SHOP FRONT SECURITY

1.1 This report is one of a series of guidance notes intended to be used in conjunction with, and as a supplement to the relevant policies contained in the Congleton Borough Local Plan in respect of shop front security. Within the local plan, the importance of shop fronts in contributing to the visual impression of a town and its centre is stressed, and the relevant policies are therefore intended to protect the character and appearance of the existing street scene within the towns of the Borough, whilst enabling shop owners to introduce or improve security measures in their business properties.

1.2 With the rising incidence of vandalism and theft in society generally, the security needs of business properties have come to the fore. The growing number of burglaries together with extreme practices such as "ram-raiding" has lead many shop owners to consider security measures.

1.3 Security measures can and ought to take many forms, not all of which directly involve the shop front. A good property security system will address a whole range of possible measures including:

- door and window lock reinforcement;
- prevention of access via roof, side and rear;
- alarms;
- closed-circuit television;
- security lights and interior/exterior lighting generally;
- as well as shop front security itself.

1.4 Other security measures are in the wider domain and include the installation of street furniture, including bollards, pillars and railings as possible deterrents to "ramming" Private measures of this nature may require the benefit of planning permission and the Council's officers would be pleased to advise on this and other aspects.

1.5 This document concentrates on shop front security and in particular the different types of security shutters available, and their suitability for use within the towns of the Borough, form a planning viewpoint.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

2.1 Most alterations to shop fronts including the introduction of grilles or shutters require planning permission from the Borough Council in its role as local planning authority.

2.2 In processing and determining planning applications for the replacement or alteration of shop fronts, the Council has to have regard for the visual impact which the changes might have on the quality of the environment. The Council will, therefore, carefully scrutinise the merits of the proposals in relation both to the buildings directly affected and to the street scene as a whole.

2.3 Alterations to any properties which are listed as Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest will also require another form of planning permission from the Borough Council, known as "Listed Building Consent". Applications for both types of permission* may be made concurrently and ordinarily, ought to be decided within 6 to 8 weeks of receipt.

2.4 When determining planning applications which are within Conservation Areas or which affect the setting or fabric of Listed Buildings, the Council has a legal duty to pay particular regard to the preservation and enhancement of the character of the area. Officers from the Council's Planning Division will be able to advise whether a property is Listed or situated within a Conservation Area.

2.5 Councils have the power, in some circumstances, to refuse planning permission for schemes which are considered seriously to detract from the quality of the visual environment. They also are empowered, as a last resort, at their discretion, to take enforcement action* against unsatisfactory development which does not have the necessary planning permission.

2.6 The Council fully appreciates, however, that businesses need to operate from secure premises and that from time to time there is a need to alter premises in order to improve security. It is considered that the aims of maintaining both a good visual environment and adequate security are compatible given a measure of reasonable understanding and cooperation between the authority and developers.

- There is a right of appeal by developers to the DOE against refusals of planning permissions or listed building consent, against the
conditions which can be attached to planning permissions by the authority and against enforcement action taken by the authority.

**PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRIES**

3.1 The Council encourages owners who are contemplating shop front alterations to make early contact with the Borough Planning Officers, based at the Council Offices at Sandbach. They will be able to advise if planning permission is required for any intended works and whether there are special considerations to be taken into account; for example, if the property is in Conservation Area or is listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. It will also be possible to raise concerns or ask questions about the proposals and for general advice to be given regarding any necessary submission.

3.2 Officers may be able to help by drawing attention to the individual and wider considerations which the Planning Authority will wish to address, for example the need to respect the design detailing of both the existing building and of the street scene as a whole. (The submission itself, of course, including the design of the alterations, the completion of the application forms, drawings and other documentation has to remain the responsibility of the applicant or his/her agent.)

**THE USE OF SECURITY SHUTTERS**

4.1 Listed below are some of the different types of shutter, categorised in terms of their visual impact, together with comments as to suitability from a town planning viewpoint.

**SOLID LATH SHUTTERS**

4.2.1 This form of security shutter, when in use, radically affects the appearance of properties.

4.2.2 Though secure and used quite extensively in industrial situations, solid shutters tend to detract from the traditional appearance of shops and shopping streets, producing a harsh, siege-like impression when in use during daylight hours and darkening the normally "cheerful", well-lit shopping streets at night.

4.2.3 The cumulative effect of solid lath shutters when used on a number of individual shop-fronts would be very seriously detrimental to the attractiveness of a shopping area.

4.2.4 **Solid lath shutters are therefore considered to be unsuitable for use on shop fronts.**

4.2.5 Policy S8 of the Local Plan aims to restrict the use of solid lath shutters on shop fronts both within the town centres of the Borough where shop fronts are an important feature of any street scene and fulfil many roles such as permitting after hours window shopping allowing supervision by Police and passers-by and allowing additional illumination of the street which is itself a disincentive to crime - against both the property and users of the town centre, and in neighbourhood shops given their often prominent position within primarily residential areas.
EXTERNAL PERFORATED LATH ROLLER SHUTTERS

4.3.1 Although this form of protection is not generally encouraged by local planning authorities, for reasons which are similar to those given in the preceding paragraph, some of the designs may be visually satisfactory (particularly those with a relatively high proportion of polycarbonated glazing in relation to the opaque, metal element), in certain locations.

4.3.2 The use of this form of shutter would not however be encouraged within Conservation Areas.

INTERNAL LATTICE GRILLES

4.5.1 These have the advantage of being less visually intrusive than other forms of protection and in most cases do not require planning permission, although, such shutters are generally less effective against "ram-raiding" than externally mounted shutters.

EXTERNAL ROLLER GRILLES AND REMOVABLE GRILLES

4.4.1 In additional to the consideration of the appearance of the grilles in themselves, there are sometimes installation problems associated with the incorporation of the box which houses the roller-type of grille. The box needs to be very carefully located, so as to be hidden behind the existing shop fascia.

4.4.2 There is also a need to consider the extent of coverage by the grille when in the closed position so as not to cover the stall-riser, fascia or pilasters.

4.4.3 Where the roller box cannot be concealed or the grille is made to extend over the whole of the shop front rather than the window openings themselves, there may well be a planning objection on aesthetic grounds.

4.4.4 The use of external grilles is to be avoided within Conservation Areas, as stated in policy S10.
OTHER METHODS OF STRENGTHENING SHOP FRONTS

5.1 There are a number of other methods of reinforcing the front of shops to give more general security, and particularly to resist both ram-raiding and theft by "smash and grab".

5.2 Many of these features are integral to the overall design of the shop front, and include the following:

a. the use of facing brick stall risers,

b. reinforcement of brick stall-risers, e.g. by concealed steel rods and/or concrete barriers,

c. the use of smaller areas of glass, e.g. by the introduction and/or retention of mullions and transoms (glazing bars).

d. the retention or installation of a recessed door,

e. the use of laminated glass and its labeling as such, together with details of its qualities, to deter attempted break-ins.

5.3 In terms of security, many of the features of older shop-fronts are better from a security point of view than the more recent, open designs with large expanses of glass.

5.4 The retention of the older, traditional shop-fronts and the use of traditional materials such as timber and brick rather than plastic or tile also serve to protect the visual environment.

Adopted on the 5th September 1994.