

Advice Guide 8

General Principles of Good Shop Front Design

Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down
and South Armagh



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Introduction

Most alterations and improvements to shop fronts will require permission. More than one type of permission may be required. Repair works do not normally require consent. This note offers guidance for shop fronts within Conservation Areas, on Listed Buildings or on buildings adjacent to Listed Buildings and Areas of Townscape Character. You are advised to contact the relevant Statutory Body or the Planning Office within the Council if you have any queries in relation to the content of this guide.

Shop Fronts

Planning permission is required for the insertion or creation of a new shop front or for works which materially affect the external appearance of a shop. For example:

- Modifying the entrance door by means of a different design, material, relocation or size
- Removing or installing steps or a ramp
- Installing an awning or security shutters/grilles
- Modifying the shop window area including the fascia
- Changing facing materials
- Altering the alignment of the frontage

Signage and Advertisements

- Fascia signs, blinds, awnings and other external features, such as 'A' boards and pavement signs, may require advertisement consent.
- Illuminated signs will require advertisement consent.

Listed Building Consent

Historic shop fronts. Alterations to shops in listed buildings will usually require listed building consent. This applies not only to the shop front, but also to internal alterations and installation of fascia, signs, blinds, lights, shutters and burglar alarm cases. Where a historic shop is not listed, there will be a presumption in favour of retaining and refurbishing the whole shop front or any historic parts which remain.

Building Control Approval will be required for any structural alterations or the provision of services/fittings.

Submission of Applications

- Clear and accurate information will enable the application to be processed promptly.
- Scaled drawings should be submitted showing all existing architectural detailing, plus relevant details of the buildings on either side at a scale of 1:50.
- Applications will also be expected to show clearly all details of the proposed shop front and its relationship to the whole elevation. This includes any existing features that are proposed to be altered or removed.
- Plans, elevations and sections should be at a scale of 1:50, highlighting specific architectural detail at a scale of 1:20.
- At least one sectional drawing of the shop front should show its profile and relationship to the upper part of the building. Owners/occupiers should seek design advice from the Council's Planning Department before applying for planning permission as each building will be considered individually.
- The application should be accompanied by the appropriate planning fee.

Please remember that if you wish to apply for a shop sign you also require advertisement consent which is a separate application.

Enforcement

Enforcement action will be taken against unauthorised shop fronts installed without planning permission.

Principles of Good Shop Front Design

Good shop front design brings many benefits. It will attract attention and trade to the business and enhance townscape quality. Good shop front design will be sympathetic to its setting, both in terms of its immediate building frontage and the wider streetscape.

Good shop front designs which protect and enhance local distinctiveness, for example, the retention of original features are often appreciated by residents and visitors to our towns. Our towns retain many original shop units which should be protected. This is particularly important within our conservation areas and areas of townscape character.

High standards of construction and installation are particularly important. It is therefore recommended that professional advice is sought from suitably qualified architects and experienced shop fitters. Installers must be used when altering or installing shop fronts.

Protection of Traditional Buildings and Shop Fronts

It is important that the historic character and features of the host building, both at street level and the floors above, are identified and preserved. The design of the shop front should avoid obscuring these features and should be adapted to fit the overall architectural scheme, for instance bay division, openings or decorative features.

Traditional materials should be used in conservation areas and areas of townscape character, such as painted timber fascia, hand painted lettering or individually applied metal lettering. UPVC is not appropriate in the construction of doors or windows.

Traditional features are an extremely important part of shop fronts. Special features on existing shop fronts such as decorative ironwork, carved or moulded timber, decorative plasterwork, terracotta tiling, stonework, glazed tiles and coloured glass should be retained and restored where necessary.

Guidelines and advice should be sought from the Council's Planning Department when dealing with historic buildings or areas.

Shop Fronts in Modern Buildings

Where the preservation of the character of a traditional building or historic area is not a significant material consideration, the emphasis will be on the enhancement of the street scene. New shop fronts should aim to be in character with the building and the street scene.

Many of the principles of good design found in traditional shop fronts can be applied to new shop fronts, without resorting to poorly executed "pastiche" copies. Considerations will usually include modern interpretations of pilasters, fascia and stall risers.

Good modern design is welcome, provided it contributes to the overall streetscape setting as well as being aesthetically pleasing.

In certain areas, good modern shop front design is likely to be more appropriate. A modern shop front design approach might be appropriate, for instance, using applied lettering and minimal modern window and doorway design rather than trying to impose a 'heritage' shop front on a frontage that was never intended to take such a feature.



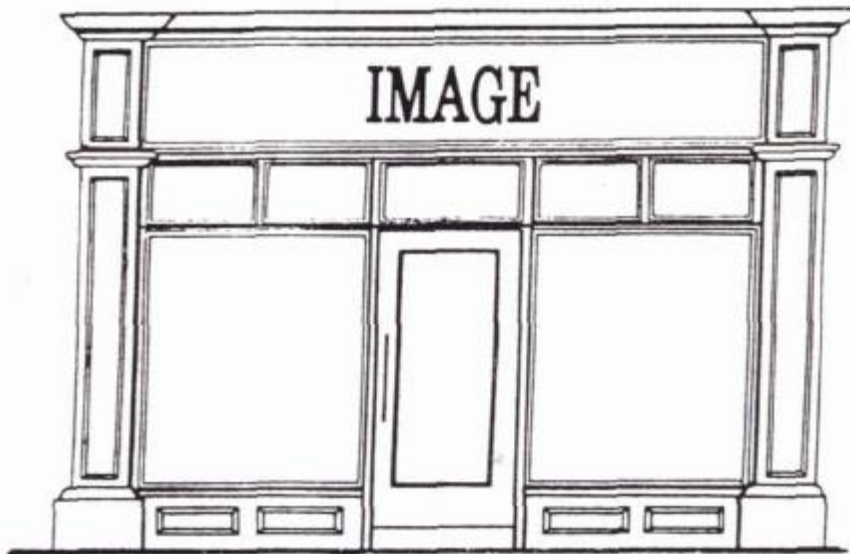
Shop Front Design Principles

As a general principle the Council will normally only give sympathetic consideration to alter, extend or provide new shop fronts if they comply with general shop front design principles:

- A shop front should not be designed in isolation but considered as part of the architectural composition of the building.
- The design should complement the period and style of the building onto which it is fitted and reflect the planning status of the area in which it is located, such as a designated conservation area or area of townscape character.

- Shop front elements should emphasise the division of the building and visually suggest a method of support for the facade above.
- Shops operating from more than one adjacent unit should retain the sub-division of the shop fronts to respect the integrity of the individual buildings.
- Materials should be appropriate to the context.

The main principles of shop front design, for each of the key shop fronts elements, are set out below.



Traditional shopfront

Window, Mullion, Fanlight and Window Sill

- Large plate-glass shop fronts without any visual support for the upper part of the premises can have a detrimental effect.
- The window should reflect the proportions of the building and be slightly recessed within the frame.
- Large expanses of glass are expensive to replace and will look out of place in older areas. Vertical timber mullions and glazing bars should be used to break up the window into smaller compartments, where appropriate.

Stall Risers (Panelled Fronts on the Bottom of Shop Windows)

- The stall riser provides a visual and structural base for the shop front and is an essential element of the design.

- Where stall risers exist, they should be retained as they are part of the overall shop front design. Where they have been removed from older shop fronts, their replacement is encouraged.
- They should be at least 500mm high or to the top of the pilaster base. It should have a moulded projecting sill beneath the glazing and be of solid construction. A stall riser brings the base of the window up to table level, improving the visibility of the goods displayed within.
- Stall risers are often panelled in timber with a deep moulded skirting or finished in glazed tile or marble.

Pilasters and Console Brackets

- Console brackets and pilasters are a feature which frame the shop front and provide vertical emphasis between adjacent shop fronts, while the cornice defines the top of the shop front.
- Pilasters and consoles should be designed to reflect the level of detail used in other elements of the shop front and treated in the prevailing material of the building, usually timber, painted stucco or render.

Fascia

- The appearance of a building will be affected by the width, length, depth, materials, colour and design of its shop fascia. For good appearance, the fascia should be designed as an integral part of the shop and building. It should be contained within the shop front, separated from an adjacent fascia by pilasters. If a shop front runs across two or more buildings, the integrity of each building must be respected. This can be achieved by creating what appears to be 2 or more separated but related shop fronts. The shop front should not extend, uninterrupted, across a number of buildings.
- An unnecessarily deep horizontal fascia can appear to divide a building in two and mar the street scene. Sometimes a fascia that is too deep is used to hide a suspended ceiling within a shop. This can be avoided by stopping false ceilings short of the glazing. As a general rule, fascia boards should integrate within the scale of the shop front at ground floor about 600mm (2ft) high, measured from top of cornice to window frame below. They should not encroach on first floor windows.
- The colours used in the fascia should not clash with the colours of an adjacent fascia. The use of acrylic or fluorescent materials in signs is inappropriate and not acceptable.

- Traditional materials should normally be used in conservation areas. These include elements such as painted timber, applied metal lettering or hand painted signs.
- Modern materials such as plastics, aluminium, Perspex and stainless steel are not normally acceptable for listed buildings, in conservation areas or areas of townscape character. This is because of their incompatibility with traditional building materials and their tendency to disrupt the visual unity of the street scene. Modern materials in modern shop fronts should be used with care.

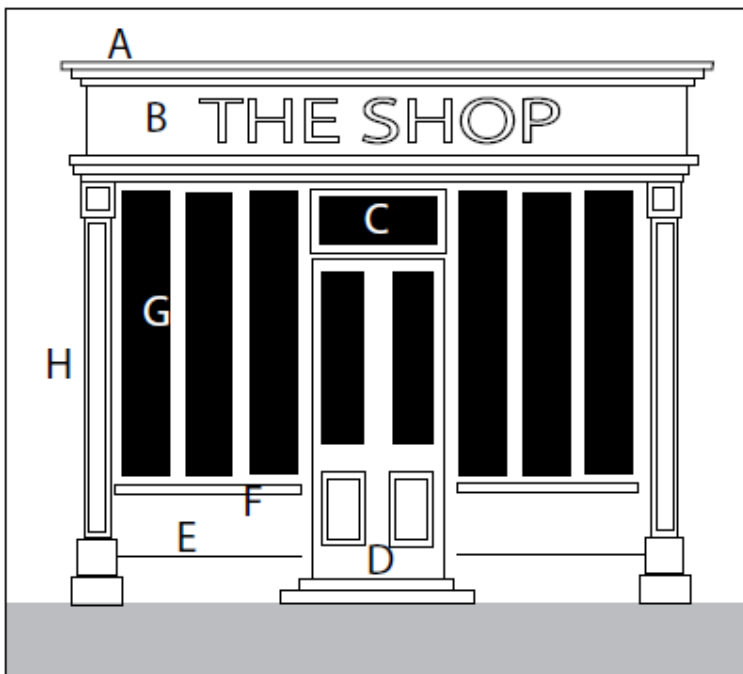
Doors and Access

- The design of the entrance door itself must reflect the design of the other elements which make up the shop front. Particular attention should be given to the windows, ensuring the bottom panel of the door is of the same height as the stall riser and both door and window frames are of the same material.
- If there is a separate access to upper floors, it should be retained to allow continued independent use of these floors.
- Painted timber, two-thirds glazed doors are recommended for shop entrances. Solid unglazed panelled doors are appropriate for access to living accommodation above the shop.
- On many traditional shop fronts the entrance is recessed and the floor of the recess decorated with mosaic or tiles. Where it remains, this feature should be retained. For safety and security, recessed entrances should be lit. Where the doorway is recessed, the recess should be square, or angled sharply. Long runs of angled shop window should be avoided.
- Appropriate door furniture should always be used.
- To be accessible to disabled people, entrance doors and access ramps should comply with current Building Control standards.

Canopies and Awnings

- Retractable canopies or blinds, when well-designed and sensitively located, can provide interest and colour in the street scene, add to the attractiveness of shops and provide protection from the weather. They should be designed to fit in with the style of the shop front and the character of the building, both when opened and closed.

- Traditional horizontal blinds that fold back into the fascia will normally be preferred. Where existing horizontal blinds and blind boxes exist, every encouragement will be given to retain and restore these in their original position. All canopies and blinds should clear the pavement by 2.3 metres.
- Plastic, fixed or 'Dutch' blinds are not acceptable. Blinds and canopies at first floor level and above are rarely satisfactory and will be resisted.
- Blinds and canopies should usually be the same width as the fascia but should not cover architectural details.
- Lettering may be acceptable where a retractable roller blind obscures the fascia when in use. When included, lettering or symbols should be limited in size. Consent to Display may be required.



Elements of a Traditional Shopfront

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| A | Cornice |
| B | Fascia (2) |
| C | Fanlight |
| D | Panelled Door |
| E | Stallriser (3) |
| F | Sill |
| G | Mullion |
| H | Pilaster (1) |

Security

- The Planning Department is concerned to balance the security needs of shopkeepers against the detrimental effect on the appearance of streets caused by certain types of shutters.
- Security should be an integral part of the design stage and when proposed, security shutters should be fully integrated into the frontage of the building. A well-designed shop front can be marred by inappropriate or 'bolt-on' security measures which fail to consider the character of the building or the general townscape.
- In new build or refurbishment, the shutter box should be recessed behind the fascia and the guide rails concealed within the shop front surround or window reveals.
- Surface mounted shutters will not be granted planning permission.
- Internal lattice shutters are a visible form of security that does not compromise the external appearance of the shop. They allow for a window display while not creating a dead frontage at night.
- Shutters shall be perforated or lattice type and colour coated to match the shop front. Unpainted galvanised shutters will not be granted planning permission.
- Shutter should not cover the whole of the shop front, only the glazed areas. For a large shop frontage, a number of smaller shutters applied to individual window openings should be used rather than a large single shutter.
- All security apparatus, including surveillance systems, lighting and alarms should be part of the design concept and located in unobtrusive positions. They should not interfere with architectural detail.

Signage and Advertising - Fascia, Projecting and Hanging Signs

Signs form a significant part of the overall appearance of the street frontage. The principal factors to be considered in the design of signs are the scale, the relationship with the design of the building, the style of the sign, the materials and the colour.

- Highly reflective and brightly coloured plastic signs are generally inappropriate, particularly in conservation areas and areas of townscape character.
- On traditional shop fronts, fascia is made of timber and are often no more than 400mm deep. Traditionally, fascia signs were either hand-painted or had individually applied letters. This type of sign can be designed to suit the building.
- Fascia signs should not extend above or below the original fascia panel and should not conceal or damage original architectural features. The fascia sign is a good place to incorporate the street number of the property.
- Internally illuminated signs or projecting signs in coloured plastic will generally not be accepted. Plastic and projecting box signs will not be permitted on buildings in conservation areas or Areas of Townscape Character. Elsewhere, fascia box signs should not protrude more than 100mm.
- If a fascia sign is to be lit, it must be done discreetly so as not to detract from the character of the building. Shop fronts can be disfigured by a clutter of swan-neck, long-stemmed projecting lamps or crude internally lit fascia. The use of concealed spot or wash-lighting to highlight signs is acceptable. Back lit or halo illumination of fascia signs may be acceptable, if well designed.
- Where lighting is proposed, full details of the fitting, method of fixing and luminance will be required in support of the application.
- The lettering should reflect the proportions, quality and character of the shop front. The best option for signs is to use individual letters restricted to the shop name. Oversized lettering can give a cluttered and unattractive appearance to the streetscape. Clear well-spaced letters are as easy to read as larger oversized letters.
- Hand-painted or individually fixed lettering such as brass or other metal will be encouraged. Samples of lettering should be supplied with applications.
- Letters or logos should not be affixed directly to the glazing of any shop or business window. Sign displays should be set back from the window and be significantly subsidiary in scale to the window area.

Projecting or Hanging Signs

- Often made from painted wood and ironwork, these can add originality and interest to the shop front and street. Hanging signs and their supporting brackets should be designed and positioned so as not to damage or conceal architectural features.
- They should not normally be placed below fascia level, or above first-floor window-sill height. Projecting signs are usually unsuitable for traditional shop fronts, especially when internally illuminated, for older areas. Projecting signs on modern shop fronts should be positioned within the fascia panel.
- The need to avoid clutter in the streetscape will be a material consideration in assessing any planning application for a hanging sign.

Lettering

There are a large number of traditional and modern fonts which can be used in shop front signage. The choice of style will depend upon factors such as the message being conveyed, the type of business and the visibility of the location. The design of the shop front and the building to which it is attached are also important factors. Lettering is an area where contrast can work as well as complement. Historic buildings do not always require a conservative font. Similarly, traditional lettering can work well on a modern façade.

Generally speaking, lettering should be contained by the architectural frame of the fascia panel and should be in proportion with it. Colours should harmonise with the detailing and character of the building and surrounding area.



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