

Agenda Item	13
Report No	EDI/25/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 17 May 2018

Report Title: Shopfront Design Guide: Planning Guidance

Report By: Director of Development and Infrastructure

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents Shopfront Design Guide: Planning Guidance (The Guidance). The Guidance aims to ensure planning applications affecting shopfronts are informed, competent and comply with policy. It will also ensure that the Council makes consistent decisions in line with national policy and best practice.
- 1.2 This document follows a 6 week public consultation and takes account of comments made. The Guidance is in line with national policy and guidance published by Historic Environment Scotland and incorporates best conservation practice for shopfronts, including shopfronts in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.
- 1.3 Committee approval is sought for the finalised version of the Guidance.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the finalised version of the Shopfront Design Guide: Planning Guidance for adoption as non-statutory supplementary guidance.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Supplementary Guidance (SG) aims to formalise and clarify for owners, lessees, agents, contractors and manufacturers the issues, considerations and options in relation to shopfronts, with an emphasis on those that are Listed and/or in conservation areas; it will help ensure informed and competent applications that accord with both national and local policy.
- 3.2 The SG will also ensure transparency and clarity in the planning process by assisting members of planning committees and development management officers in making consistent decisions that conform to best conservation practice, in line with policy.
- 3.3 Following approval by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting in November 2017, the *Draft* Shopfront Design Guide planning (Draft SG) was published for consultation. A wide variety of stakeholders were consulted including business organisations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Old Town Traders, Scottish Council for Development and Industry), Community Councils, building and civic trusts and societies, national agencies, manufacturers and architects. The consultation was publicised via social media. The consultation ran from 11 February 2018 to 23 March 2018.
- 3.4 Few responses (7) were received via the Council's consultation portal, partly reflecting the small number of people directly affected by the policy. Social media promotion reached a total of 11,506 people and received 373 post clicks and 24 comments.
- 3.5 Of the 24 Facebook comments only 2 were relevant, the remainder raising concerns outwith the scope of this report. A couple of comments were mistakenly of the view that the Council would be directly funding the upgrade of shopfronts in line with the Guidance, which is not the case.
- 3.6 A full list of respondents, together with comments received can be found on the Council's consultation portal <http://consult.highland.gov.uk/portal/environment/shopfronts/shopfronts>. The amended document is set out for Committee's consideration in **Appendix 1**.

4 Consultation Response

- 4.1 Overall, comments were supportive and the negative impact of inappropriate shopfronts on the character and appearance of Highland towns was acknowledged. The potential to create an inviting environment for both locals and visitors by maximising the historic built environment through better controls on design and signage would not only improve appearance but boost the local economy. Comments were received from individuals, manufacturers and national agencies. All comments were carefully considered and resulted in a number of minor amendments and clarifications, which have been incorporated into the final document.
- 4.2 The importance of the SG to ensure a unified, clear and transparent approach to the issue was broadly welcomed.
- 4.3 Guide Dogs Scotland raised issues with regard to on-street advertising increasing clutter and creating obstacles. The guidance on the use of A-boards has been amended in line with the comments received.
- 4.4 Signage was a particular concern picked up by a number of respondents, especially

signage which is insensitively sized and designed, using cheap and/or inappropriate materials. These comments are acknowledged and signage is discussed in detail in Section 9 but is referred to throughout the Guidance.

- 4.5 One respondent asked that the section on lighting was strengthened to include bright internal lighting causing glare when viewed externally. This issue is acknowledged and recommendations to minimise external glare and light pollution have been incorporated into the Guidance.
- 4.6 One respondent raised issues with regard to the presumption against the use of uPVC in shopfronts in Listed Buildings, and in most general circumstances in conservation areas. The position set out in the SG, which supports the use of traditional, sustainable materials and designs that are sensitive and appropriate to the historic context, is in line with national policy.
- 4.7 Historic Environment Scotland welcomed the Guidance and provided detailed comments relating to terminology and minor comments relating to other sections of the document and noting where additional images would be helpful to illustrate points. All points made by HES are accepted and the Guidance has been amended accordingly.

5 Implications

- 5.1 There are no resource, legal, climate change or community implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 Gaelic – Gaelic titles and headings are included throughout.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 8 May 2018

Author: Andrew Puls, Principal Officer - Building Conservation and Environment

Background Papers: Shopfront Design Guide: Planning Guidance

Development and
Infrastructure
Service

Seirbheis an
Leasachaidh agus
a' Bhun-structair



Shopfront Design Guide

Planning Guidance

Iùl Dealbhaidh Aghaidh Bhùithtean Stiùireadh Dealbhaidh



May 2018

www.highland.gov.uk

1 Why Good Shopfronts Matter

Shopfronts play an important role in defining the character of an area. As they are situated at ground level, shopfronts are highly visible and the image they project has a significant impact on the quality of their built environment and the way people experience an area.

Well-designed shopfronts, constructed from high quality materials with appropriate signage, interesting window displays and an inviting entrance, fulfil their commercial purpose whilst also providing more attractive streets and encouraging people to visit or spend more time in an area thereby increasing business for traders.

The opposite is also true. Rundown, unattractive and out of character shopfronts can have a negative impact, detracting from the area they are situated in and discouraging shoppers.

Many of our shops are in conservation areas or listed buildings where insensitive design can damage the historic environment and built heritage. Properly maintained traditional shopfronts add interest and variety to a street, help to foster local distinctiveness and define a unique 'sense of place'. This attractiveness is increasingly important today when shoppers can choose to shop on the internet or in out-of-town retail parks. In order to remain competitive, local shopping areas need to offer a different and diverse experience - such as an attractive environment to spend time in and sociable places to meet people and interact with the local community.

This Guidance has been produced to promote high quality design standards for shopfronts and is aimed at encouraging developers and applicants to consider design matters at the earliest stage of their proposals. It applies to all traditional, replacement and new shopfronts, including cafés, restaurants and pubs.

The Council welcomes and encourages discussions before a planning application is submitted and provides a [Pre-application Advice Service](#)⁽¹⁾. Not all shopfront changes require planning permission. See Section 13 of this Guidance for more information.



1 http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/219/planning_guidance_and_advice/4

2 Shopfront Categories

The Highlands contain a variety of settlements with a wide range of shops from local village stores to out of town shopping centres. Proposals for shopfront design, alteration or improvement usually fall within one of four contexts – as follows:

A traditional shopfront that has survived in whole or in part

A traditional shopfront typically conforms to a basic pattern, despite having evolved and responded over time to take advantage of technological advancements in materials and design. It typically consists of a door, windows, fascia, cornice, pilasters and stallriser. These elements and components are explained in more detail in Section 5. Traditional shopfront features are subject to a wide range of variation, however, and may vary greatly from building to building.



An interwar shopfront that, with the exception of curved glazing to the lobby, is remarkably intact, including the original awning



A Victorian shopfront that retains much of its original character. The finish and fascia has been well considered to give it a contemporary twist



An elegant Edwardian shopfront



Ornate pilastered Edwardian shop with delicate cast iron arcade and cresting

A traditional shopfront that was previously altered or replaced by unsympathetic design

Many traditional shopfronts have undergone unsympathetic modifications that have obscured some or all of their traditional features or are otherwise poor quality. These frequently detract from the character of their surroundings. It is often possible to improve the appearance of a modified shopfront by repairing or reinstating traditional features, colours and signage.



A formerly handsome traditional shopfront that has largely been removed by an unsympathetic replacement (right)



The original fascia is likely to survive underneath the existing. Otherwise, very little trace of the original shopfront survives



An attractive shop with cast iron pillars. Much of its detail has since been obscured (right)...



... but it is likely that the original fascia survives below the modern alterations and the character can be restored relatively simply

2 Shopfront Categories

A 20th century shopfront that makes a distinctive contribution to the surrounding streetscape

Over the course of the 20th century shopfronts changed in response to the rise of chain stores as well as the introduction of new materials and a desire to maximise display windows and adverts in an ever more competitive market. Many mid to late 20th century shopfronts have a style and character of their own and can be distinctive pieces of architecture in their own right.



A distinctive 20th century shopfront that makes a positive contribution to the surrounding streetscape

A shopfront forming part of new development

Shopfronts form part of new development in a variety of contexts such as new buildings that occupy vacant sites in town centres, neighbourhood centres in settlement expansion areas, and out of town shopping centres.

Traditional shopfronts

Existing traditional shopfronts, where surviving, should be retained and, where necessary, carefully repaired. All original fabric should be conserved, including stallrisers, pilasters, fascia, doors, windows, fanlights, tiles and ironmongery.

Where a traditional shopfront has undergone unsympathetic modifications that have retained and/or obscured some or all of its traditional features, the Council will encourage and support:

- the repair and restoration of traditional features;
- the reinstatement of traditional detailing where this has been removed.

Where a traditional shopfront has been replaced by a design that is unsympathetic or otherwise poor quality, the Council will encourage and support a more appropriate design that is in keeping with the style and character of the existing building and its surroundings.

Where a traditional shopfront has been removed in its entirety the Council will support the reinstatement of the traditional design providing this is based on sound historical or contextual evidence.

Where no evidence of the traditional shopfront exists or it can be demonstrated that reinstatement is not appropriate and/or possible, the Council will consider a contemporary design that is sympathetic to and in-keeping with the scale and character of the existing building. Design must be of a high quality. Appropriate use of traditional materials in a contemporary style will be encouraged and supported.



BEFORE: 1970s replacement shopfront in a traditional building



AFTER: Traditional shopfront, with stallriser and painted signage, reinstated (High Street, Dingwall)

3 Key Principles



BEFORE: Unsympathetic modern replacement shopfront in a traditional building (photo courtesy of Lindsay Lennie)



AFTER: Shopfront, with traditional proportions and detailing, reinstated (King Street, Stirling) (photo courtesy of Lindsay Lennie)



BEFORE: Poorly considered alterations obscure this traditional shopfront's character



Design drawn-up to reinstate its character



AFTER: Fascia and door reinstated with a traditional finish (Academy Street, Inverness)

New Shopfronts

Where a building and shopfront are considered to make an important contribution to the existing streetscape the Council will apply similar principles to those outlined for traditional shopfronts.

Shopfronts forming part of a new development

Where shopfronts are incorporated into new development they should:

- i. be distinctly of its time and avoid pastiche;
- ii. where located in a historic context:
 - respect the pattern of historic frontages, in particular how traditional shopfronts are framed and relate to the remainder of the facade, ensuring that upper floors appear to be supported by the ground floor.

- take account of the wider streetscape by relating well to the building line, proportion, scale, height and geometry of traditional shopfronts.
 - it is expected that shopfronts will exhibit a vertical emphasis to fenestration and include a well proportioned fascia board, unless unless otherwise justified on design grounds.
 - include neighbouring properties on elevation drawings to provide context.
- iii. make use of high quality materials – avoid uPVC, plastic and acrylic.
- iv. promote a high level of transparency between street and interior using, for example, high quality glazing and interior lighting.
- v. use colour but be sensitive to the predominant palette and character;
- vi. ensure advertising space in display windows covers no more than 20% of the total area.

4 General "Dos and Don'ts" of Shopfront Alteration and Design

Each shopfront should be considered on its own merits and also in relation to its context. A design suitable for one building may not be appropriate for another, but a parade of shops in the same frontage may share proportion and design elements. The most suitable approach will be dictated by a range of factors, including date, type, style and the condition of the shopfront. Nonetheless, a set of broad design principles can be applied in the majority of cases.

DO

- ✓ View the shopfront as part of the larger building and consider the shopfront as part of the overall architectural composition – a new shopfront should take account of the rhythm and scale of the upper floor windows, as well as architectural elements and embellishments that occur throughout the building. It should also relate well to the proportions, rhythm and pattern of the wider streetscape including other traditional shopfronts where these exist.
- ✓ Undertake a detailed measured survey of the existing shopfront, research its history, source historic photographs and plans and prepare accurately scaled drawings of existing and proposed elevations and sections.
- ✓ Respect the character of neighbouring buildings and reflect, respond and be sympathetic to the wider context.
- ✓ Avoid uniformity, unless uniformity forms part of the design (i.e. identically designed shops within a single building or parade of shops). This is especially important where one business occupies adjacent buildings of a different design.
- ✓ Keep the shopfront flush with or slightly projecting from the building façade, avoiding setbacks except where these occur in the original layout, e.g. at the doorway.
- ✓ Make sure display windows have a vertical emphasis; mullions can be used to subdivide the window to enable the shopfront to relate more comfortably with the rest of the building as well as giving the shop character.
- ✓ Maximise transparency between the street and shop interior by ensuring display windows are not obscured by signage, advertising or other visual clutter.
- ✓ Make sure that where a single shop spreads across several frontages, this rhythm is evident and reflected in the design, which should mark where the divisions occur.

4 General "Dos and Don'ts" of Shopfront Alteration and Design

DON'T

- ✘ Use generic 'house' styles for a commercial brand, particularly where this will have a negative impact on the character of a Listed building and/or Conservation Area.
- ✘ Adopt a pastiche approach that copies a historical style, rather than achieving an individual solution based on good design principles.
- ✘ Use unsympathetic materials such as uPVC, sheet plastics, perspex, laminates, aluminium, stainless steel or plastic coated or anodised metals and plastic signage.
- ✘ Use timber that is not certified as having come from a sustainable source.
- ✘ Place steps at doorways. Level access and doorway width should comply with best DDA practice and Building Standards.



The shopfront does not relate to the upper floors with the overly-deep fascia stretching the entire length of the building.



By dividing the shopfront into 3 symmetrical bays proportionately the shopfront relates much better to the upper floors. The stallriser, pilasters and cornice ground the shopfront and provide it with a more solid frame and structure. The fascia is much better proportioned and respects the rhythm of the building.

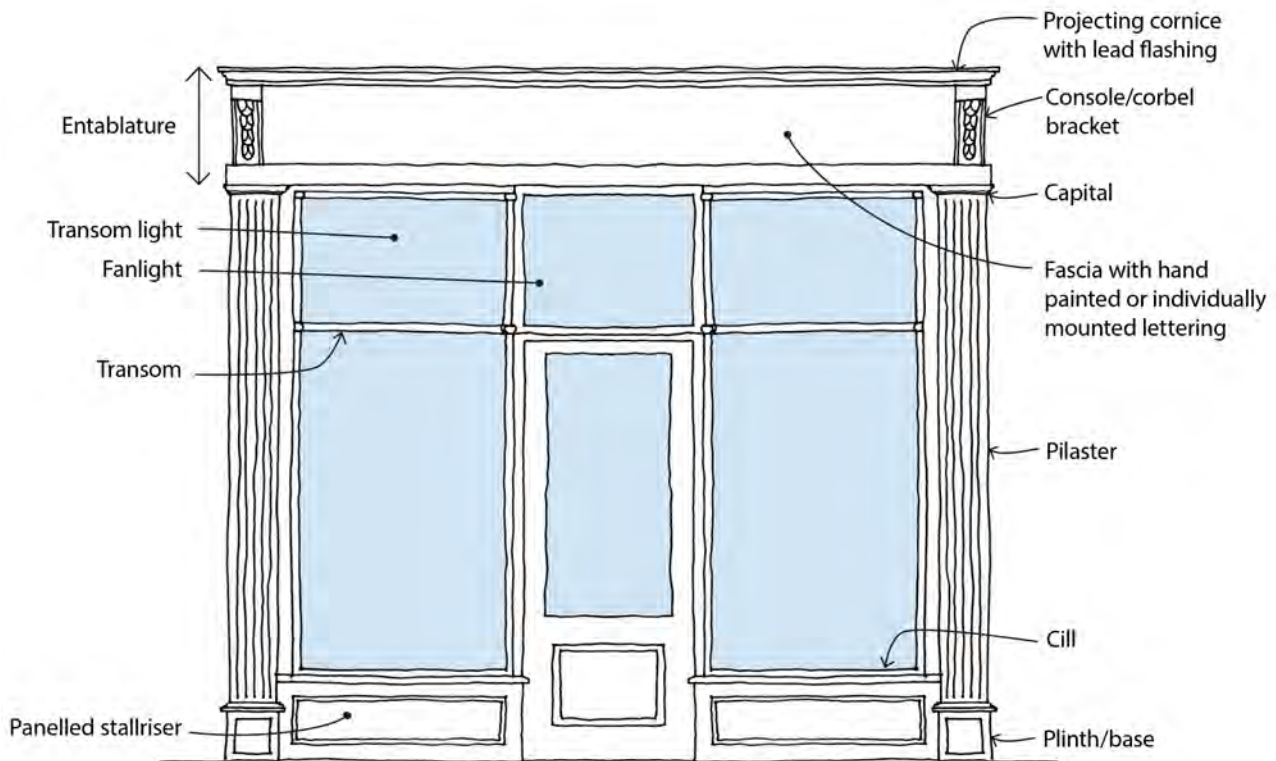
4 General "Dos and Don'ts" of Shopfront Alteration and Design



The symmetry has been restored and proportionally the shopfront now relates with the upper floors. The fascia, pilasters, stallrisers and door all work together as a coherent and unified unit making the shopfront both attractive and welcoming

Key Elements of a Shopfront

This diagram illustrates some of the key features of a traditional shopfront design. Many of the best modern shopfronts, however, adhere to the classic principles, proportions, and components of traditional design.



Fascia

The fascia typically displays the trade name of the shop.

The fascia and cornice (which provides a frame for the fascia and protects it from the weather) provide a distinctive horizontal divide from the floors above and mark the point at which the scale and design of the building changes from commercial to domestic. Given its prominence, the fascia can have a considerable impact on the character and appearance of the building and wider streetscape.

Not all shops or businesses occupy buildings that were originally designed to function as a shop and as such do not incorporate a fascia. In these cases alternate advertising space must be found which may require an imaginative solution.

General guidance for good fascia design is as follows:

- i. The scale and design of the fascia should be appropriate to the character, height and period of the building and in proportion with the design of the shopfront.

5 Detailed Design Guidance

- ii. The dimensions (height and width) of the original fascia should be used wherever possible – e.g. where evidence of a traditional fascia exists, the dimensions of a new fascia should match this.
- iii. All lettering and logos are constrained by the depth of the fascia.
- iv. A deep fascia that obscures part of the shop window or surrounding walling is not suitable.
- v. The fascia should avoid concealing any original architectural details and must always be lower than the cornice and the first floor cills above and must not extend across more than one building or shopfront.
- vi. Fascia panels will be kept flush with, or projecting slightly from, the face of the surrounding framework. Materials will relate to the building (acrylics and plastics should be avoided) and will not incorporate internal illumination.
- vii. Modern shopfronts should be designed with fascia boards as an integral feature rather than having them added later as a separate box.
- viii. Modern projecting box fascias in acrylic/plastic will not normally be supported.
- ix. Where a false ceiling is proposed inside a shop, it may not be acceptable to alter the fascia depth in line with it. Careful detailing of the window design, using opaque glass or setting the false ceiling back within the shop are more appropriate solutions.
- x. Standardized or corporate fascias or logos may not be acceptable unless they are modified to fit within or complement the traditional scale and design of the shopfront, as well as the character of the area.
- xi. Fascias should not be internally illuminated.

Pilasters

Pilasters, together with the cornice and fascia, provide visual support for the upper part of the building, frame the display and entrance and separate it from its neighbours.

The width of pilasters will vary between shopfronts, but will normally include a base, capital and/or console bracket. Pilasters can be fluted or plain. It is usual for pilasters to project forward slightly from the shopfront.

Pilasters should always be incorporated into the design either in a traditional form or a contemporary alternative.

Pilasters should be free of signs, alarms and blind fittings.

Stallrisers

Stallrisers provide a visual base to the shopfront and support and protect the glazing. They may incorporate ventilation grilles. Existing stallrisers should always be retained and contemporary replacement shopfronts should generally incorporate a stallriser.

Stallrisers should be constructed of high quality timber panels, render or stone. The appropriate depth will be determined by the overall design but should be at least 400mm high.

Glazing to ground level in traditional shopfronts is not usually acceptable. An exception occurs where the original shopfront no longer exists and the proposal features a high quality modern, transparent screen, as described in 5.15 below.

5 Detailed Design Guidance



Individually applied lettering, when done sensitively, on a traditional fascia can be very effective



A hand painted timber fascia framed by the prominent cornice and console brackets



Lettering and logos should be constrained by the depth of the fascia



Pilasters can take a variety of forms and styles in a variety of materials. They can range from the very plain to the highly ornate



Picture 5.1 An ornate console brackets, often used to bookend the fascia



Columns fulfill a similar role to pilasters often framing the display and entrance

5 Detailed Design Guidance



Shopfronts have a variety of different glazing patterns with mullions and transoms dividing the display area



Some windows can be fairly ornate and incorporate attractive detailing



Edwardian and early 20th century shops often have a clerestory with small square panes (possibly stained or coloured)



Cast iron window surround framing the display window



Doors are an important part of any shopfront and can be outstanding features in their own right



Decorative thresholds are important survivals and increasingly rare. They must always be retained, even when they display the name of a previous business

Windows and Display Area

Windows are one of the most important visual elements of the shopfront.

The size and style of shop windows, including mullions and transoms, should be in scale and proportion with the shopfront and the character of the building.

Large expanses of glass are generally out of scale on traditional buildings and are not likely to be supported. An exception occurs where the original shopfront no longer exists and the proposal features a high quality modern, transparent screen that can be justified in terms of architectural and townscape benefit (e.g. the benefit of dissolving the threshold between street and interior). The screen should be framed by pilasters and an entablature that adhere to the classic principles and proportions of traditional design.

Windows should normally be:

- a. Sub-divided vertically by suitably moulded timber mullions and where appropriate horizontally by timber transoms.
- b. Taken down to a cill and stallriser.

Where original windows and fenestration (including ventilation grilles in the window head) survive there is a presumption against their removal. Where original windows are beyond repair replacements should match the original work exactly.

Window frames should be painted unless evidence for other finishes suggests otherwise.

Where traditional windows and glazing patterns have been lost, the Council will support their reinstatement where evidence exists for the original design.

Lobby

Traditional shopfront design often features a lobby, a small recessed area at the front of the shop leading to the door. The lobby threshold may display decorative tiles or trade names; these are increasingly rare and should always be retained. See Section 12 for all-ability access.

Doors

Traditionally, shop doors are recessed from the street and are timber half or three quarter glazed with a solid moulded panel.

Guiding principles for doors:

- i. Where traditional doors survive they must be retained. Where this is not practicable they should be replicated.
- ii. The door panel should match the height and style of any panelling present on the stallriser and mouldings should be sympathetic to the period.
- iii. Doors and windows should normally be painted in a matching colour.
- iv. All original ironmongery, fittings and fixtures should be retained and, where necessary, overhauled. Where new doors are necessary, they should match as closely as possible the original design and material.

5 Detailed Design Guidance

- v. The fanlight is an important component of a doorway and should always be retained and not overpainted, covered with plastic film or excessive advertising.
- vi. The Council will support the reinstatement of traditional doors where these have been lost.
- vii. uPVC and aluminium doors are not acceptable in listed buildings or conservation areas.

Other Components, Fixtures and Fittings

Shopfronts may contain a variety of other bespoke features not outlined above, for example, ventilation grilles, boot scrapers, door bells and old street signs. Whilst these features may be small and often overlooked, they can have a significant bearing on our understanding of the building's history and contribute to its character.



Remnants of two phases of the painted street name survive below the current metal sign



Bespoke metal ventilation grille displaying the business name

Colour and Painting

Colour is an important element of a shopfront and can add vibrancy to the street. The colour scheme for a shopfront should be the result of historic precedent, be harmonious with its surroundings and should be appropriate to the style and period of the shopfront design and the building. Traditional colour schemes can sometimes be identified from historic photographs and/or old paint layers present on the surface of the building.

The Council will support the use of colour on traditional and new shopfronts in line with the following principles:

- i. A wide range of darker, rich and muted tones will be considered favourably in most contexts and works especially well where the shopfront extends across most or all of the building, or has wide pilasters.
- ii. Lighter and neutral colours (including pastels) *may* be suitable on smaller shopfronts and those with slender detailing.
- iii. Overly bland and overly vivid colours should normally be avoided, as should brilliant white except where these can be justified in terms of architectural and townscape benefit.
- iv. Shopfronts should, generally, be painted in a single colour although a second complimentary colour can be used selectively to highlight decorative or architectural details.
- v. Stained or varnished timber is not generally suitable for traditional shopfronts, but may be appropriate if satisfactorily incorporated into high quality modern design.

The Council may require generic “house” styles to be adapted to meet the specifics of the building or area. Generic styles for a commercial brands can have a negative impact on the character of a conservation area or Listed Building. Often large companies have developed ‘heritage’ options suitable for use in sensitive historic contexts. The background colour of the fascia should provide contrast to that of the lettering.

There is a presumption against painting stonework surrounding a shopfront and this will only be supported where stone has historically been painted or this can be justified through historic research.

Where masonry has been painted without adherence to historic precedent, the Council will support and encourage the removal of the paint.

Rendered or harled surfaces may be suitable for painting or the application of a lime wash to add colour to the façade. Careful consideration should be given to ensure the colour harmonises with the shopfront and surrounding context.

Glass (including fanlights) should not be overpainted.

Shopfront colour schemes should be approved by the Planning Authority.

Materials

Materials should always be appropriate to the age and style of the shopfront. Traditional shopfronts should utilise traditional materials and timber is often the best choice. Timber can be finely detailed, moulded to different profiles and by simply repainting, can accommodate changes in image and brand without detriment to the building.

6 Materials, Colour and Finishes

Cast iron components, where present, are important features of a shopfront that will be retained wherever practicable. Where beyond repair they will be replaced on a like-for-like basis.

A range of alternative materials may be acceptable for non-traditional shopfronts provided they are part of a well-designed scheme that uses high quality materials and is appropriate to the context. It should be noted that uPVC is never acceptable in a listed building or conservation area. Elsewhere its use is discouraged and should be carefully considered.



A pair of contemporary shops with cast iron pillars finished in complimentary colours.



Dark muted tones can be particularly effective on traditional shopfronts



Although predominantly painted red, architectural detail has been highlighted in white



The rich green of the cast iron surround contrasts well with the white window frames and door



Here, exposed stonework is an integral part of the shopfront. The paint finish has been carefully chosen to compliment the colour of the stone



The use of a single colour can help unify a shopfront

7 Canopies and Blinds

Blinds and canopies were traditionally used to protect goods from damage by sunlight. The Council will encourage the use and repair of existing traditional blinds (including the blind box and mechanism) and reinstatement of appropriate blinds where there is historical precedent. New blinds will be considered where there is a requirement to protect goods from sunlight. Where there is a requirement for a canopy or blind, these should:

- i. cover the width of the shopfront fascia;
- ii. be incorporated into the fascia, flush or behind the fascia, and not obscure any architectural detailing;
- iii. be fully retractable with a non-reflective surface;
- iv. be of materials and colour to complement the shopfront and building;
- v. not include advertisements or lettering that dominates the streetscape; and
- vi. have the outer edge a minimum of 1m from the kerb and be no less than 2.3m above the pavement.

Dutch blinds and similar non-retractable blinds are primarily used for advertising and are not a traditional feature of Highland streetscapes. Such styles will not be supported.



Surviving traditional canopies and awning are an increasingly rare and important survival. They should always be retained and repaired where necessary.



The detailing and mechanism as well as the design of traditional awnings all contribute to the significance and character of the shop



The blinds provide shelter for external tables and are retracted into unobtrusive purpose-built blind boxes under the fascia.



Internal blinds are an effective way of protecting goods or customers from sunlight without the need for external canopies

8 Advertisements and Signage

Effective signage is essential to successful commercial activity; good and effective signs are simple, uncomplicated and uncluttered. There is, however, a balance between the need for eye-catching design and the preservation of character of the building and the amenity of the surrounding area. As such it is important that signage is considered as an integral part of the design of a shopfront or building.

Signage should take into account the following principles:

- i. Signs should state the name/type of business and any corporate logo should be of a suitable scale as to not dominate the sign. Pictures should be avoided where possible.
- ii. Insensitive, oversized new signs over the original fascia, letters and logos of excessive size, plastic signs with computer-generated images or lettering and highly reflective fascias will not be supported.
- iii. Colours used must be sympathetic to the building.
- iv. Signs should fit within the original fascia, where this exists.
- v. In circumstances where a traditional fascia has either been removed or covered over by a non-traditional fascia, it is expected that the fascia is returned to its more traditional form.
- vi. Placing a new fascia above frieze level should be avoided.
- vii. Hand painted timber or individually applied lettering is the preferred form for traditional buildings. The letters chosen should occupy a maximum of two-thirds of the space and be centred leaving a gap above and below and at either end.
- viii. Transfer lettering stuck to the fascia may be acceptable.
- ix. Plastic letters will not normally be supported although non-reflective metal or acrylic may be acceptable.
- x. Signage in Conservation Areas, regardless of the age or style of the parent building, will always seek to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the conservation area.

On buildings where no purpose built fascia exists the design and detailing of the façade will dictate the form and scale of the advertising. The preferred option in this case is to fix individual letters onto a frame or bracket (a clear acrylic panel may be acceptable in certain circumstances) which can then be carefully fixed to the masonry. However, in some cases individual letters fixed to the stone by way of concealed fittings may be acceptable. Other options to consider could include sign writing (signs may only be painted onto buildings where the building itself is painted), a transparent transfer on a window, a small well-designed plaque or a simple projecting sign.

Window stickers should cover no more than 20% of the total window area.

Temporary advertisement stickers drawing attention to sales and other special events should be kept to a minimum, usually one per window and removed as soon as the event closes.

The application of opaque film that renders a window 'blind' will not be supported.

Window signs in upper floors will only be permitted for a business operating solely on the upper floors.

Advertising panels applied to masonry piers or shop surrounds will not be supported.

Freestanding signs such as A-Boards are often unnecessary, can lead to street clutter and create obstacles for the visually impaired and those with mobility problems. Council policy requires businesses to apply for permission to display A-Boards and, if approved, comply with requirements laid out in the guidelines attached to the relevant [application form](#)⁽²⁾. Council Roads Inspectors are responsible for enforcing this policy.

Where such signs are to be used they should be limited to:

- i. one sign per business
- ii. approx. 1m high and 0.75m wide and able to resist being blown over
- iii. sited immediately outside the business being advertised and only where the width of the footpath allows
- iv. only be displayed during the opening hours of the business

The use of signs of an inappropriate scale, style or material can seriously detract from the amenity of an area, for example plastic or aluminium backed signs on traditional shopfronts. Inappropriate signage will not be supported and where installed it may lead to formal action to have it removed. It is important, therefore, that you check with the Planning Authority prior to installing new signage, even it appears to be permitted under the deemed consent provisions (see Section 13).

2 http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6840/advertising_sign.pdf

8 Advertisements and Signage



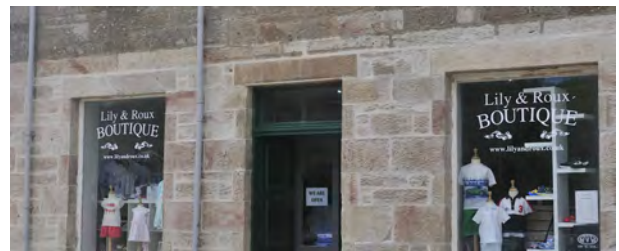
Individually applied lettering



Hand painted signage on a timber fascia



Individually applied lettering scaled to the depth of the fascia can be an effective way of adding signage to a shopfront.



Where no fascia exists using window transfers to advertise the business can be very effective



The painted lettering of a business that previously occupied this shop is still visible on the original stone fascia. Historic lettering, where it survives, is an important indicator of the building's history and should be retained. The new signage lacks the style and character of the original



Gable sign writing is not often seen today, but may be supported on painted or harled buildings

Projecting or hanging signs on a bracket form an important element of a traditional shopfront. The Council will consider the following:

- i. Only one hanging/projecting sign will be permitted per building and this should be positioned at fascia level.
- ii. The projecting sign should not dominate the elevation or obscure architectural detail or important features. It will be located to one side of the fascia and be fixed into stone joints rather than the masonry itself.
- iii. Illustrations, i.e. indicating the trade, are permissible. A hanging 3D model or symbol that relates to the business can also be considered
- iv. Projecting signs at fascia level should normally be no more than approximately 0.2 sq. metres. However, larger hanging signs may be acceptable in certain contexts and will be considered on their merits.
- v. The sign should be a minimum 2.3m above the footway.
- vi. On modern buildings, simple projecting signs will normally be acceptable.
- vii. On traditional buildings and within conservation areas, internally illuminated fascias and projecting box signs will be strongly resisted.



Ornate cast iron bracket with a mixture of gothic text and image reflects the business



This 3D projecting sign of a pestle and mortar belongs to a pharmacy



A more modern approach to a hanging sign showing the logo and a contemporary bracket



A standard bracket with the sign cut to help represent the name of the business

10 Lighting

Lighting should be discrete and carefully positioned. Light pollution should be avoided. Lighting needs careful design, but in general the Council will support:

- i. concealed trough lighting recessed into a projecting cornice or fascia box;
- ii. internally illuminated individual letters with opaque side;
- iii. the use of small spotlights; or
- iv. individual halo lit letters which stand proud of the fascia.

Generally the Council do not recommend, and in conservation areas and on listed buildings will not support, the following methods of lighting:

- i. Internally illuminated/Box signs
- ii. Swan-necked fascia lights (exceptions may be made for public houses)
- iii. Large expanses of illuminated light

Internal lighting should be carefully considered so as to not cause excessive light and glare to spill onto the street. Internal lighting should be recessed where possible or directed into the shop. Blinds may be appropriate in helping to minimise external glare.

Traditional shopfronts with smaller panes of glass can be more difficult to break into than modern shops with extensive areas of glazing. The introduction or re-instatement of glazing bars, mullions and stallrisers provides greater strength to a shop window or door. Strengthened and laminated glazing can also be used to give added security.

If a physical barrier within a shopfront, including doorways, is necessary the most appropriate option is an internal lattice or brick-bond grille. Internal grilles have a limited impact on the appearance of the shopfront and do not normally require Planning Permission. However, they may require Listed Building Consent.

External security

External retractable shuttering and shutter boxes can be very unattractive and are unlikely to be acceptable in conservation areas or on Listed Buildings. When closed, solid shutters detract from the visual appearance of individual buildings and will not be supported.

Where external shutters are permitted or are already in situ they should be coloured to match the shopfront. Uncoated or galvanised metal shutters are not acceptable.

New shopfronts outwith conservation areas should have external shutter boxes carefully designed to be unobtrusively concealed within the design of the shopfront.

Removable or fold-away cast iron or similar grilles are suitable options for traditional shopfronts. Well designed grilles can fit neatly within the window, and need not extend the full height of the window. The grilles and supporting mounts can be painted to match or complement the shopfront.

Applicants are required to demonstrate a particular security problem or need which cannot be satisfied by these measures before any other security means would be considered

Alarm Boxes

Alarms should not be overly prominent. It may be permissible to mount alarm boxes on the fascia board, coloured to blend in with the background and positioned so as to not obscure architectural details.

Wherever practicable, wiring should be routed inside the building rather than along the façade. If surface wiring cannot be avoided it should match the colour of its background, be securely fixed and mounted as inconspicuously as possible.

12 Access

Shops need to take into account the needs of disabled people and special user groups as well as prams and trolleys. Issues can arise where traditional shopfronts are involved and compromise may be required. However, where new shop fronts are installed, designs should aim to incorporate the following wherever possible:

- i. Flush thresholds.
- ii. Ramped access where necessary and steps of appropriate dimensions.
- iii. Non-slip, well-lit surfaces.
- iv. Doors with easy operation, preferably wide enough for wheelchair access (900mm minimum).
- v. Grab handles and door pulls at suitable height.
- vi. Satisfactory space for manoeuvring in lobbied areas.
- vii. Easily identifiable entrances.
- viii. Clear unobstructed approach on pavements.

Alterations to a Shopfront in a Listed building or Conservation Area

Any property within a conservation area and/or which is listed as being of 'Special Architectural or Historic Interest', is subject to more stringent planning control. This means that you will require Planning Permission for all external alterations to buildings in a Conservation Area, and Listed Building Consent for internal and external alterations to any Listed Building. This can include repainting in a different colour, small changes to features such as doors, decorative details, and fire and burglar alarms.

Alterations to a Shopfront not in a Conservation Area

If the building is not a Listed Building, and located outwith any other designated location listed under Class 9A(3) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1992, alterations to a shopfront may not require Planning Permission, although the Council will still encourage good design in line with this guidance.

Signage and Advertisement Consent

Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 1984 (as amended) outlines what signage can be displayed with Deemed Consent. All other signage will require Advertisement Consent. The two classes within the regulations that apply to shopfronts are *Class IV* (advertisements on business premises) and *Class VI* (illuminated advertisements).

Class IV concerns non-illuminated advertisements and places restrictions on the sizes and location of the advert.

Class VI concerns illuminated advertisements. Within a Conservation Area illuminated advertisements *always* require Advertisement Consent. Outwith a Conservation Area, individually illuminated letters are permitted development but an internally lit background, or any form of external illumination will require Advertisement Consent.

IMPORTANT NOTE Where an advert is installed under the deemed consent provisions of the Classes outlined above (IV and VI) the Planning Authority can still take enforcement action if the advert is considered to be inappropriate, i.e. an unsympathetic plastic or otherwise garish sign on any shopfront if, in the view of the Planning Authority, it is considered to have an adverse effect on amenity. In such cases the Planning Authority can serve a discontinuance notice and the signage would need to be removed. It is, therefore, important that the Planning Authority is consulted first, prior to installation, even if the advert appears to be permitted under the deemed consent provisions.

Building Regulations

In addition to Planning Permission and Advertisement Consent, certain works will need a Building Warrant, for example, if work involves structural alterations.

14 Further Reading

Historic Scotland. 2010. *Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Shopfronts and Signs*. Historic Scotland.

Historic Environment Scotland. 2017. *Short Guide: Scottish Traditional Shopfronts*. Historic Environment Scotland.

Lennie, L. 2010. *Scotland's Shops*. Historic Scotland.