



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# Commercial Buildings Selection Guide

Heritage Protection Department

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# Selection Guide

## Commercial Buildings

### I INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Commercial buildings range from small corner shops to huge department stores, from corner pubs to Victorian 'gin palaces', from simple offices to huge speculative office blocks. Some specialised commercial buildings emerged in the Middle Ages: others developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But their range and scale were transformed in the nineteenth century and they made a huge impact on the face of the Victorian town; the twentieth century has continued this trend. Commercial architecture always placed a high premium on novelty and effect. This has resulted in some of the country's most splendid public high street architecture. However, it has also led to constant change, especially regarding shop fronts and fittings. Rates of survival in some of the categories discussed below are sometimes very low.

The categories in this guide cover buildings for the *face to face* buying and selling of goods or services by providers to the general public: shops and stores, market halls and exchanges; hotels, restaurants, inns and pubs; and banks. Offices and chambers, although less public, are most conveniently covered here. Warehouses are dealt with in the **Industrial** Selection Guide: although the term is sometimes used to describe rooms or buildings to store goods just before being displayed and sold in shops, its wider use is adopted in these guides to describe large-scale wholesale storage facilities.

### 2 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

Most commercial buildings post-date 1840. Many building types - offices, pubs, shopping arcades, department stores, and hotels - are largely nineteenth-century creations. Because they survive in such large numbers and were subject to a high degree of standardisation, a discerning selection for designation needs to be made.

However, it is also the case that Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings transformed our townscapes and gave many English town centres their distinctive character. Shops and pubs can also play a particular role in enlivening residential districts too. Where coherent commercial townscapes survive reasonably intact, there will be a strong case for designating individual components comprehensively in recognition of their cumulative impact.

Listing in the past, with its emphasis on architectural interest, has favoured the opulent and the grand at the expense of the more modest end of the sector: it tends to be the 'gin palace' and the palazzo-style bank, rather than the beer shop or humble savings bank, that is designated. Consequently the latter have suffered disproportionate loss. When examples arise, listing should aim to redress this balance. Sometimes, special historic interest clearly resides in the unadorned fabric itself: humility can be a virtue; it is certainly now rare.

### 3 HISTORY BY BUILDING TYPE

#### Shops and shopping

Medieval retailing has left its imprint in countless market places. Although specialised buildings developed early, very few survive. *Market houses* are among the most prominent. Open at ground floor level, they provided permanent, covered places for selling and exchange and were a natural progression from the temporary market stall. Upper-floor rooms were used for a variety of purposes including municipal government. Thaxted, Essex, boasts a celebrated example of c.1400. *Medieval shops*, though once common, survive only rarely although fragments may be found such as arched openings and shutter rebates. Some medieval shops were arranged in rows, with living accommodation on upper floors or to the rear: a small number, including Abbot's House, Shrewsbury (1457-9), survive in recognisable form.

***Shops and shopping arcades*** The earliest surviving complete *shop fronts* date from the mid eighteenth century as competition grew and the display of wares became ever more important in the expanding urban centres. Glazed shop fronts, first of all inserted into the ground floor of conventional houses, typically consisted of big windows with small panes, sometimes bowed, set between pilasters beneath a frieze or fascia; plinths, known as stall-risers, supported the display windows. These are rare; shop interiors from this period even more so: one renowned *in situ* example is the Fribourg and Treyer tobacconists' shop, in London's Haymarket, possibly of 1751, which has kept its shelves and screen. Late Georgian shop fronts are slightly more common, and form one of the pleasures of the English urban scene. Retail became increasingly assertive from the late Georgian period. The arrival of plate glass (made by casting rather than blowing) led to a wave of shop window replacement, especially after c.1840, by which time the ground-floor shop, boasting attention-seeking displays sometimes lit by gas-light, was a standard feature of most high streets. The use of cast iron allowed for two or three storeys of well-lit display rooms: Norwich's Crystal House of 1863, built as a farm machinery showroom, demonstrates the possibilities of this new approach to retail architecture. Purpose-built shops proliferated at this time. Many of the best-known varieties assumed their familiar guise at this time: butchers' shops with their slabs, decorated tiles and provision for hanging meat; tobacconists, and particularly chemists, with their shelves for jars; drapers, with their drawers and shelves for bolts of materials, their aerial communication systems and emphasis on mirrors and display windows; jewellers, with their screens and elaborate shelving. Lettering could be exuberant, and decoration grew in opulence. Ceramic enrichment was one of the particular contributions of the late nineteenth century to retail design and ranged in scale from tile panels in butchers' shops, to architectural schemes of great ambition.

The *shopping arcade* was introduced to England by John Nash from Paris, making its first appearance at London's Royal Opera Arcade of 1817; the city's Burlington Arcade, perhaps the best known of all, followed in 1818. Examples outside the capital include Bristol Lower Arcade of 1824 and Henry Goodridge's Union Passage of 1825 in Bath. Arcades created vibrant commercial thoroughfares, architecturally united by means of repeated shop units lining covered and top-lit walkways; they enabled deep plots to be used to the full as well. They gained a new lease of life through cast iron building

technology. This enabled larger, more elaborate, designs to be realised, such as the Barton Arcade in Manchester (1871), or the Wayfarers' Arcade in Southport (1896). Norwich's Royal Arcade (1898) is famous for its decorative tile work. Related to the arcade was the *bazaar*: A purpose-built structure in which retailers set up stalls: a good example is the former Bazaar in Quiet Street, Bath (1825), with elaborate top-lighting and an embellished classical front. Arcades and bazaars were the first retail buildings to inject an element of theatre and grandeur into the shopping experience.

The shopping experience was taken further in the later Victorian period by the *department store*, which thrived on a growing well-heeled middle class able to get into town by means of the increasingly dense and efficient public transport network. Unlike Paris (where the department store was established), there were at first relatively few opportunities in most English towns and cities for retailers to accumulate the necessary consolidated blocks of high street property and many of the earliest examples went hand-in-hand with large-scale municipal redevelopments in the 1880s and '90s. The first purpose built English department store (Bon Marché in Brixton, London, 1877) and its success encouraged others to diversify. Floors tend to be open allowing displays to merge one into another; floors were linked by large and opulent staircases –the first escalator was installed in 1898 - and extra services such as fitting rooms, rest rooms and tea rooms were added as customer expectations rose. Some had sleeping accommodation for upwards of 400 staff. The grander survivals, such as Harrod's, with its outstanding food hall, Selfridge's (opened in 1909), with its powerful Beaux Arts exterior or the renowned Liberty's store in London, which retains its wooden galleried light-well and other internal features inside the remarkable half-timbered exterior are exceptional examples.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of chain stores, W.H. Smiths, Montagu Burtons the tailors, and Boots the Chemists being amongst the best known. Each developed a distinctive brand identity through shop design. Some were mildly classical revival, others half-timbered vernacular revival in style; all aimed to be reassuring and enticing to the customer. The arrival of Art Deco in the 1920s ushered in a period of remarkable retail architecture. London shops, such as the former Simpsons in Piccadilly (Joseph Emberton, 1936) and the Fox's umbrella store in Moorgate, employed chrome lettering, neon lighting, *Moderne* detailing and non-reflective windows with curved glass, to produce highly characteristic buildings of their day with a strong sense of the progressive that was guaranteed to appeal to the opulent shopper. Interwar commercial design quality could be extremely high.

Post-war shops of special interest survive in very small numbers, so marked has been the shift towards short-lived, adaptable or ephemeral retail architecture. American influence has been very pronounced as well. Few display this better than the former Sanderson's showroom (now a hotel) in London's Berners Street, an unusually forthright and ambitious building in the International style of 1957-60 by Slater, Moberly and Uren with John Piper's glass to the stairwell, and other bespoke features of quality. Smaller-scale survivals of note are surprisingly rare. Listed examples include the Canterbury branch of David Greig's, the butchers, by Robert Paine and Partners won an RIBA gold medal in 1954 and retains considerable architectural interest despite conversion; Gillespie, Kidd and Coia's 1969 Blackwell's music shop in Holywell Street, Oxford, is another. The rise of the covered shopping centres and of the out-of-town mall have yet to be reflected in designations.

**Markets and exchanges** The earlier open-sided market house spawned a number of related building types. *Exchanges* were purpose-built structures devoted to commercial activity, somewhere for traders to display their wares, for customers to gather, for business negotiations to take place, and so forth. The key establishment was the Royal Exchange in the City of London, founded in 1566-68 (and several times rebuilt) by Sir Thomas Gresham, who was familiar with similar institutions in the Low Countries: he sought to provide merchants with an all-weather place to conduct business, set within a shop-ringed courtyard. Others include the King's Lynn Exchange (1683) and the Exchange at Bristol (1741-3, John Wood the Elder), which endowed commerce with magnificence on a near-palatial scale. Eighteenth-century examples include the Piece Hall in Halifax (1775), a monumental wholesale cloth market comprising a courtyard surrounded by two-storeyed arcaded ranges to all sides. This was the normal plan (at least in England) until the middle years of the nineteenth century when they comprise a large hall, often circular or oval inside and sometimes out, flanked by walkways and offices on two or more levels, all contained under a single roof (cf. Banks, below). By this time they had also become diversified according to trade: impressive examples include the Corn Exchange (1861-3), Leeds.

Similar panache may be found in other types of market, too. Fine examples of *general-purpose markets* survive from the late 1820s (e.g., Covent Garden, London, 1828-30; Grainger Market, Newcastle, 1835; and Exeter 1834). The rapidly expanding urban population created massive demand. New technologies enabled greater numbers of stallholders to be grouped together in spacious new markets under wide-span cast-iron roofs. By 1891 around half of England's markets were covered. Elaborate municipal *wholesale markets* were opened, greatly facilitated by the coming of the railways. The finest sequence are those designed by Sir Horace Jones for the Corporation of the City of London, at Smithfield (1866-7), Billingsgate (1874-8), and Leadenhall Street (1880-1), which sported both architectural elaborateness and boldly-displayed civic swagger. Many were equipped with cold stores, gas lighting and running water, and some had pubs and even temperance houses.

## **Banks and offices**

**Banks** The distinction between early banks and exchanges is not a clear one. In England, banking was the preserve of goldsmiths up until the late seventeenth century. Sir Richard Hoare (1648-1719) is considered to be the 'father of the banking profession' and the Bank of England was established in 1694. During the eighteenth century banks (like warehouses) were private houses with business rooms on the ground floor. What is thought to be the earliest surviving bank building - Hoare's Bank in the Strand, London (1829-30, by Charles Parker) - treated in Bath stone in an Italianate villa style, still provided accommodation for the owner's family above.

Banks were built in great numbers especially after the financial reforms of the 1840s. As with exchanges, the common formula is a grand entrance leading into a banking hall with offices off to the side. Italianate or Renaissance designs were the favoured idiom, with effort being concentrated on front elevations and public areas, above all the banking hall. Rear areas tend to be much more utilitarian, with increasingly sophisticated strongrooms; employees often lived above banks for security reasons. Savings banks such as the National Penny Bank Company catered for the less well off and their

premises tended to be smaller and less elaborate, but they remain important testaments to Victorian notions of self-help and thrift.

Twentieth-century banks retained their prominence on the high street, embodying solidity and respectability. Classical designs gave way to more contextual styles, with Neo-Georgian a particular favourite in the 1920s. Banking halls remained the principal spaces, with increasingly more sophisticated security vaults beyond. Strong American influence was felt in some of the larger banks, such as the richly finished Martin's Bank in Liverpool by Herbert Rowse of 1932. The Wall Street Crash slowed down the rate of bank building but did not affect the spate of bank company headquarters' rebuilding in the capital. Modernist designs arrived in the later 1930s, such as W.F.C. Holden's National Provincial Bank in Osterley (London Borough of Hounslow); classical treatment gave way to the streamlined style, and marble and teak were replaced with travertine and glass. Post-war banks of note are very few in number: little has been needed, given the number of branches already existing, and given the rise of automated banking services.

*Offices* Private or speculative offices are a development of the Victorian age and bespoke premises for the sole conducting of business do not feature in the Georgian period with the single exception of the legal chambers in London's Inns of Court. Purpose-built *chambers*, the forerunner of the office, appeared from the late seventeenth century onwards and the Inns of Court are the earliest ones to survive. Outwardly similar to domestic architecture, but internally planned on the staircase principle of colleges, these private rooms (with limited residential quarters attached) provided places for private meeting and for the preparation and safeguarding of the increasingly complex legal and financial transactions that characterised the post-Restoration age. Otherwise, offices were accommodated within merchants' houses, or created within workshops and warehouses: the commercial office building would only appear in the mid nineteenth century. Public, or government-funded, office developments, the best known of which is Sir William Chambers's Somerset House on the Strand in London (begun 1774) are touched on in the **Law and Government** Selection Guide.

Offices comprise a new kind of building type during the Victorian period, reflecting the enormous growth in Britain's domestic and foreign business. The great merchant cities of Liverpool and Manchester, Bristol, London and Newcastle retain outstanding examples. As the middle classes moved out to fast-growing suburbs, older houses in the centres of cities came up for redevelopment. Ground plots were expensive to acquire, so building heights increased to accommodate more letting space. From mid-century, these combined offices of varying ranks, meeting rooms, fire-proof strong rooms, all placed within impressively treated exteriors, often classical, or Italianate, gave an appearance of dependable dignity. Many combined ground floor offices or banks, with offices on the upper floors. Commercial pressures brought about important innovations in plan and structure. Packing as many offices as possible into a multi-storeyed building often set on an awkward site posed problems of lighting and ventilation which were solved by the introduction of small central light-wells clad with reflective white tiles. Internal glazed partitions enabled this light to be freely borrowed (as well as facilitating supervision of the clerks). Fully iron-framed office buildings appeared in Liverpool in the 1860s: Oriel Chambers (1864) and 16 Cook Street (1866), both by Peter Ellis, are remarkable in their dramatic use of iron and glass construction.

Providing a smart image remained paramount for the twentieth century office. The newest Modern Movement idioms were drawn on. Frederick Etchells, translator of Le Corbusier, designed what is regarded as the first modernist building in London: the offices of Crawford's Advertising, in Holborn (1930), while Serge Chermayeff designed an elegantly pared-down headquarters building for Gilbey's Gin in Camden Town (1937). As with public buildings, there is a clear hierarchy of importance, with architectural effect being reserved for the principal spaces - foyers, stairs, and boardrooms.

Offices have become one of the most important building types in post-war England: many of the iconic buildings of the second part of the last century are in this category. The office (like the shop) was sometimes embellished with art: the outstanding instance of this was Michael Rosenauer's Time-Life building in London's New Bond Street (1951-53), enriched with a sculpted screen by the leading world sculptor of the day, Henry Moore. American-inspired International Style skyscrapers arrived in the 1950s: Sir John Burnet & Partners' New Century House in Manchester (1959-62) was conceived on a large scale and showed how such buildings could re-define the city. Ronald Ward & Partners' Millbank Tower on the Thames Embankment of 1960-63 possesses an adventurous use of curved curtain walling, while Centre Point by Richard Seifert & Partners (1961-66), in the centre of London's West End, shows how structural daring could combine with architectural inventiveness to create an iconic commercial building of its day. Key buildings also reflect new ways of working. American architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill's Heinz UK HQ and laboratories at Hayes Park, Hillingdon (1962-65), introduced the green-field office complex to Britain. Its clever design of a concrete grid bearing the floor plates ushered in the open-plan way of working, which became more the norm during the 1970s. This factor determined the planning of the Willis Corroon building in Ipswich by Foster Associates (1972-75), with its sinuous curtain-walled exterior, which is perhaps the outstanding example of the post-war office.

## Eating, drinking and accommodation

***Inns and hotels*** A considerable number of medieval inns survive, usually because they have survived as hotels over the centuries, but relatively few retain their original internal arrangements and many have been substantially rebuilt. The fifteenth-century George Inn at Norton St Philip (Som.) and the Angel Inn in Grantham (Lincs.) illustrate the scale and architectural finesse that could be achieved. The common form of the biggest establishments survives in the late seventeenth-century George Inn, Southwark, with its coaching yard surrounded by galleried ranges (giving access to bedrooms) and stabling beyond. The improvement in road communications in the eighteenth century stimulated the establishment of large *coaching inns*. Their street fronts combined architectural elegance with strident promotion, often in the form of large overhanging signs. Inside, eating and sleeping rooms, of varying status, coincided with extensive stabling and grooms' quarters to the rear, with galleried ranges overlooking the yard and providing access to rooms.

The transition from inn to hotel – at least at the top end of the market - is the development from the simple accommodation of travellers to the provision of a wide range of cultural facilities such as a ballroom or assembly room (for which see the **Culture and Entertainment** selection guide). These were reminiscent of clubs (see

below) and contained suites of rooms as well as single rooms for gentlemen (but not ladies). The term *hotel* in c.1800 also refers to simple establishments that offered clean and comfortable accommodation (and in architectural terms are little different to private houses). The railways brought both streams together: travellers' accommodation (both suites and bedrooms), ballrooms, restaurants, and other public rooms. The major hotels are marked by their scale and facilities (though never as large or plush as their American exemplars): electric lighting, bathrooms and elevators in particular. The architecture could be grand (especially in the public areas), but many more routine examples were built too: exceptions such as London's Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras (1868-74, G.G.Scott) show a mastery of planning as well as of elevational treatment, and decorative sumptuousness. The increasing purchasing power of the middle and (later) the working classes, and the rise of the family holiday, conveyed these buildings and services to seaside resorts such as Scarborough, Torquay and Blackpool and added spectacular buildings such as winter gardens. The first half of the twentieth century saw the gradual rejection of historicist styles and focused on elegantly streamlined interiors (notably the modernist Midland Hotel, Morecombe (Lancs.), 1932-3, by Oliver Hill, which was influenced by French examples). Few post-war hotels have reached this level of interest.

***Restaurants and Cafés*** Extremely few restaurants have survived well enough to be designated. Like shops, they are prone to regular upgrading, and few modern eateries now have permanent fixtures or decoration. Eating out as a recreational activity is largely a modern invention, but it has been an important aspect of urban life for centuries. The nineteenth century saw an expansion of bespoke premises serving meals, often as part of a larger establishment such as a hotel or railway station. The Tivoli Tavern in Gravesend, Kent, for example, was built in 1836 as a hotel and boasted refreshment rooms to serve the nearby Windmill Hill Pleasure Gardens. Some dining rooms could be very opulent: the first class waiting and refreshment room at Newcastle Station of 1893 has Burmantofts tile decoration covering the walls and ceilings. There are survivals of less opulent eating houses too, though these are rare: a late seventeenth-century building in Shambles Square, Manchester, for example, contains evidence of its use as an early nineteenth-century oyster restaurant and is listed; at 94 Farringdon Road, London, is an 1870's chop house, with in-built seating.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw many more premises built for eating and drinking. Some restaurants survive from this period: 46-8 New York Street, Leeds of 1900, for example, is listed. The chop house, which did not differ dramatically from the public house architecturally, also endured: one example is Thomas's Chop House of 1901 at 54 Cross Street, Manchester. There are small numbers surviving of one of the great working-class establishments of the period, the Pie and Eel Shop, such as F. Cooke's on Kingsland High Street, Dalston (London Borough of Hackney). Where these retain their tiled interiors and signage they could be listed. The greatest expansion in eateries was after the First World War when recreational dining became *de rigueur*. A good number of cafes, tea rooms and restaurants survive from this period including Betty's in York of 1936 which has an interior inspired by the cruise liners of the time, and what is now the Serpentine Gallery in London's Hyde Park, which was built as refreshment rooms in 1933-4. Cafes in or near tourist attractions, for example Ove Arup's Labworth Café of 1932-3 at Canvey Island, also survive and may merit listing where they are of architectural distinction. From the 1950s, cafes and coffee bars (often in London, and frequently run by Italian immigrants), revolutionised British eating and

drinking culture. Survival rates are very low but the best, retaining contemporary style fixtures, deserve serious consideration. Vitrolite and chrome Art-Deco exteriors and, are listed: the exemplar is the 1948 Pellicci's café on Bethnal Green Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, with its inlaid wood panelled interior. These buildings were important venues for the fast-emerging youth culture of the day: the Casbah Club, 8 Hayman's Green, Liverpool is listed on account of its basement coffee bar, replete with mural decoration by the proto-Beatles.

**Public houses** Pub architecture has always been a compromise between peoples' desire to drink and the authorities' desire to control it: 'the drink question' was a politically sensitive issue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 1830 Beer Act, a reaction to the perceived evils of gin, resulted in an increase in the number of pubs, often converted from private houses and barely distinguishable from them. Small and simple, often with no bar counter, they survive in small numbers in town and countryside. What we recognise today as the standard pub emerged in the mid-Victorian period. In line with other commercial types, pubs became more visually assertive, with a greater emphasis on display realised through lettering, decoration and scale. Further legislation and licensing controls encouraged the plan form that became prevalent, with multiple entrances and numerous rooms for different styles of drinking, often divided by low partitions rather than solid walls, served increasingly from a single bar. Not all pubs were lavishly decked out but most had some of the fittings that, when brought together, created the iconic 'gin palace': mahogany bar counters, shelving, mirrors, partitions, frosted glass windows, signage, decorative tiling, embossed ceilings, occasionally with public rooms upstairs. This type of urban pub emerged in London from the 1840s onwards, and became more common elsewhere from the 1870s, but only reached its height in the 1880s and 1890s. Occasionally, integrated brewhouses to the rear of a pub survive: this can add to the interest considerably.

As suburbs grew, so pubs of a different type developed: called 'improved' or 'reformed' these targeted 'respectable' drinkers and provided a range of eating and entertainment facilities. The apogee of the reformed pub was the 'roadhouse'; invariably suburban, and generally built on the growing network of arterial roads, these could attain great size to accommodate many varied functions, and were generally traditional in style, from half-timbered to Neo-Georgian to the 'Cape Dutch'. Some interwar resembled small stately homes, with appropriately fitted-out interiors; Lutyens's Drum Inn at Cockington, Devon, was like a vast thatched cottage. Pubs can vary considerably from region to region in terms of plan and display; also, companies often adopted a distinctive house style. The Temperance Movement built alternatives, also often on an ambitious scale: the Ossington Coffee Tavern of 1882 in Newark (Notts.) by Ernest George & Peto marks the architectural high-water mark of temperance architecture. Post-war pub architecture has seldom attained great heights, and for decades a traditional revival style has been common.

**Gentlemen's Clubs and Masonic Lodges** More exclusive conviviality was to be found in a select number of clubs. *Gentlemen's clubs* developed as an exclusive version of the coffee houses and political clubs that met in London in the eighteenth century. The earliest recorded example was White's, founded in 1693 and on its present location in St James's St since 1755. Like many clubs it has an earlier town house at its heart, which has been remodelled with coffee, card and dining rooms, around an open stairwell. Later, clubs provided a library, and billiard room, even basement baths. The

Travellers' Club of 1829-32 by Charles Barry is the British début of the Italian *palazzo* style, with a series of rooms around an imposing central staircase hall, a plan developed further by Barry at the Reform Club of 1838-41. The Royal Automobile Club on Pall Mall (Mewes and Davies, 1908-11) took the genre one stage further by including a fine swimming pool and baths complex in its basement. The extreme example of the exclusive gentleman's club is the *masonic lodge*, a series of meeting and dining rooms around a formal hall or temple. Their architectural character is strongly ancient and symbolic, with Egyptian as well as classical motifs, and they were built in considerable numbers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The lodge at Bradford, of 1926-8, is a good example in a classical style, with a marble-lined entrance hall, two dining rooms, a small temple and a large two-storey temple-cum-banqueting hall.

## 4 SUMMARY OF SELECTION CRITERIA

**Date** All medieval commercial buildings will be eligible for designation since they are exceptionally rare. Even fragmentary evidence will be very important. Most buildings prior to 1840 surviving in anything like their original form will be listable; intact contemporary details and fittings, both internal and external (like shop fronts) may justify a high grade. Thereafter more discretion is required, on account of higher survival rates, increasing standardisation, and varying levels of design interest.

**Selectivity** As with all buildings after 1840, rigorous selection is necessary. Given the high rates of attrition, however, all buildings which retain claims to special architectural interest, irrespective of date, deserve careful consideration. The quality of decorative treatments may be an important consideration too.

**Alterations** Commercial premises are intrinsically prone to change and alteration, and cannot be expected to survive in their original configuration. Careful assessment is needed as to whether enough survives of the special interest for designation to be warranted. Sometimes the special interest will be concentrated in a single aspect of a building (such as a shop front) and this needs to be identified at the designation stage. Front elevations can sometimes be sufficiently interesting or rare architecturally to warrant listing, even if the interior has been substantially altered or even lost.

**Rarity** It is easy to overlook the significance of some modest and plain commercial buildings. They can sometimes possess a significance beyond that suggested by their outward form. Beer houses, for instance, are now extremely rare and they should not be judged against the high decorative standards of more numerous gin palaces. Some modern categories such as coffee bars are surprisingly rare too.

**Authenticity** Care needs to be taken as a fair number of shop fronts that *look* convincingly Georgian often turn out to be much more recent and care is needed in confirming authenticity when assessing for designation. This applies to banks, pubs and hotels as well.

**Group Value** Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings sometimes form impressive urban ensembles and may be listable for their group value as well as any intrinsic merit they may possess.

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