

Design guide: Shop fronts and advertisements: Historic buildings and conservation areas



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Shop fronts and advertisements: Historic buildings and conservation areas

1. Introduction

Shop fronts are vital elements in the character and appearance of a street scene. This guidance aims to avoid bland, soulless shops and reinstate the individualism of our towns and villages. Shop fronts originally had a very specific purpose: to entice potential buyers into the shop and this reason still exists today.

Shop fronts have plenty of scope for variety, but the relationship between the shop front and the existing building is of great importance. The shop front should be integrated into the whole building, reflecting its period and style. Shopfronts form part of the setting of the town or village and the design approach adopted should aim to capture the spirit and character of the settlement in which it is located. The shop front should respect the scale, style and materials of the local area with high standards of design, materials and workmanship.

Shop front and advertisement design can, if handled with skill and care, enhance conservation areas and improve the appearance of historic buildings. Handled badly, it can have the opposite effect. An attractive shopping environment can have a beneficial effect on the vitality and viability of a shopping area.



2. Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this design guide is to encourage and promote good practice in shop front and advertisement design within conservation areas and on historic buildings. It aims to provide a clear indication of the criteria against which the Council will assess applications for new shop fronts and advertisement within the District.

Its purpose is not to stifle or limit innovative designs, although there is an emphasis on traditional styles and materials, but to create a shopping environment which respects the historic personality of the villages and towns of Cherwell District. In considering individual proposals, the Council will use this guide as a basis for assessing their merits.

This guide will also provide information on consents that may be required. These include listed building consent, conservation area consent, planning, building control and advertising. A licence will be required if you propose to have an external display, or have chairs and tables outside of your shop. We encourage early discussion to help guide you through the process and proposed scheme.

3. Existing character

Cherwell District has two main urban shopping areas; Banbury and Bicester, which have developed and changed over time. Several villages, especially Kidlington, have a small range of shops which provide top up shopping facilities for the local community. Local shops are an important part of sustainable village life.





Banbury

Banbury's retail core is concentrated around High Street, Parsons Street and Market Place, with other small connecting alleyways and lanes. These locations provide contrasting characters, from polite Georgian architecture to more brutal mid 20th architecture. There is a good mix of national chain stores and smaller independent shops, which complement the range of architectural styles, age of buildings and materials within the town centre.



Bicester

Bicester's retail centre is concentrated along Sheep Street and Market Square. A major expansion of the town centre is currently being developed south of Sheep Street. Bicester contains national chain stores and a range of independent shops. The buildings vary in period, but the general character of the area is defined polite architecture constructed or majorly altered in the mid 19th century. Later 20th century buildings have been inserted into the streetscape and share a similar size, scale and mass to the earlier buildings.



4. Brief history of shop fronts – quidance on styles

People have traded from their own properties or simple markets with the use of barrows and stalls, from pre-Roman times. By the late 18th century, permanent sales areas and shops as we know them today had developed.

The Georgian style became the most popular approach for shop fronts now deemed 'traditional'. The 19th century saw the introduction of 'modern' materials

and technologies, introducing decorative iron work, tiling and more extensive glazing.

The availability of materials, especially glazing, has been the main influence on the change of fashion. Glass was taxed from 1746 until 1845, and therefore shops reflected this in the smaller size of their windows. The development of manufacturing of plate glass from the early 20th century provided larger and larger panes of glass. New techniques alllowed decorative glass at the top of the shop window etched with details of the shop and the goods that it supplied. Coloured glass was introduced by the early twentieth century.

All these buildings have their place in the development of our towns, and therefore should be appreciated for their individual style. A general understanding of the type and age of property is required to ensure that the correct style of shop front is fitted.

Georgian – late 18th century/ early 19th century



- Small, domestic windows or slightly enlarged windows sometimes with bow fronts
- Timber board for sign or narrow fascia
- Small panes of glass
- Limited display and poor natural light
- Some Classical detailing such as pilasters or arched openings
- By the 1830s and 1840s window size was increasing

Victorian – mid to late 19th century



- Cornice, sometimes moulded, may be of timber or stone and may have a lead flashing for weather-protection
- Larger panes of glass with the introduction of plate glass
- Fascia, may be flat or angled or curved and usually of timber
- Console brackets, which mark the end of the shop fascia. May be of a variety of designs but is typically timber.
- Decorative 'Bookend' consoles (found in the late 19th century)
- Pilasters which may be plain, fluted or decorated with geometric designs
- Use of cast iron pillars and other decorative ironwork
- Use of encaustic and geometric tiles in lobbies
- Roller blinds and shutters became integral to the shop front design

Edwardian and early 20th century



- Art Nouveau influences evident with flowing plant forms
- High quality joinery using hardwoods such as mahogany and teak
- Entrance to shop started to have curved glass frontages
- Showcases in entrance and ceilings to lobbies are decoratively panelled
- Clerestory making use of stained or coloured glass or sometimes with small square panes at the top of the windows
- Shop fronts tall and elegant
- Entrances have mosaic tiled floors, sometimes with name incorporated
- High quality brass door fittings

Inter war



- Use of smooth, glossy materials such as Vitrolite (coloured glass), polished granite, marble and faience (tin glazed pottery)
- Little decoration to shop front, although consoles in an elongated and stylised form may be used
- Marble, terrazzo and mosaic used for lobby floors.
- Black and white geometric tiles also favoured in 1930s
- Use of Art Deco inspired designs, including stepped fascia
- Etched and sandblasted glass, particularly in geometric designs such as zig-zags
- Many shops designed and fitted by specialist shop fitters rather than architects
- Use of window screens to the back of the window, sometimes with opaque glass

Post war



- Mix of styles from the previous generations, mainly undertaken with an 'interpretation' of the surrounding styles
- Introduction of larger shopping malls and centres and the introduction of public pedestrian spaces
- Use of modern materials, such as concrete and steel frames for the construction of the buildings allowing large open shop fronts
- Large expanses of fenestration
- Standardized design
- Either monochrome or multi-coloured shop fronts



5. Elements of a traditional shop front

There are several elements that make up a shop frontage – the cornice, fascia, capital and pilasters and stall riser. Each of these elements should be in proportion to give a balanced and pleasing appearance.

Cornice

The cornice is the decorative or moulded ledge along the top of the fascia. Its purpose is to provide weather protection to the fascia and provides a horizontal visual break to the building.

Fascia

The fascia is the section that normally has the shop name located on it. It should be approximately 10% of the shop front height, any larger, and the fascia overpowers the front.

Capital and pilasters

The capital and pilasters provide the vertical break or edge to the shop front. The capitals sometimes referred to as corbels or consoles, sit on top of the pilaster, a flat version of a column.

Stall riser

The stall riser is the section beneath the shop window constructed

usually in timber, brick or stone, or covered with glazed tiles.

Glazing/ fenestration

The glazing forms the main plane of the shop windows. The glazing is held in a frame which can vary in thickness and detail.

Mullions

Traditionally timber, though later shop fronts can be of metal, they provide vertical structural support to the shop glazing.

Transoms

Traditionally timber, though later shop fronts can be of metal, provide horizontal structural support to the shop glazing.

Threshold

The threshold is the entrance to the shop.

6. Design style

By understanding the style of the period, it is possible to ascertain the appropriate design for any proposed works.

The influencing factors may include:

- the age and the style of the existing building
- the age of the existing shop front
- the materials previously used and to be used in the new shop front

- the business or purpose of the shop – original shop fronts often reflected the goods they were selling, such as a high stall riser to draw the eye to small items such as jewellery or lower stall risers for furniture or larger items
- the location of the shop, either on a high street or a rural village.

As part of the overall design, it is the little details that make the building individual and interesting. Many of these items, such as door handles, patterns in glass or sign writing on the side of a building, may be original and an important part of the historic value. These features should be retained and incorporated into the proposed design.

The layout of the shop front should start with the placement of the door, which is generally either to the centre or the side. From here the type of fenestration should be decided including the height and construction of the stall riser.

Many shops showed their wealth by having a recessed door way or threshold, as it provided more display area but less sales space. This show of affluence may be appropriate for a shop in a high street or small town, but not for a small village shop.



Good example of shop frontage



Bad example of shop frontage

It is important when designing the new shop front that it should be in proportion to the building. Shop frontage that covers, cuts or removes existing features such as pilasters, date stones, windows to the first floor, or other important architectural details will lose the integrity of the building.

The individual identity of each separate building must be retained. New shop fronts (and fascias) should not cut across the frontages of different buildings. Where two

buildings are to be occupied by the same business, the shop fronts should be designed to identify the separation between the buildings either with different height stall risers, fascia levels and careful positioning of window transoms where appropriate.

The vertical sightlines should stop at the top of the shop front, typically with the cornice, without interfering with the building above. This visual break will vary in height with the building.



Hook Norton - Large shop hidden behind a multitude of frontages. This retains the character of the buildings and the street scene

The symmetry of a building should be taken into consideration. A Georgian building generally has a symmetrical style, whereas vernacular buildings have a tendency to asymmetrical. This will affect the horizontal and vertical relationships of door placement, fascias, transoms & mullions, signage and other details.

Colour choice, like design, is not only subjective but allied to the image the designer wishes to project. Colours are often used to reflect the type of shop, such as red and white for Barbers, or British Racing green is deemed as a classic colour and yellow is seen as vibrate and easy going.



Cropredy – rural shops in a village setting.

Colours do not have to be deemed as traditional. They should be complimentary to both the surroundings, the materials, the building, its neighbours and to the period of the property.

The use of stained or varnished timber was mainly used during late Victorian and early Edwardian periods when the trading of hard woods made these timbers accessible. This finish is now extremely unusual, and therefore painted timber will be the preferred option for the majority of replacement shop fronts. The use of hardwoods today would be discouraged unless it has been resourced from a sustainable source.

Large areas of undivided glass should in general be avoided as they are of less visual interest and can detract from the overall character of an older building. However in contemporary shop fronts, larger glass panes are a characteristic of their appearance. Consideration of the age and style of the building will influence the size of the fenestration selected.

The details of the mullions and transoms will be dictated by the form of the frontage. Georgian details are very delicate and simple, with Victorian details thicker and are of more solid appearance. The use of metal frames and transoms was only developed in the late Edwardian period.

Although there is a wide range of design solutions to any given place, the design of the fenestration, the detailing, the choice of materials and the balance of new to old should relate to the building as a whole. The installation of a 'traditional' shop front will not always be appropriate. Some premises are constructed in a style where a contemporary design would be more suitable. The individualism of each buildings frontage can be important to the overall appearance of the street and therefore alternative styles may be acceptable, subject to the character of the building in which they are proposed.



Good use of simple design with plain mullions complementing products sold.

Corporate Identity

People expect to see retail chains in our high streets but it may be necessary for these retail outlets to adapt their use of corporate images/logos to retain the harmony of the individual building and street scene. Most now recognise that this adds value to their customer perception of their brand.

The use of internally lit fascia signs and projecting signs are actively discouraged. The use of individually designed shop fronts that work with the setting and the building is encouraged. A standard 'heritage' solution may be offered by retailers but these are often designed for a specific historic period (generally Victorian) and may not be appropriate for other properties.

The use of corporate colours provides shoppers with an instant visual connection with the chain store. Corporate colour schemes will generally be acceptable, though the scheme should not conflict with the building or the setting.

We expect to see the individual property and its setting considered as part of the design. The justification for the design should be included in the Design & Access Statement and the Heritage Impact Assessment.



7. Materials and workmanship

Materials used in shop fronts need to be compatible with the building and the selection of the appropriate materials should be guided by the age of the building.

Traditional materials, such as timber were used because they could be easily painted to give the shop a quick, cheap make over. Paint also allowed for features to be picked out in contrasting colours, making the shop front more interesting and distinguishable.

The use of metals, such as bronze and cast iron tended to be used from the Edwardian era onwards, and therefore would only be considered appropriate for a building of this era or later. Plastic or polished aluminium frames are

generally discouraged within historic buildings, conservation areas and rural locations except where specific circumstances justify.

Small details, such as good quality fixings with neat returns, trims and mouldings can be critical to successful design. Good quality workmanship will enhance the appearance of both the shop and the street.

8. Accessibility

When altering an existing access or creating a new shop front, there is a statutory requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure ease of accessibility for both wheelchair users and the ambulant disabled (such as mobility problems or poor vision). Detailed guidance on items

such as the size of door openings, ease of door openings and height of latches, etc can be obtained from Building Regulations (Part M) or Building Control Officers.

In some cases it may be necessary to install ramps, clearly readable signage, including brail or foreign language, etc., all of which will require careful consideration in respect of location, size and materials used. The location of call pads for wheelchair assistance or to open automatic doors will require careful setting to be accessible without causing visual harm. Ramps should be located internally. Where this is not possible a temporary and removable access ramp will comply with regulations.

Traditionally the threshold for the door is set back from the pavement and this should be retained or re-instated where appropriate. This can be used to personalise the threshold, eg placing name in tiles.

Summary:

- Design of shop front should complement the building, street and location
- Consideration should be given to the smaller details that can make the building interesting and distinctive
- Layout of the shop front should in proportion to the building
- Each building should be clearly identifiable
- Colours should complement the building and reflect the type of shop
- Materials used should be compatible to building age and style
- Good quality workmanship and materials will be encouraged
- Standard corporate schemes will need to be amended to ensure it enhances and protects conservation areas and is of a suitable scale/ design for the building



9. Canopies

Canopies and blinds can add interest to the appearance of shopping streets as well as shading goods and customers. They should be historically accurate, simple in form and retractable. The colour and material choice should reflect the overall colour scheme. The use of bright plastic or highly reflective materials is unlikely to be appropriate.

Fixed material canopies are likely to be inappropriate, unless they were part of the original design of the building. The reinstatement or refurbishment of fixed metal canopies, particularly favoured in the Edwardian period, will be encouraged if evidence can be found for the proposed style.





Banbury – Simple canopy design

10. Signage and lettering

Signage that is clear and instantly recognisable is essential, but is too often driven solely by the corporate identity of national companies.

Traditionally the name of the shop would have been located in the centre of the fascia board. Victorian and Edwardian signage were busy and highly decorative, advertising the trade or products sold within, whilst other periods chose a simpler, plainer style.

The selection of the font and type of lettering used will be influenced by the design of the shop front, with the selection ranging from traditional hand painted lettering on fascias and windows to the use of raised three dimensional lettering and lettering on metal plaques.

The colour of lettering should be clearly contrasting from the fascia colour. Lettering applied directly to the building should ideally be metal raised letters. Plastic, highly reflective and back lit fascias will be discouraged.

As a general rule the size of lettering should be designed to relate to the overall size of the building and to the depth and length of the fascia. The lettering should be well spaced and well proportioned.



Advertising on building with hand written signage – a traditional, Victorian method of advertising – now protected by statutory listing.

11. Projecting or hanging signs

Projecting or hanging signs are traditional forms of advertisement and can add character to and enliven a shopping street.

A hanging sign should ideally be constructed of timber or metal and painted with details of the shop. They can be made more individual by being applicable to the type of retail unit eg cut in the shape of a boot for a cobbler or shoemaker.



Banbury – Large hanging sign making a good visual reference to location and part of wayfinding.



Banbury – Hanging sign showing visual image of the goods



Projecting sign

12 'A' boards

Please call Highways department at Oxfordshire County Council on 0845 3101111.

13 Internal advertisements

Signs set behind windows are in most cases subject to the same regulations and control as those fixed externally. Permanent window advertisements, such as telephone numbers and email addresses can be acceptable if sensitively designed, coloured and positioned.

Blanking out windows with advertising is strongly discouraged as this reduces active frontage. Open window displays allow potential customers a view into the shop.



Banbury – Advertising sign written onto the shop fenestration

14 Lighting

Good lighting enhances the shop and neighbourhood by picking up architectural features, lighting up the signage or lighting the display in the shop window.

Light fittings are a relatively new invention so there is no historically correct style. They should be carefully selected and located to suit the style of the shop and be as discreet as possible such as trough lighting or spot lights.

Light pollution can have a negative effect on the shop, ecology and neighbours so light levels should be carefully considered particularly in rural settings. General 'flood' lighting will be discouraged and there are a laws governing light pollution.

Internally lit projecting signs and fascias do not enhance the building and are unlikely to be appropriate for historic buildings or conservation areas.

Appropriate forms of illumination can include, depending on individual circumstances:

- Externally front-lit or 'halo' back-lit individual letters, depending on the quality of the design and the position of the sign when fixed to the building
- Discreet use of spotlighting of fascias and hanging signs
- Signs painted on to shop windows which are internally lit
- Some types of independent or freestanding illuminated signs behind window glass. Such signs are subject to control if less than 1 metre from the glass.



Discreet trough lighting blending in with the shop signage.

15. Security grilles and shutters

Effective security methods can be justified to safeguard premises and goods; however their installation should be considered carefully and should not be to the detriment of the street. The preferred means of achieving security is to use toughened glass, which has a negligible impact on the appearance of the street.

For higher forms of security and protection, additional glazing bars and internal window grilles, which allow views through are the preferred options. They not only keep the street scene open, and therefore visually attractive, but also provide added security as people can see into the shop.

The cumulative effect of numerous external grilles or shutters along a street is unsightly and can lead to a reduction in 'active frontage', which may lead to a drop in footfall and possible anti-social behaviour.

The use of permanently fixed external grills will not be permitted in public places. Installation of these grills at the rear of a property may create an accessible climbing system enabling illegal access to this or adjoining buildings.



Photograph showing closed or solid grill which provides a negative image.



Photograph showing open grill which does not close the active frontage and provides security.

16. Alarms

The Council recognises the need for an Intruder Alarm boxes. The location of the external box and the wires require consideration. A neat solution is for the box to be located within or directly above the fascia, with the cables running discreetly along the top of the fascia.

17. Mechanical and electrical plant

Careful setting of mechanical and electrical fixtures and fittings, including air conditioning condenser units, etc will be required. Locations to the rear which do not harm the fabric of a historic building or the street scene will be encouraged.



18. External displays and street furniture

Use of the property frontage for external displays and street furniture will normally be encouraged because it can enliven the character of a street. Use of the public highway including footways for this purpose requires a licence and this is available from the local authority.

If you wish to place furniture or displays on the pavement outside the shop front you will need first need to seek guidance from the Licensing Department by email: licensing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01295 753744.

19. Cash points

The installation of external ATMs will be actively discouraged as these often distract from the building and its setting, particularly where they have been installed as an after thought. Where ATMs are required, it will be recommended that they are installed internally in a lobby which will also provide security for the user.

Where machines are installed externally, early consideration should be given to integrate them into the overall design of property.



Banbury – Nationwide with external ATM integrated into design of shop front

Summary:

- Canopies should fit with the building and use appropriate colours and materials
- Good access should be provided into the shop
- Signage should be written in a suitable font and size for the building. The fascia should be approximately 10% of the shop front height with the lettering written on the fascia
- Backlit fascia boards and internally lit projecting signs will be discouraged as they distract from the building
- Projecting or hanging signs are encouraged. The brackets for the signs should reflect the style and age of the property
- 'A' boards are discouraged as they can add clutter to the street
- External lighting should be small and discreet
- If security grills are required, they should be retractable, internal to the shop front and open grilled
- External alarm boxes and other plant should be carefully located to ensure that any architectural features can be seen
- External displays and street

furniture requires a licence

 ATMs should be installed within the shop, preferably within a lobby area.

20. Internal fit out works

If a building is listed, listed building consent will be required for works to the property. It is a common misconception that it is only the facade or external elevations that are listed. In fact the whole of the property is protected by the listed status. Any historical internal features should be retained and this may restrain the use to which the building can be put, particularly if the works affect the fabric or lavout of the property, such as removal of fixtures, forming new openings, such as doors, hatches, large holes for extract fans, etc., plastering over walls, dry lining and insertion on new walls and fixed counters.

The installation of freestanding units and display racks, replacement of kitchen units or general like for like repairs will not require Listed Building Consent.

Early discussion should be undertaken with the Development Control duty officer who will be able to guide you through the process and provide advice. For

works to historic buildings early contact should also be made with the Design & Conservation team for specialist advice.

21. Do I need consent?

Before undertaking any work, it is always advisable to contact the Council to discuss your proposals.

Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent will be required for all works which affect the character or fabric of the building (other than repair), this usually includes:

- new or replacement signs as well as changes to shop fronts
- internal works, apart from standard 'fit out' works which will affect the character and/ or fabric of the building
- investigation works, such as the removal of fixed display units and wall coverings.

Further guidance on work to a listed property is available from Cherwell District website.

Conservation Area Approval

Works to a non listed building in a Conservation Area may require planning permission if one of the following is involved:

- Change of colour to external shop front
- New shop front
- Installation of any external fittings or advertising boards

Further guidance on works to a nonlisted property in a conservation area is available from Cherwell District website.

Planning Permission

Installing new shop fronts, grilles, shutters and projecting blinds will require Planning Permission, in addition to either of the above consents (if applicable).

If the shop is to have a change of use, such as conversion into a take away from a retail unit, then Planning Consent will be required.

Building Control

Building Regulations are there to ensure that buildings are safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable for current and future generations. Therefore permission is required for:

- some alterations to shop fronts
- a new shop front is proposed
- for any internal structural alterations
- any works effecting the health and safety of the public and employees, such as fire protection.

The building regulations do not apply to advertisements.

Advertisement Consent

Advertisement Consent is required for most types of new or replacement shop front signage, especially if it is to be illuminated.

Licensing

A licence is required if you wish to put an external display, chairs, tables, outside of your shop.

22. Relevant policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan - Policies C18, C23 and C28

23. Contacts

Development Management

Tel: 01295 227006

Email: planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Design and Conservation

Tel: 01296 221846

Email: design.conservation@

cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Building Control

Tel: 0300 0030200

Email: building.control@

cherwell and south northants. gov. uk

Licensing Department

Tel: 01295 753744

Email: licensing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Or write to:

Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 4AA

Tel: 01296 227001 Fax: 01295 221856 DX: 24224 (Banbury)

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