

Shop Front Design Guidelines



The purpose of this booklet is to provide shop front design guidelines for shopping areas throughout Fife. A coordinated approach to shop front design across Fife will enhance the appearance of the built environment and help to provide an effective marketing tool for promoting the wider area to visitors and investors alike.

A diverse, varied and often unique selection of shop front designs can be seen around Fife – from traditional styled shop fronts on historic buildings to more modern designs on infill developments, in newer shopping areas and at out of town retail parks. Many of the older buildings within historic areas may also have had their original shop fronts completely or partially replaced by modern ones.

Whether old or new, this guidance aims to encourage a better quality of shop front design in all types of shopping areas across Fife. In this guidance, the term “shop front” refers to the full range of commercial premises found in town centres including banks, public houses, restaurants and hot food takeaways, as well as food and non-food retail. The guidance is not meant to be prescriptive, but it does offer advice on the various aspects of shop front design that the planning authority will consider when determining planning applications.

Contents

1. Policy
2. Traditional and Contemporary Shopfront Designs
3. Good Contemporary Shopfront Designs – Details
 - Fascia, Cornice and Console Bracket
 - Columns, Pilasters and Stallrisers
 - Windows
 - Doors
 - Blinds and Canopies
 - Materials, Colours and Signage
 - Pavements and Forecourts
 - Lighting and Security
4. Submitting an Application

1. Policy

Shop fronts should make a positive contribution to the local environment by respecting the predominant character of the area and the proportions, character, design details and materials of the building into which they are set.

The key objectives of the policy are:

- To protect and enhance the traditional character and appearance of individual Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and prime retail frontages within traditional shopping areas.
- To encourage a better quality of design and enhance the character and appearance of retail frontage in newer shopping areas and out of town retail parks.

THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DESIGN

Uncomplicated design and high quality detailing are trademarks of a quality shop front. While the style of adjacent shop fronts is less important, neighbouring shops should generally follow similar design principles.

Consider ... the shop front as part of the whole building. The design should be sympathetic to the existing architecture and materials.

Respect ... the character of neighbouring properties. However, do not attempt to unite individual buildings, especially those of different architectural styles, with single fascia treatment / double frontages.

Diversify ... the streetscape with well designed contemporary shop fronts that complement more traditional shop fronts and buildings and provide the town centre with some distinctive landmarks.

Retain and maintain ... traditional detailing, modelling and decoration on older shop fronts. These add variety and interest to the street and help to create a sense of place, which is key to successful marketing.



Removal of a modern fascia boards may reveal original details.



Use of quality traditional materials and skills can facilitate ongoing maintenance and repairs and help extend the life of a shopfront.

2. Traditional and Contemporary Shop Front Designs

Many of the buildings within Fife's town centres are Listed Buildings, or fall within Conservation Areas. Often the potential contribution that these buildings can make to the appeal of a town centre is undervalued or unrecognised. Many of these buildings suffer from long-term neglect, with ill-designed shop fronts and poorly maintained façades - a poor advertisement for a town centre to consumers, visitors and potential investors. Shop front design for historic buildings should be grounded in an understanding of the development and structure of the building, as well as in the needs of the business.

It is therefore advisable when working with a listed or historic building, even for a project as limited as a shop front alteration or the addition of awnings or security measures, to seek an appropriately qualified professional to carry out the design, preferably an

Architect with experience of working in a historic building environment. Although perceived as costing more, a professionally designed shop front will generally attract more custom and should prove a sound commercial investment.

Where there is firm evidence of the original arrangement of shop fronts on listed and older buildings, the restoration and reinstatement of period features or entire shopfronts is encouraged.

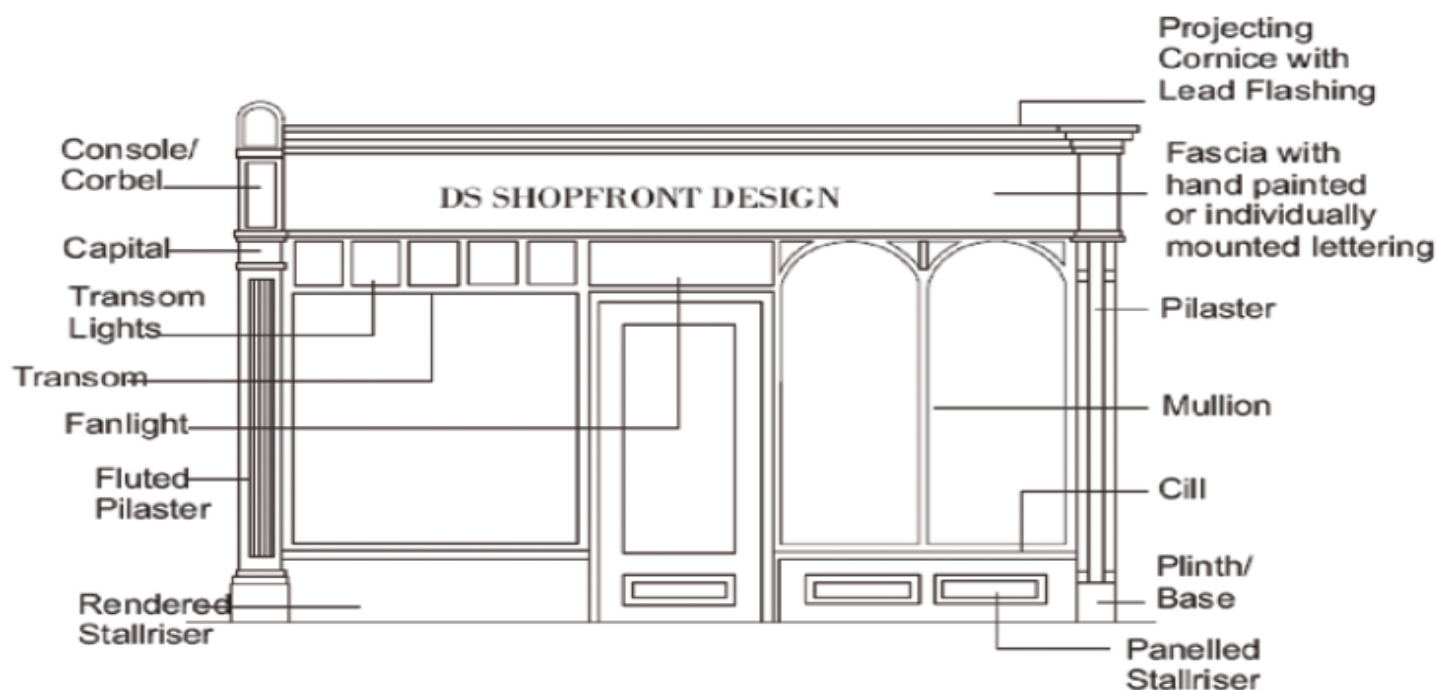
Evidence may be from archive information or from historic photographs or plans and drawings. The Dean of Guild Plan collections, in Fife Council Archives in Markinch, or St Andrews University Library are both good potential sources of information. It may be from the building itself – e.g. often a previous fascia remains in situ beneath a modern one. By looking at neighbouring properties to identify unaltered buildings of a similar age to yours, it may be possible to identify original features that could be reinstated.

Depending on the scale of the works proposed, you may be able to do this research yourself or you may prefer to appoint an architect to do this for you, and to design the planned alterations.

In addition to the many listed and historic buildings within town centres, more modern developments will have contemporary shop front designs. Many older buildings may also have had their original shop fronts completely or partially replaced by modern ones, and

the quality and design of these shop fronts varies considerably.

Where there is *no* firm evidence of the original arrangement of shop fronts on listed and older buildings, the restoration or reinstatement of traditional shop front designs is still encouraged, especially if the current shop front is of poor quality. Where appropriate, quality modern designs that respect the proportions of the building and adhere to these guidance notes will be encouraged.



Example of good modern shop front design, using quality materials and incorporating the basic principles.

3. Good Contemporary Shop Front Design



(Above and left) Shop fronts incorporating all the basic elements of good shop front design.



(Below) Contrasting modern shop front treatments to similar adjoining units. The accumulation of relatively small differences to the unit on left resulting in poor overall design quality.



FASCIA, CORNICE AND CONSOLE BRACKET

Fascia Board

The fascia board is located over the whole shop. The scale and design of the fascia should be appropriate to the character, height and period of the building and in proportion with the shop front. Excessively deep fascias should be avoided.

Cornice

Many shop fronts have a cornice situated above

the fascia board. The cornice provides a distinctive break between the shop front and the building façade and forms an overhang that protects the fascia and shop window from rainwater run-off from the façade above. Often the projecting cornice allows the fascia to lean out, allowing the lettering on it to be more easily read from the pavement below. Reinstatement of cornices or the incorporation of cornices into new shop front design is encouraged where appropriate.



Example of inappropriate fascia board- excessively deep, obscured console brackets, cornices and pilasters.

Console Brackets

Traditional shop fronts often have elaborately carved console brackets situated at the ends of the fascia boards. These start under the cornice and finish below the fascia board. Although purely decorative they often add character to an otherwise plain shop front and should be retained or reinstated if appropriate.

COLUMNS, PILASTERS AND STALLRISERS

Columns and pilasters

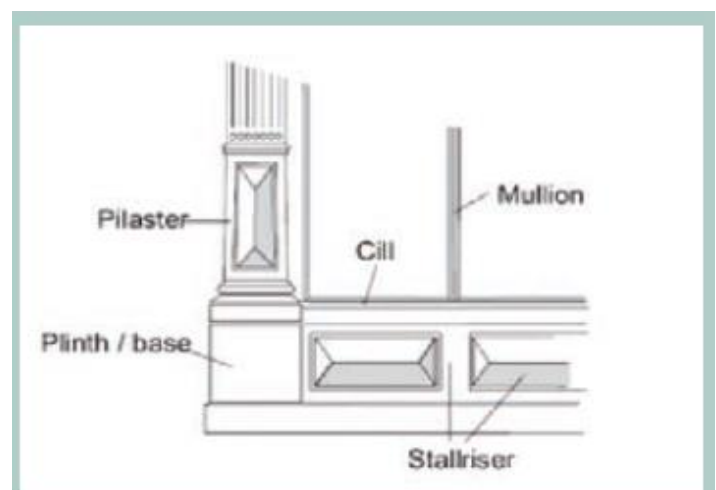
Columns and pilasters project slightly from the shop front and serve to provide visual and physical support to the building façade. Columns are either round or half round and are plain or fluted, whilst pilasters are flat and panelled or fluted.

Stallrisers

Stallrisers give the building a visual anchor to the ground and provide the glazed area with protection and security. The stallriser can be constructed of stone, brick, render or panelled timber. If the facing material of the stallriser is the same as that used on upper floors of a building it can help to harmonise the shop front with the rest of the building. Some Victorian shop fronts have decorative tiles covering the stallriser. These should be retained wherever possible, even when the shop name has changed. Columns, pilasters and stallrisers that harmonise with the building and existing shop fronts should be retained or incorporated into new shop front designs where appropriate.

WINDOWS

In general, large undivided areas of glass should be avoided for security reasons. Windows should ideally be framed and subdivided vertically as most buildings will have a vertical emphasis. The method of subdivision should be in keeping with the character of the building and shop front. The window area can be broken up with doors and recesses, and on some shop fronts the glazed area is divided with mullions (upright posts) that are sometimes complemented by transoms (horizontal dividers). The window area should preferably be flush with the front of the building, with recesses usually centrally positioned and limited to the shop entrance.



Example of an unusual shopfront design which still follows the basic principles to good effect.

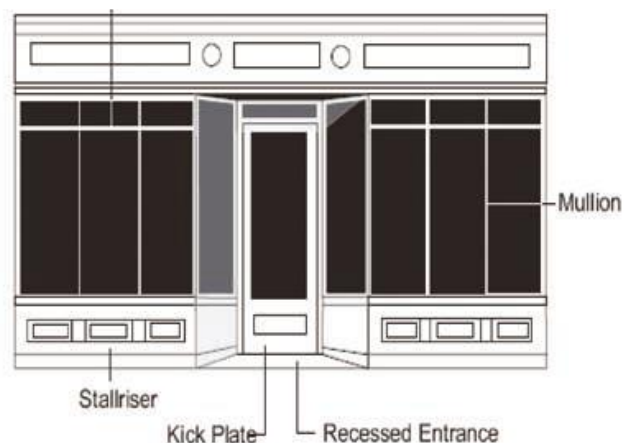
DOORS

Doors should preferably be centrally located and should be recessed to reinforce visual interest, provide shelter and a non-slip access ramp into the shop.

Traditional panelled doors should be retained where possible, whilst the design of new doors should harmonise with the window and shop front design. Windows and doors should be constructed of the same material and painted in the same colour. The design of the fanlight windows over doors should be sympathetic to the design and character of the shop front and door.

The bottom of the door or “kick plate” should be the same height as the stallrisers (if present). Door panels should match the panelling on the stallrisers, and mouldings should be sympathetic to the period and design of the shop front. Incorporation of these design features will provide a better overall balance to the shop front.

Wherever possible on traditional shop fronts, the original door furniture should be retained. All doors should be furnished with fittings and fixtures that complement the period and design of the shop front.



Blinds and Canopies

Preference will be given to retractable, straight awning, traditional shop blinds over non-retractable Dutch canopies, especially within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Blinds can be fitted above or below the fascia, ensuring that columns/pilasters or other details are not obscured, and when retracted the blind casing should not protrude beyond the fascia. The external proportions and scale of the blind should dictate the length of the canopy and a suitable colour of non reflective finish canvas type material should be used. Muted primary colours are the most appropriate in most cases.



Examples of traditional retractable awnings



Examples of unacceptable non-retractable Dutch canopy.

Materials, Colours and Signage

Materials

Materials chosen should harmonise with the building above and, where suitable, with neighbouring buildings.

Timber is a versatile and durable material, which makes it an attractive and cost-effective option for use on traditional and contemporary shop fronts. Not all types of timber are suitable for outdoor use and the suitability of any timber must be considered, as well as its maintenance requirements.

Now rare, an exception is the structural pigmented glass, known as Vitrolite and by other trade names, which was popular during the 1920s and '30s. Storefronts were tiled with it, giving them a shiny, streamlined look so popular in Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. Although it hasn't been produced in America since 1947 there are companies who salvage, restore and install it. The styles often included block or box letters, some in stainless steel, which were applied directly to the fascia, often as the only decoration.

The use of modern materials such as glossy plastics, aluminium, stainless steel and plastic coated or anodised metals should not be encouraged on listed or traditional buildings or in Conservation Areas as they may compromise and detract from the architectural quality of the building and overall character of the area. UPVC windows and doors are not considered acceptable.

Colours

Colour is both extremely important and subject to planning control. The sensitive use of colour can contribute much to the street scene; but there is no standard formula. The imposition of corporate colour schemes regardless of the location may erode the character of the area but minor variations can often emphasise the uniqueness of the location. Any intention to change colouring must be discussed and approved by Fife Council.

Care should be exercised in colour choice to avoid confusion with traffic signals and road signage. Corporate colour schemes should be adapted to suit the character of the area, for example muted primary colours are the most appropriate background colours for shop fronts on historic buildings and within Conservation Areas. The Council will seek to ensure that the colours of adjacent shop fronts in a parade complement each other.



Example of insensitive use of colour.



Example of effective, sensitive, use of contrasting colours. In this case the original colour scheme has been researched and reinstated.



Example of effective use of bright colour from a traditional palette of colours (above).

Signage – Lettering

Lettering should not be too large or obtrusive especially on historic or Listed Buildings, or in Conservation Areas. Sign-written fascias are encouraged, as is the use of individually applied raised letters - however, care should be taken to avoid damage to the stone facing on the building to which the lettering is to be applied. Although the style of lettering can help to convey the image of a shop it should also be sympathetic to the character of the building and area into which it is set. Accordingly national multiples may have to adapt their house style to suit sensitive locations.

Lettering on signs to identify premises to motorists should be clear and contain the minimum necessary

information. Light coloured lettering on a dark background is preferred as the optical contrast makes it easier for motorists and visually impaired people to read.

Signage – Projecting Signs

- Projecting signs should be small, compact and carefully mounted to avoid damage to architectural features or obstruction to pedestrians or traffic.
- Signage above fascia level will be discouraged, unless the sign is of exceptional merit.
- The use of bulky, internally lit, perspex box signs is discouraged.
- The minimum horizontal setback from road channels to signs shall be 0.50m and the minimum vertical clearance for signposts and awnings over footways shall be 2.30m.
- They should be located to complement the overall composition of the frontage, usually at an end.
- Traditional style hanging signs with wall mounted metal brackets are favoured. These can be designed to complement the architecture of a building or to reflect the nature of a business.

Signage Lettering



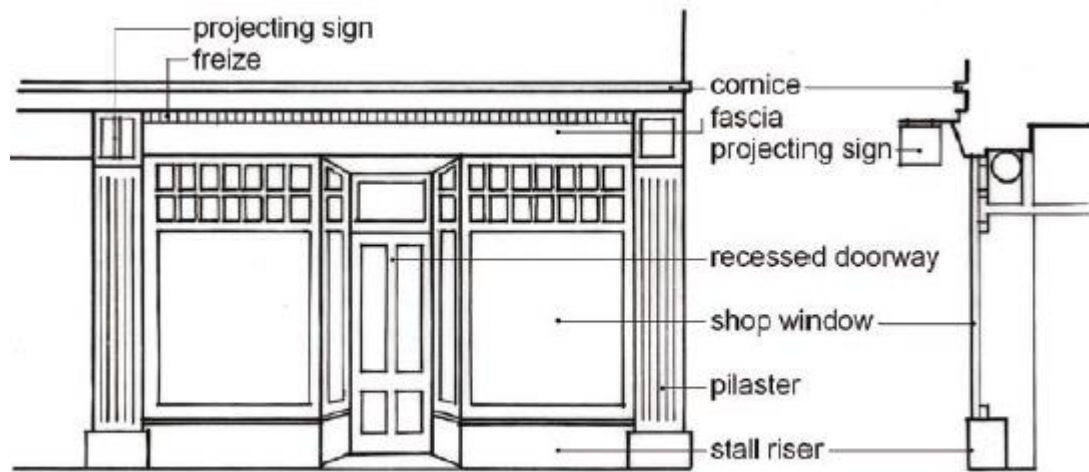
Examples (above and below) of acceptable handwritten and raised lettering signs, including national multiples adapted signs to fit fascias.



Examples (above and below) of traditional gilt lettering on a glass fascia.



In contrast (above) is a rare example of 1930's Art Deco Vitrolite box sign.



Projecting Signs



Examples of acceptable modern and traditional projecting signs



The cake piping bag (left) and hippers (above) are acceptable modern interpretations of the traditional projecting sign.

Pavements and Forecourts

Bad, unsafe or excessive signage is in no-one's interests. This includes often unauthorised placed Aboards and displays on road verges, footpaths and pedestrian precincts. Whilst carefully considered signs can contribute to visual amenity and provide public information, poorly considered signs clutter the footpath, create unnecessary hazards and spoil the amenity of a Conservation Area or group of Listed Buildings.

Fife Council's Roads Network Management officers have powers to request the removal of any unauthorised and dangerous signage and to take direct action where necessary. It is recommended that applicants considering the use of any temporary signage always consult with Transportation Development Management officers Services before doing so.

In some towns, Fife has joined the growing trend towards a 'café society' where bars and cafes place tables and chairs on the pavement outside their premises; enclosed in some cases by windbreak screens formed by glazed/ canvas panels or planters.

Sitting out areas require planning consent and licensing, as well as permission from the landowner (this is Roads Network Management team in most cases). Some areas of pavements are privately owned. In the right location and well regulated this can create an interesting atmosphere and a vibrant street scene but in the wrong location it can have the opposite effect.

A-boards have also become a regular feature, advertising businesses, particularly on main shopping streets. Transportation Service is working on a guidance note for the control of A-boards and other similar objects, but in any case where such items cause a hazard or obstruction to pedestrians, wheelchairs and pushchairs,

Roads Network Management have the powers to remove them under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. There should be a 2 metre wide clear zone for pedestrians. The landowner can be either Fife Council as Transportation Authority or in some cases land can be privately owned but adopted by Transportation Services.

Where shop doors are recessed it is important to ensure the material and colour of the paved area in front is designed to harmonise with the whole shop

front. Access for people with a disability is also a primary concern and applicants are advised to consider the Equality Act 2010. Steps should be avoided and ramps into the shop should be surfaced in a non-slip material in accordance with relevant legislation and BS5810-1979 **Code of Practice Access for the Disabled to Buildings.**



Examples of the well regulated use of pavement areas





Example of a traditional recessed shop doorway.



Example of the rich variety of traditional treatments of door recesses which can complement and enhance the character of the shop front.



LIGHTING AND SECURITY

Illumination

Shops will normally be permitted one fascia sign and one projecting sign, only one of which may be illuminated. Fret cut, halo lit and similar units are the preferred methods of illumination. Other suitable methods of illumination include indirect illumination by means of concealed lighting or carefully positioned spotlights, particularly within Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings. Internally lit box fascias and swan neck fascia lights are not recommended.



Examples of multiple swan-necked fascia lights which are not recommended.



Further guidance on illumination and signage is available within the Advertising Signs for Businesses guidelines, available on www.fifedirect.org.uk. Internal illumination of an effective shop window display can be an alternative method to encourage window shopping and advertise the goods or services on offer.

Wires and cables

It is accepted that some level of modern wiring will be present on some buildings, but it should always be as discrete as possible. Wiring should follow existing building edges and should not cut across existing edges or features on the building.

Security

Demountable mesh grilles placed over windows and hinged gates across recessed doorways are traditional means of providing security to shop fronts after opening hours. These grilles and gates are preferred for traditional shop fronts subject to an agreed design, material and colour. However the perceived inconvenience of this operation is acknowledged and the following guidance is intended to achieve an appropriate roller shutter design.

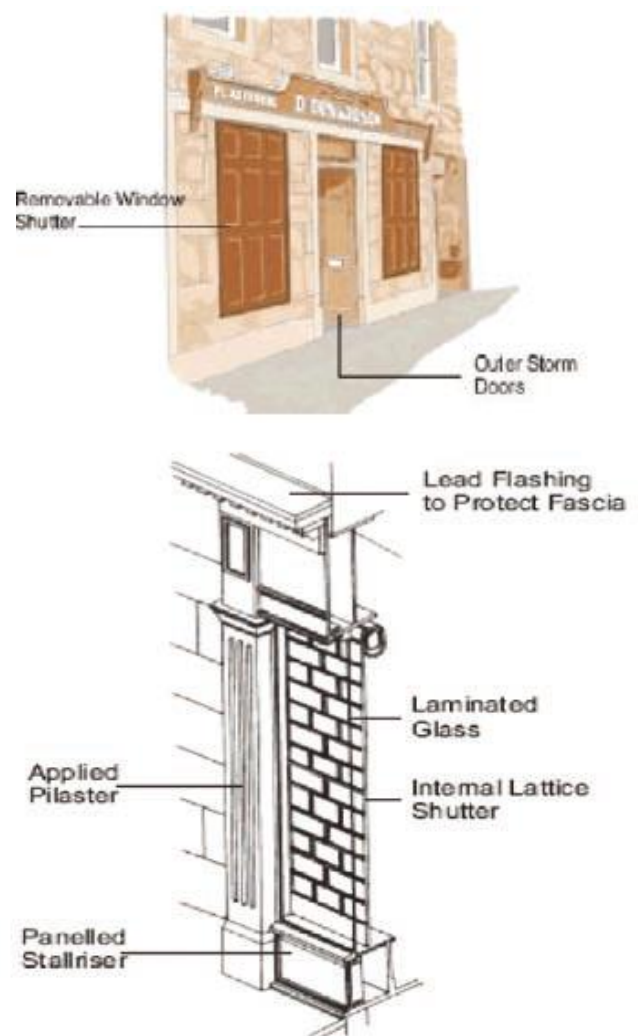
Unattractive solid security shutters are often used on shop fronts. These have a detrimental effect upon the character and amenity of an area and also hide from public view any activity or merchandise sold within the shop. For this reason they are discouraged, and the use of internal lattice shutters and reinforced laminated glass is encouraged within town centres. In other shopping areas, external shutters that allow natural light into the shop are recommended.

Boxes housing the shutter mechanism will not be permitted where they project in front of the shop front. They are inherently ugly and their fitting can mutilate the original woodwork to which they are attached. The shutter box is therefore acceptable only where it is recessed behind the frontage of the property and fitted either directly below the first floor structure behind the main fascia or at a lower level behind the sub-fascia/clerestory.

Additional security can also be achieved through the use of traditional stallrisers which provide a robust deterrent to vandals and ram raiders. Outer storm doors, window shutters and demountable grilles can be incorporated into the design of the shop front. These provide a practical and attractive alternative to solid roller shutters.

Alarm boxes will preferably be mounted on the fascia board or door return, coloured to blend into the background and carefully positioned to avoid obscuring architectural details.

The illuminated box sign, Dutch Canopy and solid security shutters are elements of design that are not encouraged.





Example of unacceptable projecting box shutters



Example of unacceptable projecting box shutters



Example of a traditional demountable security gate

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

IS PLANNING PERMISSION REQUIRED?

Planning permission is required for any changes to the external appearance of a shop front which materially affects its external appearance as well as for

replacement shop fronts. Any alteration to the exterior of a building, including windows, doors, walls, roof, chimneys, paint work and rainwater goods will require planning permission.

Planning permission is required for new shop fronts, exterior shutters and alterations to shopfronts, for

example replacing or moving doors or windows. Repainting is deemed permitted development not requiring planning permission unless in a Conservation Area. Signs are usually exempt from advertisement consent unless illuminated. This is the same in a Conservation Area. Listed Building consent is required for any alteration, including painting, to a listed building. Listed Building consent could be required for an advertisement which was exempt from advert consent.

It is essential that before any alterations are undertaken to a shop front that all the necessary approvals have been obtained. Enforcement action may be taken against unauthorised work, and this can lead to the need for further work to alter or reinstate or prosecution. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the relevant area office prior to submission of an application to discuss the planning implications of proposed works and avoid unnecessary delays. Application forms are available from Fife Council's Web site **www.fifedirect.org.uk**.

We would encourage you to submit your application electronically as this is the quickest and cheapest method. However applications may be submitted in paper or electronically and should be accompanied by:

- Drawings to a suitable scale showing clearly what is proposed and how it will look within the context of the building and immediate environment.
- Where necessary, a sectional drawing should be provided showing its profile and position relative to the upper part of the building, large scale details of architectural features, including pilasters, cornices and window details.
- Materials and colours specified should be supported if necessary by samples or photographs.

Drawings accompanying applications for advertisement consent should include accurate details of the size and design of all letters and symbols, together with the proposed colour scheme.

SUMMARY

Most new shop fronts, or shop front alterations, will adhered to:

1. Follow this design guidance.
2. Ensure design proposals are sympathetic to the predominant character of the area and/or building into which the shop front is to be set.

3. Consult with the Council's Built Heritage Officers before submitting your proposals.
4. Submit your plans in plenty of time and do not arrange to start work until the necessary consents or building warrants are in place (if required).

Reviewed April 2016