

Conservation guidance note 2 - shop front design

The more care that is taken in shop front design, the more attractive North Somerset will become for shoppers and visitors. A shop front's main purpose is to display products and project a good image of the shop. A bad shop front will project a negative image of the shop.

This conservation guidance note will explain which consents are needed from the council to change or create a shop front, the general design principles that should be followed when replacing or creating a shop front, the components of a traditional shop front and the care that should be taken in conservation areas and with listed buildings.

What permissions do I need?

Planning permission

Altering or replacing an existing shop front or creating a new one will require planning permission.

Listed Building Consent

Any alterations that may affect the building's character as a building of special architectural or historic interest require Listed Building Consent. It is likely that most alterations to the shop front of a listed building will require Listed Building Consent.

Advertisement Consent

Any new signs or adverts associated with a new or replacement shop front are likely to require Advertisement Consent. For advice contact Development Control on 01275 888 881 or dccomments@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Building Regulation Approval

Building Regulation Approval may be required for works carried out to a shop front or a replacement shop front. For advice contact our Building Control team on 01275 884 550 or bc.info@n-somerset.gov.uk.

General principles of good design

A well designed shop front should be in keeping with the style and character of the building which contains it and the area in which it is located. Alterations to an existing shop front should improve this harmony.

Where a shop front is of the same date as the building retention and restoration will always be preferred to replacement.

Where a shop forms part of a uniform terrace it is preferable that each shop front retains the original surround.



If a shop occupies two or more distinctive but adjoining buildings, the shop front and fascia are often best sub-divided with pilasters and perhaps, a change in fascia level. This will place emphasis on the individual buildings rather than the entire shop unit. Individuality of character should be emphasised.

The components of a traditional shop front

Fascia

Fascia design should be appropriate to the character and period of the building. Existing first floor windows and architectural features, such as decorative brickwork or pilasters should not be obstructed by fascias or signs. There should always be a gap between the top of the fascia and the window sills of the floor above. The cornice should provide a decorative and functional element to the overall design.

In uniform terraces, or where a number of small shops occupy a large building, fascia positions, projection and depth should generally line up to maintain continuity. If a single shop occupies more than one building a change in fascia level can be considered so that individual buildings rather than the shop unit are emphasised.

Fascia materials are an important feature. Modern plastic boxed fascias often appear much less attractive than traditional timber, hand-painted signs and their use in historic buildings should be avoided.

Pilasters

Pilasters are primarily structural elements to the building, and visually define the width of the shop front and unite the upper floors with the pavement.

When a single shop unit covers the width of two or more separate buildings, the shop front should respect the individual identity of each building and this can be achieved with the subdivision of the shop front and fascia with pilasters. Cladding of historic pilasters should be avoided.



Stallrisers

Stallrisers improve the proportions of a shop front by providing a solid visual base beneath the window display. They also have a practical purpose in providing protection from wear and tear.



Stallrisers should usually be between 450mm and 700mm high and should incorporate a moulded projecting still to provide a strong junction with the glass. Stallrisers should be painted timber panelling, rendered, brick or occasionally ashlar stone.

Doors

Many traditional shop fronts have recessed entrance doors and these should always be retained. Doors should be in a style and materials that match the rest of the shop front and the building as a whole.

Where original features remain, such as an ornate frieze or grille above the door or main window, these should be retained.



Blinds and canopies

Blinds and canopies can add character to a shop front and the shopping street more generally. Care should however, be taken to ensure that their shape, size, material and position are appropriate.

Non-retractable blinds and canopies are normally unacceptable when used in conservation areas or on listed buildings.



It is important that any blind or canopy is designed as an integral part of the shop front. Retracting blinds should always retract fully into the fascia.

Security arrangements

There are a number of ways to incorporate security arrangements into a shop front while respecting the character of the building and the area.

Shutters or grilles located behind the glazing wall will be encouraged, as will demountable security grilles that are mounted on the outside of the shop front.

Roller shutters may be considered if the shutter boxes are located within the plane of the shop. Projecting shutter boxes will not normally be acceptable on listed buildings and in conservation areas.

Shutters should not cover pilasters and thought should be given to the external decoration and colour.

Advertisements

In most cases, a single fascia sign coupled with a single projecting hanging sign will be sufficient.

Advertisements above the line of the top of the fascia and blinds over upper floor windows will not normally be acceptable.



Shop fronts in conservation areas and listed buildings

Conservation areas

The quality and extent of shops and advertisements can significantly affect the character and appearance of an area.

The continued use of traditional materials and designs will be encouraged. New shop fronts should incorporate as many traditional components as possible.



Box-lit fascias will not normally be acceptable and internal illumination should be avoided.

Listed buildings

Any alterations to shops which are listed buildings require skill and care in order to avoid damage to historic structures and to ensure that any additions are in keeping with other parts of the building. Any changes should respect the character of the building and its setting. Most work will require Listed Building Consent and you should always contact the Conservation Heritage officer before submitting an application.

For more information contact our Development Control team on 01275 888 811 or dccomments@n-somerset.gov.uk.

For advice contact our Conservation officer on 01934 426 250.