



# Shopfront Design *Toolkit*



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# Shopfront

## Design *Toolkit*

### *Introduction*

This document has been prepared by South Lakeland District Council. It was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on 18th May 2004. South Lakeland District Council is the planning authority responsible for land use and development issues outside the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. This Supplementary Planning Guidance on shopfront design will only be applicable in those areas of the District outside the National Parks. The guidance contained in this SPG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. This guidance supersedes the document 'Shopfronts and Signs in South Lakeland - A Design Guide' produced in 1987.

Prior to it being formally adopted the guidance was consulted on widely with local amenity groups, civic societies, the retail community and other potential users of the guidance. A separate document detailing the results of that consultation process is held by the District Council and is available for inspection.

### *Why is the guidance needed?*

South Lakeland is a special place containing a wealth of history, historic properties, features and structures. South Lakeland's built heritage forms part of its charm, character and popularity for both residents and tourists. Tourism plays an important contribution to the area's economy and the character of shopping areas not only adds to the attractive quality of South Lakeland but it enhances the experience of visitors and residents. Shopfronts are a very important element of the street scene and they have considerable influence over the character and quality of our towns and villages. The guidance will be particularly relevant for owners and developers of retail and non-retail (commercial) premises with a ground-level display window and/or a fascia sign. This will include banks, building societies, estate agents, restaurants and shops.

This guidance has been produced because shop fronts are constantly under pressure to change and provide a progressive image, which is not always advantageous for the character of our towns. The growth in 'corporate' images is leading to one town centre becoming indistinguishable from the next. Promoting the merits of good design and high quality shopfronts will overcome some of the threats identified.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of the guidance is to:

- enhance the design of both modern and traditional shopfronts;
- clarify, amplify and further explain the policies set out in the adopted South Lakeland Local Plan;
- provide practical guidance for developers and retailers proposing changes to the external appearance of properties; and
- preserve and enhance the character of conservation areas and listed buildings.

### *Policy context*

This guidance supports the policies set out in the Local Plan, which can be found in Design Sheet 10. The Local Plan emphasises the need to enhance the town centre in a sensitive manner and protect features, particularly in the Conservation Areas, which add to the shopfront character. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment sets out the national context for shop fronts. Wherever shop fronts of merit survive they should be retained and new shop fronts should be designed in sympathy with the rest of the elevation and incorporate any ground floor details of interest.

## *Do you need planning permission?*

In all cases where alterations are proposed it is strongly advised to contact the Planning Services Group at an early stage. The planning officers can provide advice and guidance on whether permission and/or consent are required. If unauthorised work is carried out without permission/consent then the authority can take enforcement action against the shop-owner. This can lead to the need for further alteration or reinstatement of the original shop front. In addition fines or imprisonment can be imposed through the courts for unauthorised work to listed buildings.

In submitting proposals for consideration, it is essential that applications should contain drawings that contain sufficient detail. Plan drawings at 1:50 scale and elevation drawings at a scale of 1:20 are a minimum requirement and all construction details or decoration elements should be rendered at full size or 1:10. Applications should also indicate the nature and colour of the proposed materials to be used.

### **Planning Permission**

Planning Permission is required for work that involves a material change to the appearance of the building. This includes changes to the size of windows and doors, the addition of blinds and shutters and alterations to the fascia. The replacement of features on a like-for-like basis does not normally require permission.

### **Advertisement Consent**

Consent will depend on the location, type and size of sign proposed, but the regulations around advertisement consent are complex and it is strongly recommended to take early consultations with the Planning Services Group.

### **Listed Building Consent**

Listed Building Consent is required for any alterations (internal or external) to a listed building which will affect its character or appearance as a building of special architectural or historic interest. As well as changes to the form of a shopfront, consent may also be required for re-painting schemes when this might affect the character of a listed building.

### **Conservation Area Consent**

A stricter degree of control is also evident in Conservation Areas. Again any proposed alteration which will have an affect on the area's appearance would need consent.

### **Grants**

The prospect of gaining grant assistance is highly dependent on each specific scheme. The availability is dependent on location and type of shopfront. It is generally historic properties, which are likely to receive grants, but the circumstances are constantly changing so you are advised to contact the Planning Services Group at South Lakeland House.

The relevant application forms can be obtained from the Planning Services Group, South Lakeland House, Kendal.

Tel: 01539 733333 Email: [dev.control@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:dev.control@southlakeland.gov.uk)

### **Building Regulations**

Building Regulation approval may be required even if planning permission is not. For further details please contact the Building Control Group on 01539 733333.

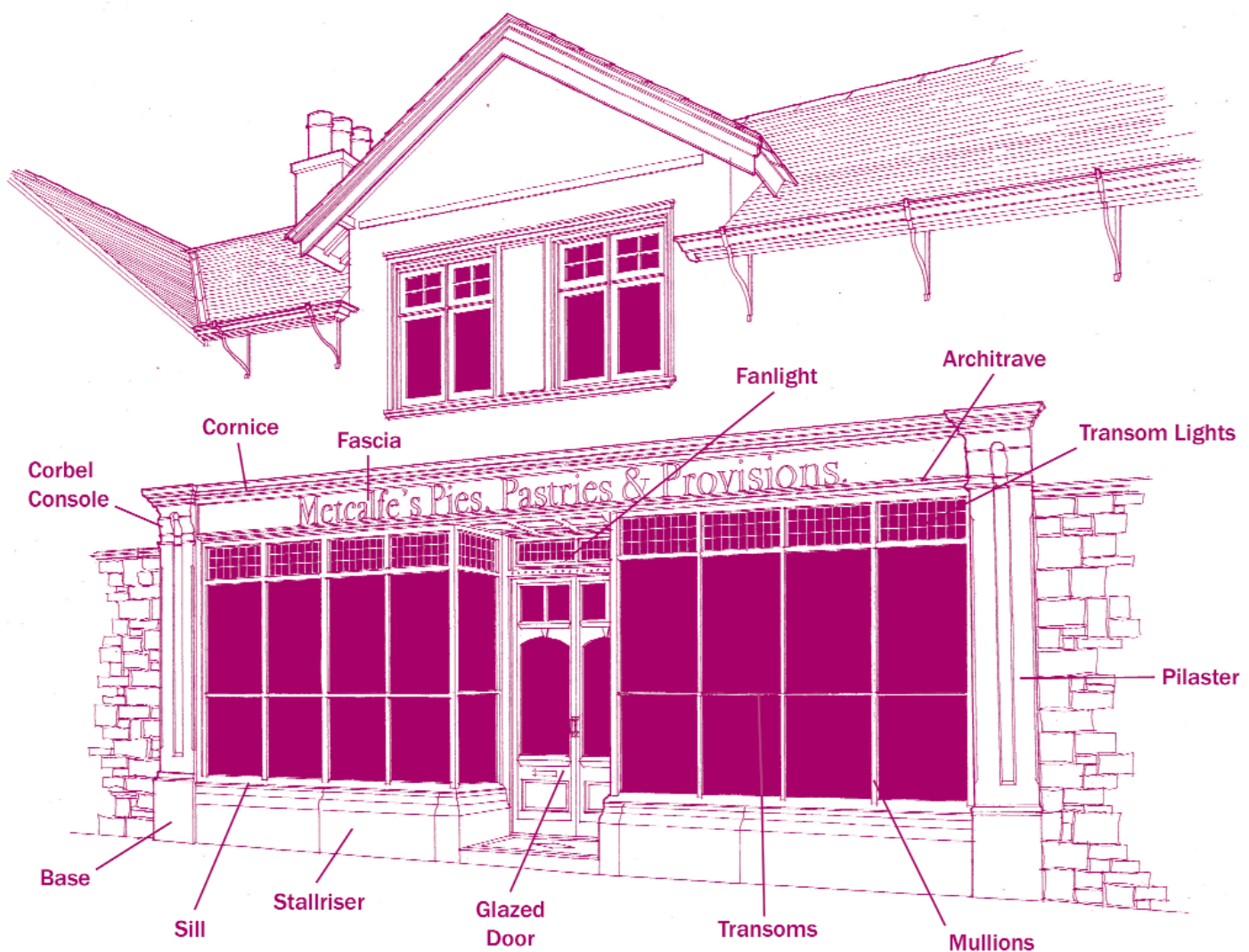
Email: [building.con@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:building.con@southlakeland.gov.uk)

## *What are the general design considerations?*

It is essential that any new shopfront is not designed in isolation. Your drawings should show the relationship of the shopfront to the upper floors and any adjoining buildings. You will need to demonstrate that care has been taken in respect of the arrangement of the elevation into which the new shopfront is to be incorporated and in relation to any neighbouring buildings. Structural divisions that are visible within upper stories will need to be respected and such separation should always be continued down to ground level. Any designs which ignore the vertical integrity of abutting buildings or which seek to merge a number of well defined bays or frontages in order to create the appearance of a single large shopfront will be strongly resisted.

Except in the case of uniform parades or terraces, where shared design components contribute to a wider architectural whole, variation in the relative heights of features such as fascias or stallrisers may be acceptable, subject to clear benefits in terms of townscape, so long as the general design principles indicated in the various Designs Sheets have been followed.

Corporate designs and signage can have an adverse impact in sensitive locations such as conservation areas. While it is accepted that commercial recognition is a legitimate concern, it is also a factor that the standardised use of shopfront designs by national multiples is leading to an erosion of local distinctiveness in our towns and villages. If the guidance contained within this document is followed, it should be possible to maintain corporate distinctiveness by adapting house styles so as to respect the age, style, proportions and character of the particular building.



*A poorly conceived design for use  
in an historic area*



The above illustration shows a new shopfront that has been fitted into an early nineteenth century building. The design for the shopfront can be said to have failed to respect the context of the original building and introduced poor design elements in a number of ways, including the following:

- The lack of strong vertical components leads to too great a horizontal emphasis, in an elevation with significant vertical interest in its upper floors.
- All of the framing elements are excessively thin in section and there is no attempt at providing the appearance of any support for the upper floors.
- The design uses large, square areas of plate glass that do not relate well to the vertically proportioned windows above. This combines with the lack of framing to create the impression of a dark void over which the stonework appears to float.
- The lack of any stallriser or vertical surrounds such as pilasters further harms the proportioning and framing of the shopfront.
- The fascia is excessively tall and no attempt has been made to provide it with any framing elements or moulded cornice and so it gives the impression of being a flimsy, applied component, rather than a part of an integrated design. It also harms the architecture of the building by obscuring the sills of the first floor windows.
- The roller shutter box appears fitted almost as an afterthought. It protrudes awkwardly and reduces the amount of natural light able to enter the shop.
- The illuminated box sign above the door is both cumbersome and unnecessary and harms the architectural integrity of the elevation above.

*A well considered example of a new shopfront design in a historic area*



The shopfront design in the above illustration is far more sensitive in terms of both its own proportions and detailing and in relation to the front elevation of the building, for the following reasons:

- The design introduces a pleasing balance of vertical and horizontal elements, with glazing panels that possess proportions that are more in sympathy with the arrangement and shape of the openings above.
- The pilasters and stallriser are of sufficient thickness to help frame the window and give it strong definition.
- The fascia is well proportioned, framed by the capitals on top of the pilasters, and set well below the first floor windows. Its much sturdier appearance helps to give the impression of it supporting the masonry above.
- The introduction of a well-moulded cornice above the fascia, which is similar in style to the moulding at the eaves and around the upper windows, helps to integrate the new front into the building.
- The lettering style to the fascia is refined and unobtrusive while the hanging sign is well proportioned and similarly scripted.
- The retractable canvas blind is traditional in style and unobtrusive and its box housing integrates well into the fascia, leaving the name board visible.

## *Summary of design principles*

The Design Sheets contained within this toolkit contain detailed information that should help you to develop a suitable shopfront design in most locations and contexts. The key principles that you should aim to follow are highlighted below and the practical means of implementing these principles should be guided by the points contained within each of the various Design Sheets.

- Retain, repair and reinstate original and historic shopfronts wherever possible.
- The architecture of the whole building and its neighbours should inform the alteration of an existing or the design of a new shopfront. Shopfronts should not overwhelm the architecture of the building.
- Each new shopfront should be designed individually and be based on good design principles, which are consistent with the scale and appearance of the building.
- Avoid undue horizontal emphasis, which can often conflict with any vertical design character evident in the upper floors. A good design will use vertical elements (pilasters, mullions, door frames) and horizontal components (fascia, stallriser and cornice) to produce pleasing proportions appropriate both to the building and the rhythm of the elevations in the street.
- A shop front design should not aim to unite buildings of different architectural styles but rather be conceived so as to reflect their originality.
- In historic areas, define your shopfront by ensuring it has a clearly established frame incorporating a cornice, fascia, pilasters and a stallriser. Keep the various elements in scale and proportion to each other: in particular try not to make the fascia too large or the pilasters too wide.
- Modern designs are more likely to be considered acceptable in contemporary buildings, existing buildings with little demonstrable architectural character, or outside historic areas. However, they must always be of a high design standard, utilise clear notions of scale and proportion, and use appropriate materials in relation to the wider elevation and street scene.
- Poorly conceived features such as undivided plate glass, excessively deep fascias, inappropriate materials and crude joinery details should be designed out when shopfront alterations are being considered.
- Strong consideration should be given to modifying standardised corporate designs in order to harmonise with the streetscape. This is especially the case where attractive original shopfronts survive, and in historic areas.
- Use appropriate materials and details that are sensitive to the street scene and are easily maintained. Accurate and authentic detailing is essential if awkward, unconvincing designs are to be avoided.
- Make the signage clear and simple.
- Inclusive access for all should be considered at every stage of the process of repair and design.
- Take special care with listed buildings, as stricter controls will apply.
- Choose paint colours for shopfronts with care. The shopfront/building should blend in with and not try to contrast with its neighbours.
- Incorporate designs for security at an early stage of the process.
- Visually acceptable means of improving security include the use of toughened glass to prevent vandalism, laminated glass to prevent theft, shatter proof adhesive films on existing glazed areas and internally mounted lattice grilles.



## *Glossary*

**Architrave:** A shallow moulding, which sometimes surrounds the shop window but is often confined to a simple run immediately below the fascia.

**Blind Box:** A long, hollow, rectangular box, usually set below the fascia but sometimes above, which traditionally houses a roller or concertina canvas sun blind.

**Capital:** The upper-most part of a classical column or pier

**Chamfer:** A surface formed when a square edge is cut away obliquely.

**Console/Corbel:** Decorative, often projecting features, terminating the upper part of any pilasters, usually at the same height as the fascia, which they flank.

**Cornice:** A projecting moulding, set above the fascia that forms the top edge of the shopfront. Invaluable for shedding rainwater away from the shop window below.

**Dentils:** A series of small rectangular blocks, arranged like a row of teeth, which project immediately below the cornice.

**Dutch Blind or Balloon Blind:** A modern blind usually made of reflective or plastic material and generally semi-circular or segmental in profile.

**Fanlight:** Also called an overlight. A small window set above a doorway and used to give additional internal illumination.

**Fascia:** A flat panel, often framed, which sits below the cornice and is enclosed by the corbel/console. Sometimes called the name board, as this is generally where the premises name is advertised.

**Fretwork:** An ornamental pattern of repeated combinations of straight lines.

**Glazing Bar:** A thin, wooden or sometimes metal framing piece enclosing a windowpane.

**Mullion:** Vertical framing members which divide the shopfront into smaller glazing units or lights.

**Pilaster:** Tall, rectangular, shallow projecting piers that flank the shop window/fascia. Often a flat representation of a classical column with a plinth/base below and either a console/corbel or a capital above.

**Plinth/Base:** A slightly projecting block at the base of a pilaster or column.

**Sill:** The lower horizontal member of a shop window, often provided with a projecting moulding to ensure that water is shed clear of the stallriser below.

**String Course:** A moulded, projecting band laid out horizontally across a wall, often to mark the point of an internal floor.

**Stallriser:** A solid, sometimes panelled base set below the shop window.

**Stop:** A method of terminating a chamfer or moulding, either ornamental or flat.

**Transom:** A horizontal member used to divide the shop window into smaller glazed areas.

**Transom light:** Usually a series of small panes set above a transom that is placed near the top of a window. Also sometimes mistakenly called a clerestory.





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