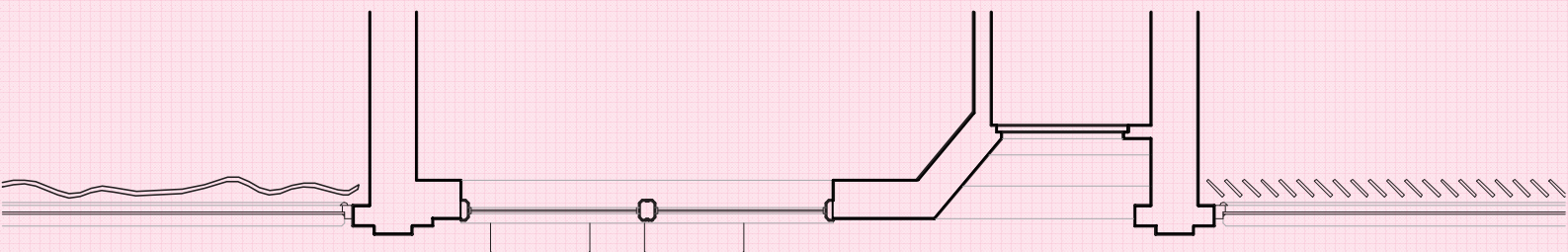
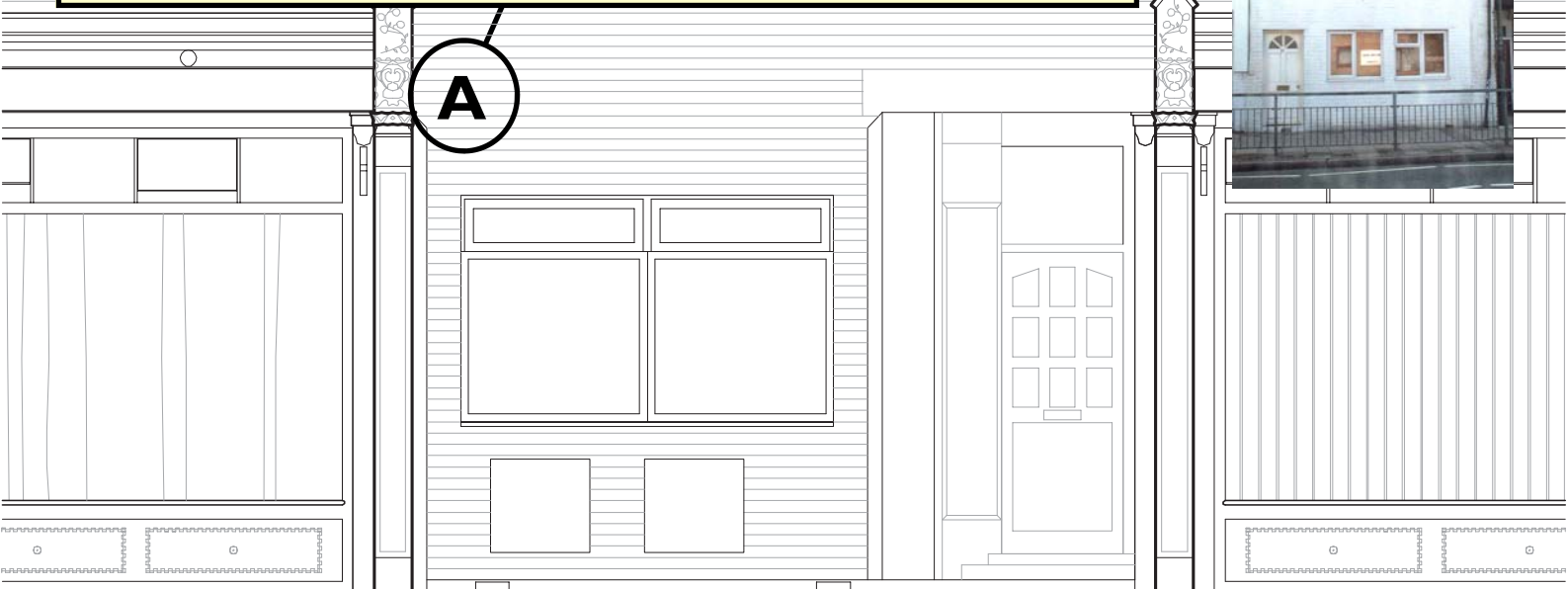
- The impact on the individual building
- The impact on the visual amenity of the streetscene
- The quality of the design
- The compatibility of the new use with the area

# Examples of bad practice.

**A** The examples illustrated below and to the right are typical of many of the conversions that currently take place in Croydon. The following points describe some of the moves that have been made that add up to a poor design:

- No attempt has been made to reuse the original shopfront
- The design does not adopt the language of shopfront design\* or respect the design of the residential accommodation above
- The design makes the shopfront less adaptable in the future
- The design makes the ground floor and the street, less open and active
- The original signboard fascia has been removed
- Steps up to front door do not comply with Building Regulations
- The new external meter boxes have not been considered from the outset as part of the design and have an unduly prominent presence in the streetscene.

\*see SPG 1 Shopfronts and Signs for further guidance on the language of shopfront design.



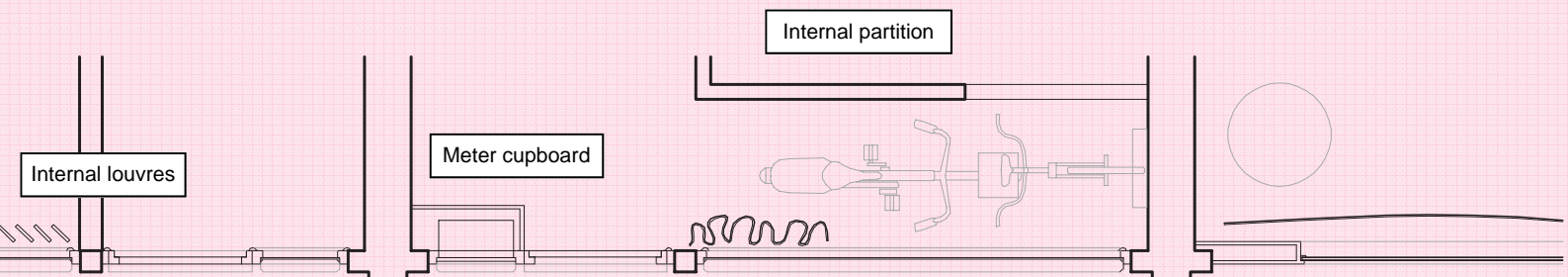
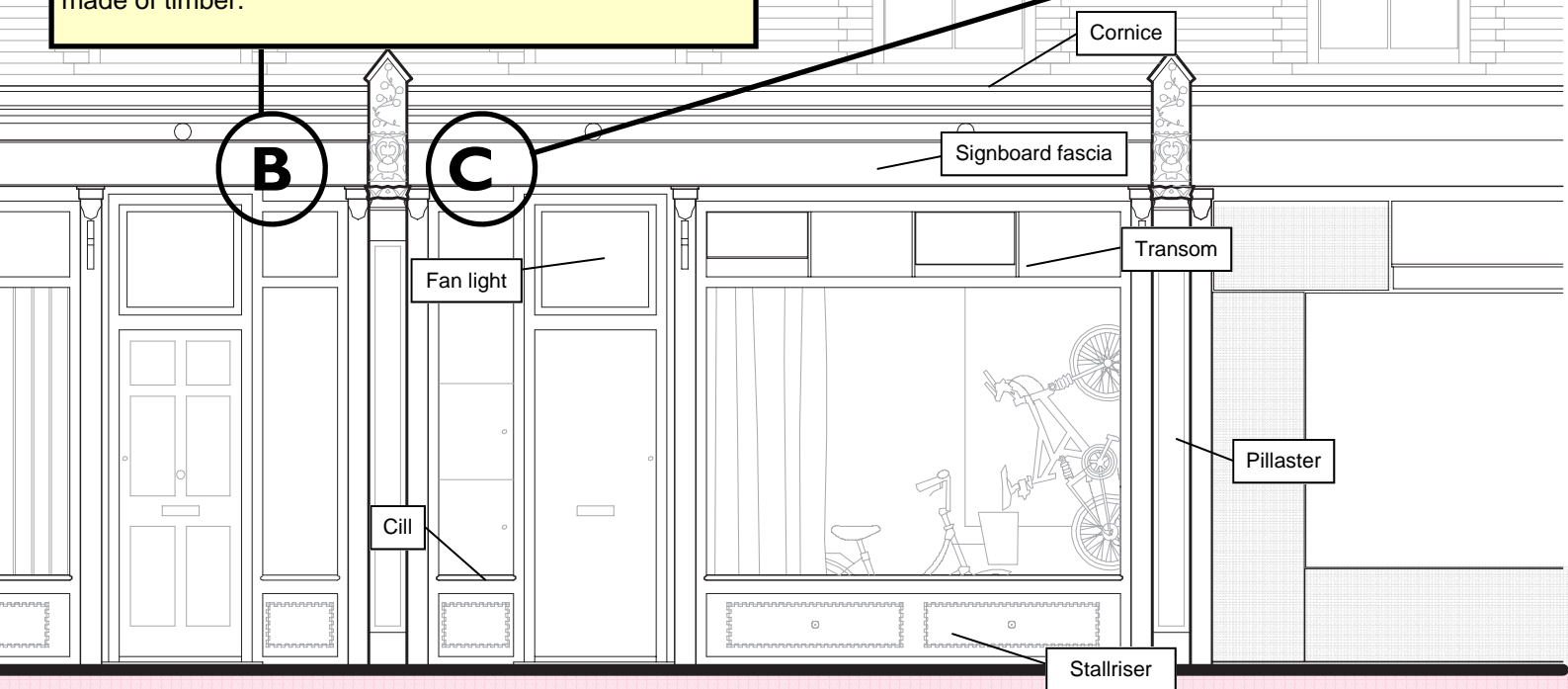
# Keeping the Shopfront.

Wherever possible it is preferable to keep and adapt the existing shopfront. The large windows, details and proportions of a shopfront can make for unique, adaptable and attractive homes that do not detract from the streetscene. Simple and inexpensive changes can be made to counter the potential privacy issues; the introduction of a curtain or internal louvres for instance. Other options include etching, painting or applying privacy films or 'manifestations' to the windows. Shops adapted in this way can also easily be changed back in to shops in the future.



**B** The original shopfront, including signboard fascia, rollerblind box, corbels, stallriser etc. is retained, repaired and redecorated. Internal timber louvres have been introduced here to provide privacy. These louvres open and close, but they could also be fixed, and need not be made of timber.

**C** Again, all of the features of the original shopfront are retained. The narrow window to the left of the door has been removed and the space has been utilised to house gas and electricity meter cupboards, with flush doors. A lightweight internal partition has been built 1 metre behind the old shop window, creating a cloakroom and storage space at the front which could also be used as a winter-garden. The internal partition finishes 500mm below the ceiling and has a window in it to allow plenty of light in to the new flat. A heavy curtain in the Shopfront provides controllable privacy.



These examples are not intended to be directly copied, but indicate a way of thinking.



# Designing a new frontage.

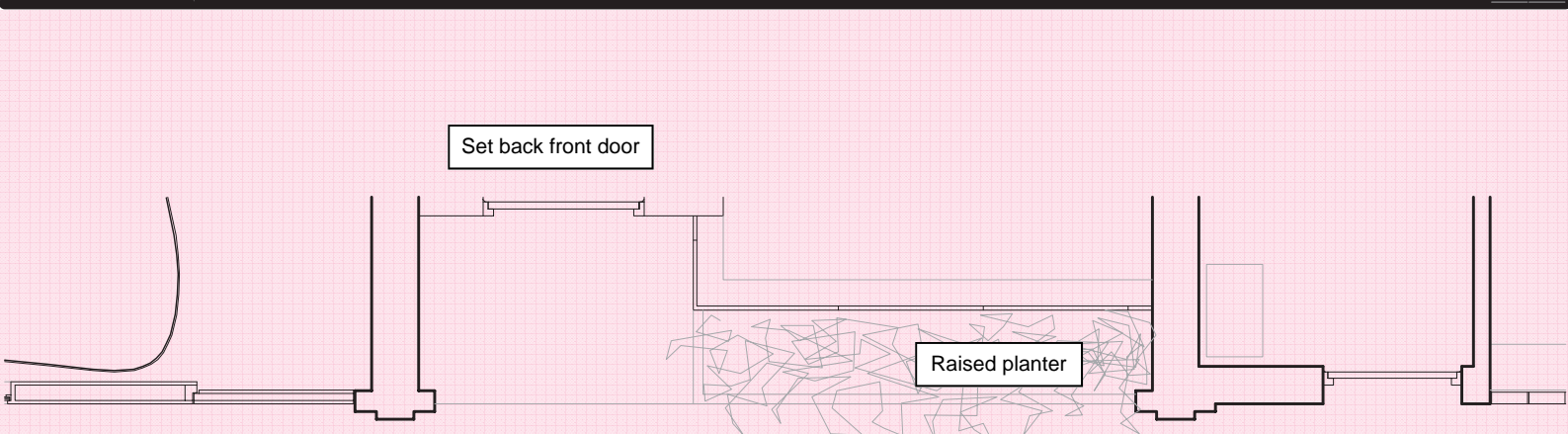
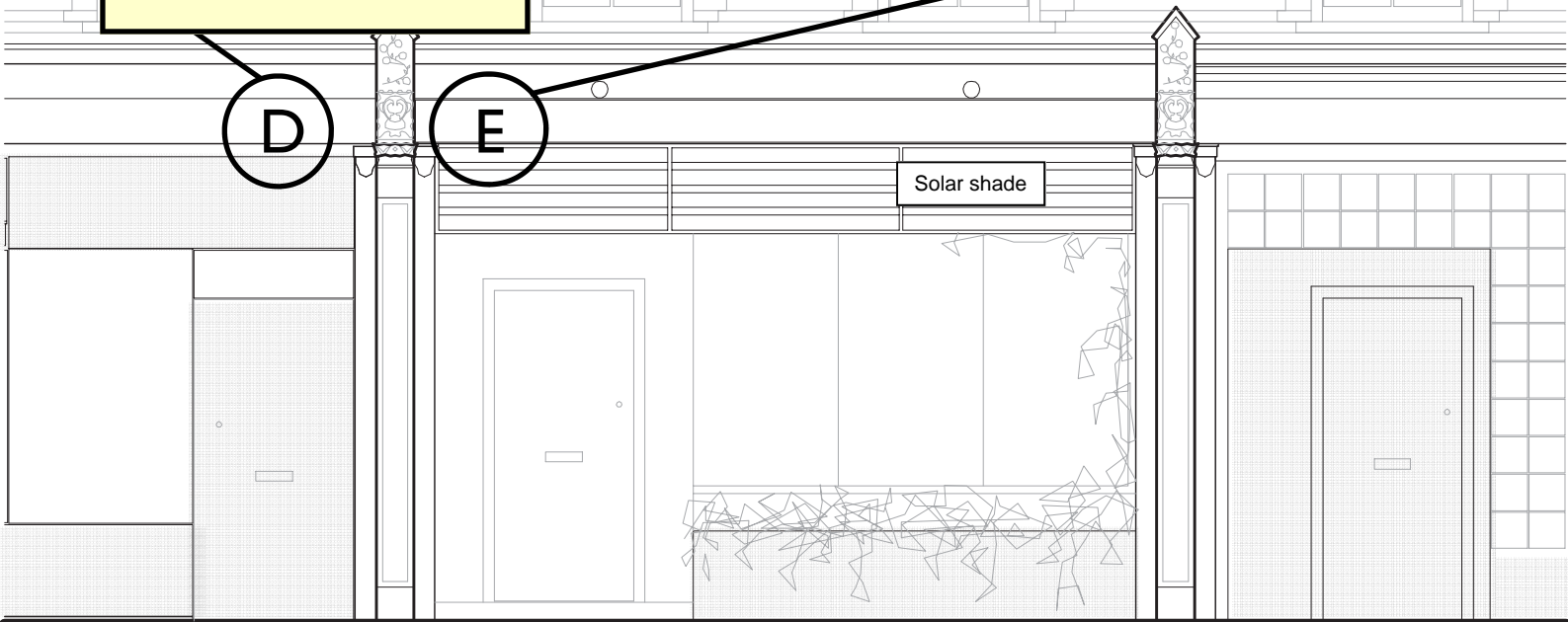
Always aim to retain and reuse the existing shopfront. Where this is not possible or appropriate, there are a wide range of opportunities to create new residential shopfronts that adopt and reinterpret the language of shopfront design to create active and attractive frontages on the ground floor that remain aesthetically distinct from but also respect the storeys above.

**D** There are many options for panel cladding that can be employed, including forms of timber cladding and metal panels etc. However it is of prime importance that these are of the **highest quality**, durable, easy to maintain and form part of a good overall design. The Urban Design Team can be contacted for design guidance to ensure that proposals meet the desired standards.

Below and in the image to the right, a window and opening toplights and fanlights are set in to a frame with their frames detailed to be concealed behind the cladding. The frame of the door is also concealed, so that windows and cladding are completely flush. Again, shopfront proportions are respected and fascia, pilasters, corbels have been retained.

**E** Here, the doorway and windows have been set back to provide a planting bed at the front. The doorway is set back further than the window to accentuate the entrance and create a bay window with large panes of glass and minimal frames.

Beneath and flush with the fascia, a metal-frame contains solar shading louvres. The planter and shading device relate to the proportions of shopfront design and provide a horizontal emphasis. The large 'bay' window and set back door are also reminiscent of shopfront design.



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**F** The examples shown in the image above and the drawing below show a new residential shopfront constructed out of glass blocks. A stallriser is retained in the above example and a rendered base refers to the height of a shop stallriser in the example below. An internal curtain can provide extra privacy.

A new front door which follows the proportions of the windows above is set in a new aluminium clad insulated studwork wall (see previous page). Internally, this is the position of electricity and gas meters.

**G** This new frontage has been designed so that new windows and doors follow the lines, proportions and detailing of the windows above. This would only be appropriate in cases where the windows above were of sufficient quality to be copied, for instance original timber sash windows, or where a shop which was originally part of a house was being restored to its original state. A 'plinth' at the base picks up on the lines of adjacent stallrisers, and a smooth finish coloured render applied to the new brickwork keeps the ground level distinct from the storeys above.

The signboard fascia is retained to ensure the continuity of the terrace

**This approach should only be considered once all other more imaginative design options have been exhausted.**



Glass blocks

Timber sash window to match to the original windows above

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# Remember to...

**Provide a Design Statement as part of the Planning Application to justify your proposals.**

## **Get the brief clear before you design anything.**

What activities are planned for the new home?

Consider how much light and space will be needed, and how much privacy is required.

Will any of the proposed spaces be used for working?

Are separate rooms or flexible / adaptable spaces more appropriate?

How many people will be living in the new home?

What sort of materials are intended to be used?

What services are required? Water, gas, electricity, drainage, ventilation? How will these be incorporated?

Where will meter boxes be placed?

Consider the budget.

Will the design incorporate access to other flats?

## **Study the particular shopfront and its context.**

What are the details and materials of the existing shopfront and the building it forms part of?

How much of it is original?

Has it always been a shop?

What are its proportions?

How many storeys is it?

Is it a terrace?

How old is the building?

What style is it?

Are the windows to the rest of the building original?

What are the other surrounding buildings like?

What activities go on in and around them?

Is the shop in a Conservation Area?

## **Consider Urban Conservation**

Some buildings are protected by Listed Building and Conservation Area legislation. Proposals effecting buildings protected by this legislation require careful attention and must be properly justified. For further information please refer to ministerial guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the Urban Conservation section of the Croydon Plan and the Council's Proposal Statements on Conservation Areas.

## **Consider Sustainability**

Sustainability is key to good design. You should seek to make your conversion energy efficient, improving on Building Regulations standards if possible and should seek to use sustainable materials such as FSC timber, locally sourced materials and products made from recycled material.

## **Seek building regulations advice and approval.**

You will need to have your proposals approved to ensure they meet Building Regulations. This document has concentrated mainly on the external elevational appearance of a conversion, but your complete proposal will have to meet current standards. Existing features such as doors, windows and stairs may well be exempt if left unchanged.

## **Consider Crime prevention.**

Providing adequate lighting, perforate security shutters and specifying materials that mitigate against vandalism are moves that could be considered as part of your design. Refer to Addendum 1 to SPG 1 for further guidance.

# Special cases

In this document an example of a 19th Century terrace of shops with residential accommodation above has been used to illustrate the main principles of converting shops into homes, as these are the most common form shopfront effected by this change in use. There are, however many variations on the theme which require special consideration. Some of these are listed below:

**20th Century Parades, Edwardian Parades, shops without accommodation above, converting public houses into homes, converting corner shops into homes and turning a shop that was previously a home back into a home.** Many of the front gardens of Georgian terraces were built over to form shops with flat roofs. It may be that you are considering turning one of these back into a house and wish to reinstate the front garden.

**For further guidance on anything covered in this document contact: Urban Design: 020 8686 4433 ext.62051**



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