



# Shopfront Design

A Guide for Businesses  
and Communities



Historic England have observed that town centres and high streets are at a critical point because of changes in the retail economy. They need to reinforce and redefine their role and function at the centre of community activities.



Shopfronts that respect the character of a street, particularly in a Conservation Area, will enhance its appearance and visitor appeal and thus contribute to its vitality and viability.

Shopfronts that are well designed, individual, recognisable and memorable will attract a greater footfall. One over assertive shopfront can spoil the street scene.

The purpose of this leaflet is to promote attractive shopfront design.

### Principles of Good Shopfront Design

It is important that the cumulative effect of shopfront design contributes to the character and appeal of the street scene, especially in Conservation Areas.

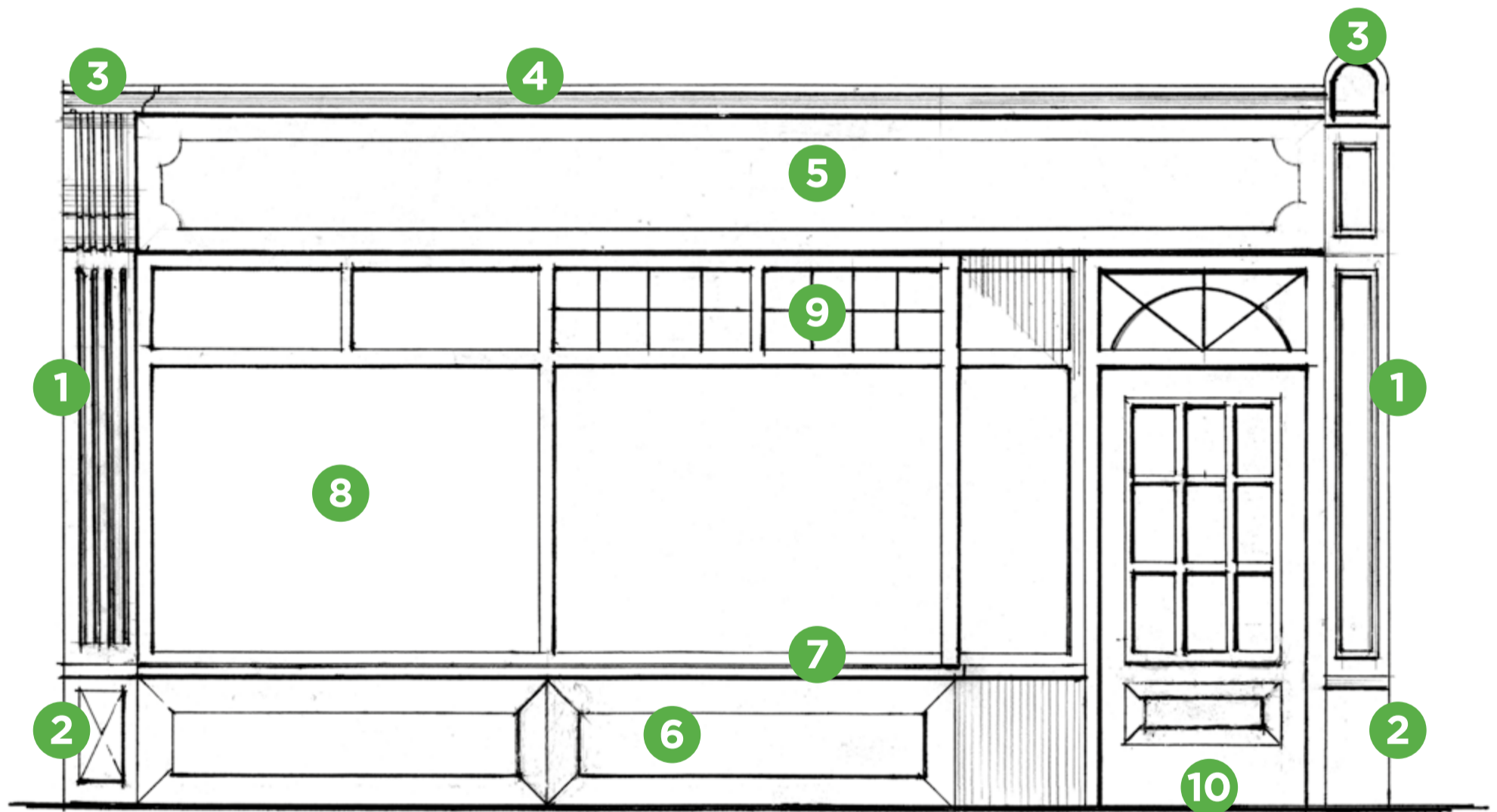
Shopfronts should reflect the structural elements of the host building. E.g. Victorian and post-war architectural styles vary considerably, and shopfront design should complement them.

### The Need for Planning Permission

Alterations to existing shopfronts will usually require planning permission from the Local Authority. If permission has not been sought and approved by them, they can insist on removal of any changes made.

Commercial buildings including shops must conform to planning regulations. Permission is normally required for changes to shop fronts, including blinds, security shutters, removal of architectural features and replacement of doors and windows, unless in an identical material, design, and finish.

In Conservation Areas, there is greater control over advertisements and signs in terms of their size and type.



## Key to Traditional Shopfront Elements

The main features of the traditional shopfront have evolved from an application of classical design principles as a form of picture frame to the shop window display and would be especially appropriate for buildings of the Victorian era. The diagram illustrates the main elements.

- 1 Pilaster:** a decorative treatment of the edge of the shopfront, concealing the party wall – may be fluted or a moulded design.
- 2 Plinth:** to pilaster, like the base of a column.
- 3 Capital:** to pilaster. May be a scroll type bracket, console, or many other variations to form a distinct and decorative edge to the fascia.
- 4 Cornice:** usually built up from a series of mouldings to form a projecting top to protect the fascia from weather.
- 5 Fascia:** the part of the shopfront displaying the name of the business. May be slightly canted forward, sign written, or with individually applied lettering, subject to method of illumination.
- 6 Stall riser:** the part of the shopfront below the display window. The term derives from the origins of shops as open fronted market stalls.
- 7 Sill:** at base of window, projecting rain away from stall riser.
- 8 Window:** usually now laminated glass for security; may be divided by mullions (vertical) and transoms (horizontal). These may be of metal or wood using decorative sections. They can be reinforced with steel 'T' bars if necessary for security.
- 9 Clerestory Glazing:** The upper part of the window can be treated decoratively using clerestory panes; a popular style in the early-mid 20th Century.
- 10 Doorway:** may be recessed but not more than 600mm nowadays for security. Design should comply with relevant building regulations.



Streetscene

## Considerations that Lead to Good Shop Front Design

- Does the shopfront obscure or respect architectural details and materials?
- Are materials, colours, type of graphics and signage overly dominant or in keeping with the building?
- Do proportions of frontages relate to the scale of the host building and those surrounding it?
- Are methods of illumination overly intrusive?
- If security grilles are needed, they should be fitted internally as external shutters create dead frontages, attract graffiti, and prevent viewing interior.
- Are any key architectural features such as columns and pilasters at upper level carried through to the ground floor via the design of the frontage? This may apply particularly to wider frontages.

### Shopfront Design

## Shop Signs, Illumination, and Advertising

Proposals for signage, including projecting signage, should be considered against the Local Authority design policies and guidelines and subject to government guidance on advertising.

Advertising A-frames may require consent and a licence from the Highways Authority if on the public highway.

Signage design should be of individual style rather than factory printed signs on plastic fascia boards.

Illumination methods may require planning permission. In Conservation Areas, stricter controls apply to methods of illumination of shopfronts and signage e.g., spotlights.

**Advice from your Local Authority should always be sought.**



Shadow signage distinctive at night

## Security Considerations

If necessary internal grilles are far better than external roller shutters which create dead frontages, attract graffiti, and prevent viewing of the interior.



Georgian style frontage



Post-war frontage

## Further Information and Useful Contacts

### Advertisements

Advertisements – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

### Boston Spa Shop Front Design Guide

Shop Front Guidance 02.04.19  
([bostonpapc.org.uk](http://bostonpapc.org.uk))

### Bradford Shopfront Design Guide

[www.bradford.gov.uk/media/2974/shopfrontdesignguide.pdf](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/2974/shopfrontdesignguide.pdf)

### Conservation Team Conservation, Protection and Heritage, Leeds City Council

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/conservation-protection-and-heritage>

### Historic England

#### Commerce and Exchange Buildings

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-commerce-exchange-buildings/>

### Historic England

#### Maintenance and Repair of Older Buildings

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/maintenance-and-repair-of-older-buildings/>

### Institute of Historic Building Conservation

[www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk)

### Isle of Wight Commercial Frontages

#### Interactive Design Guide (2022)

<https://iwdesignguide.uk>

### Planning permission, Leeds City Council

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning>

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Attractive traditional hanging sign and console type bracket top to pilaster



A neat traditional design with restrained colour scheme

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