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Using the guide

Introduction :

This Cornwall Shopfront Design guide will be endorsed in 2017 by Cornwall Council as a material consideration for land use planning purposes to support the application of Policy 24: Historic Environment, as the relevant policy in the adopted Cornwall Local Plan. It gives advice on the design of shopfronts, which contribute so much to the special character of the County's settlements. It has been produced by Cornwall Council with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and St Austell Town Council. Special appendices will be produced over time for selected towns and villages to give information on local distinctiveness. These can be produced by local Council's or partnerships.

Owners:

Do your research and find out what is the best design approach to suit your business and the building you are in.

Is the building listed, in a conservation area or does it have surviving historical features? Are you keen to get a more creative design?

Use the guide to check your building and see a range of design options. Then choose the right designer for the job with proven experience in achieving the quality of work you need.

Designers:

Use this guide as a checklist. Not all the headings may apply but they will help in working out the best options for the client.

Confirm what permissions are required.

Do your research into the historic context of the building and character of the street. Consider how to complement the building and the streetscape with the new design.

Investigate the remaining fabric, and look for evidence of previous designs which could be repaired and incorporated as a priority in the design.

Traditional or Contemporary design?



Why are historic shopfronts of value?

Traditional shopfronts can contribute much to the locally distinctive character of a town or village. Even small historic details that survive are worth retaining and incorporating into a new shopfront. They often have a higher degree of craftsmanship and tell you something of the story of the town and previous businesses. “Historic” is just a relative term and can include styles from Georgian through to the 1960s, all of which are valued and can be restored today.

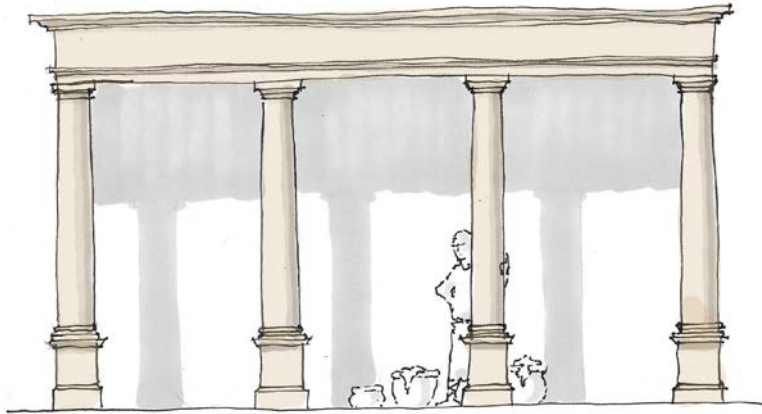


When is it appropriate to produce a contemporary design?

A well-designed contemporary shopfront can look good in a historic building, especially if it reflects traditional proportions and elements such as pilasters fascia and projecting cornice. High quality materials and detailing should also be provided. Large flat fascia signs or box signs rarely work well.

A modern building can give more scope for a bolder creative design that can add to the local distinctiveness of the area.

Origins of shopfront design



1. The classical open colonnade with plinths, columns and entablature

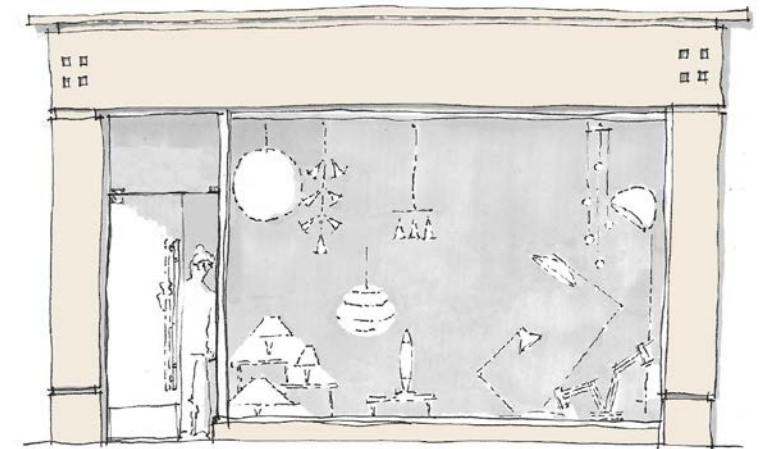


3. A Victorian approach introduced many variations and embellishments of detail, such as ornate console brackets, dentilled cornices, decorative transoms and mullions and panelled fascia and pilasters

Most shopfront designs can be traced back to classical origins. Over the centuries, new styles have emerged that modify the details and materials, but interestingly the same key components have been retained. The column has become a pilaster. The stallriser has filled in between bases. The entablature has become the fascia. a shopfront can look incomplete without a cornice of some description. See components sketch on page 5.



2. The Georgian shopfront often infilled the colonnade with glazing and stallriser between the bases, keeping the classical appearance



4. A contemporary shopfront can still be influenced by classical design, with posts and lintol forming a frame that supports the façade above. Replicating the classical proportions with a projecting cornice detail works best.

Design to complement the building

Shops spanning two buildings

If your new shopfront occupies two or three adjoining buildings it is good to reflect the rhythm, height and scale of the buildings above. Don't resort to one large, overbearing fascia sign. This will help create a more attractive shopping street.



Left: a poor response

This is not designed. It simply uses a large, flat fascia to try to link the shop units, without any respect to the size of the buildings or heights of the windows.

Combining designs

These two shops on Treloarwarren St in Camborne were brought together in a unified design, bringing a great improvement to the streetscene. This was a joint project.

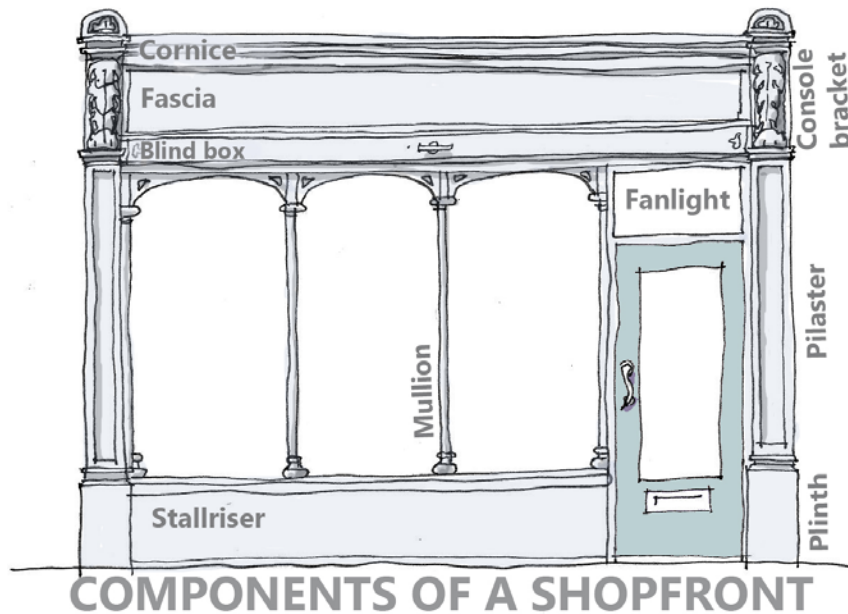


Right: a good design

This shopfront design steps to reflect the buildings heights. It does not hide window cills. It also positions pilasters to create a strong frame under each elevation. Two shopfronts are linked in terms of design style, detailing and colour.



Historic shopfronts



A highly decorative late Victorian shopfront in Bodmin, with curved corners



Bow window shopfront in Falmouth, dated 1812



Above: Early Victorian shop in Truro, with narrow beaded pilasters and narrow projecting cornice

Left: Edwardian shopfront in St. Day, with sliding sash windows



Commercial late Victorian shop windows in St. Austell, built as part of original design

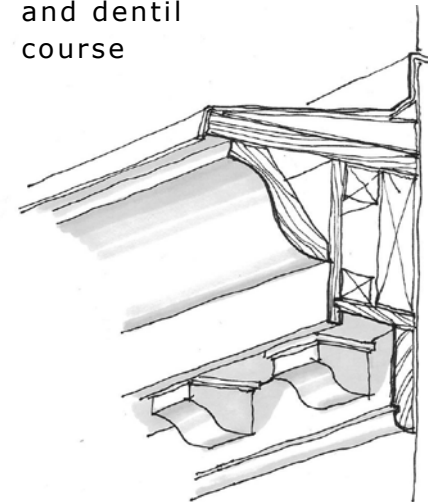
Elements: cornice and fascia



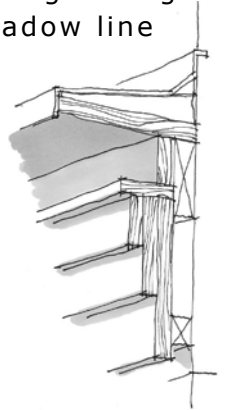
The traditional Victorian fascia is usually set in a frame and topped by a stepped, projecting cornice. This was based on classical design, sometimes with a curved *cyma recta* moulding and a dentil course below. The shadowing under the cornice gave a definite visual stop to the shopfront design. The example, in the middle left, shows a curved Georgian shopfront with a narrow, red fascia and deep, flat cornice. Bottom left is a very contemporary interpretation using a projecting floating blade that gives the definitive shadow line.



Traditional cornice construction with *cyma recta* moulding and dentil course



Modern version of cornice with deep projection, giving strong shadow line



Elements: Pilasters and Consoles



Console brackets

These are located at the top of the pilaster, originally devised to support the projecting cornice (7).

They became very substantial features and were commonly positioned to the side of the fascia. The brackets were often decorated with scrolls or leaf carvings and capped by a small pediment. (1,2,8)

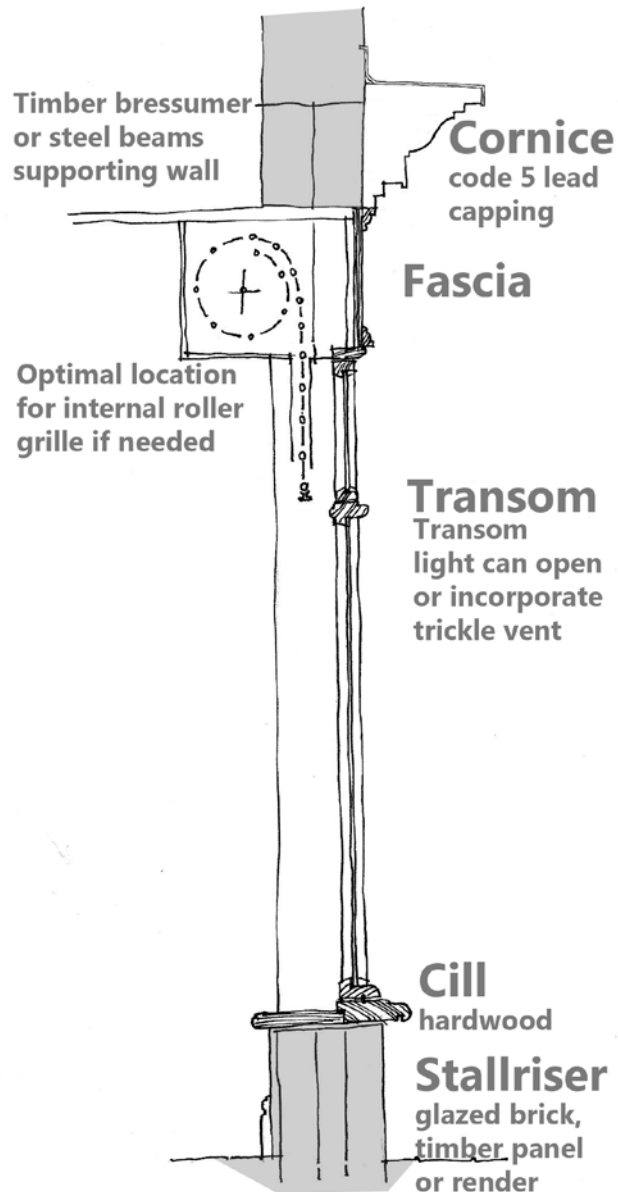
Pilasters (above) are the vertical columns that frame the shopfront and appear to support the fascia (or the entablature in a classical design). Early shopfront designs stopped the pilaster just underneath the fascia without a console bracket (3,4,6)

Pilasters can be plain (2,3), half round (5), panelled, beaded (4), or fluted (1,5). The pilaster sits on a base that can be varied in height to deal with a sloping site.

Flat pilasters with an inscribed, rectangular pattern are very distinctive to Cornwall. (6)



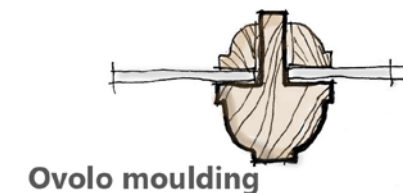
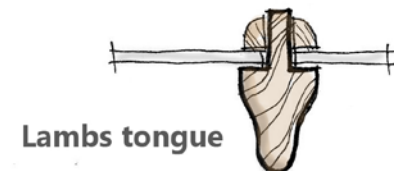
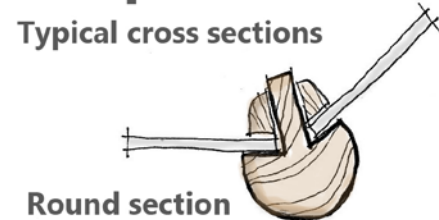
Elements: Traditional shop windows



Historic shop windows were often subdivided by vertical timber elements called mullions. Many profiles were used for mullions, typically rounded or oval shapes projecting about 40-70mm from the glass. Tall windows sometimes had opening transom lights, which could incorporate leaded glass. Ultra slim double glazing can be used in standard framing for thermal insulation or laminated glass can be used for security.

Shopfront mullions

Typical cross sections



Elements: fascia signage



The fascia is more effective if it is part of the structure of the shopfront design, framed and topped with a strong cornice.

Painted signage works best if it includes a highlight or shadow to give a 3D effect. The lettering needs to be proportioned nicely within fascia depth - see images 1 and 2.



Lettering can also be fixed directly to an elevation. See image 3. This contemporary design fixes thin blades that only create the shadowed underside of letters. Our eye gives the impression of 3D stone lettering.

Alternatively well-designed, thin, 3D letters, that are fixed flat to the fascia, can be very effective. See 4 and 5.



Sometimes large flat fascias, or reflective materials can leave your business at a disadvantage if the sign is not very readable. The framed fascia and projecting cornice also gives a stronger presence for a shopfront. See 6 below.



Elements: lighting



On most lit streets it will not be necessary to illuminate the shopfront or fascia. Internally illuminated signs often look bulky and detract from the character of the shopping street. Large projecting light fittings can be just as intrusive.

If necessary, small, focused LED fittings can highlight key features of a shopfront. These are a preferred solution as they are unobtrusive as well as energy efficient.



Sometimes light fittings can distract from the business name or the shopfront design



Elements: projecting and hanging signs

Hanging and projecting signs have become part of the local townscape character, especially in Cornwall's narrow streets and opeways.

However, this interest can be lost when cheaper commercial projecting signs add to the clutter and advertising confusion. Internally illuminated box signs with poor graphic design can often be unnecessary, and have a negative effect on the attractiveness of the shopping street.

Good signs will demonstrate personalised creative artwork, local interest, humour or craft skills, often in metalwork, which become features of the shopping street.



Contemporary design in historic buildings



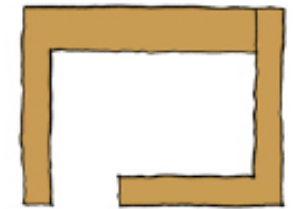
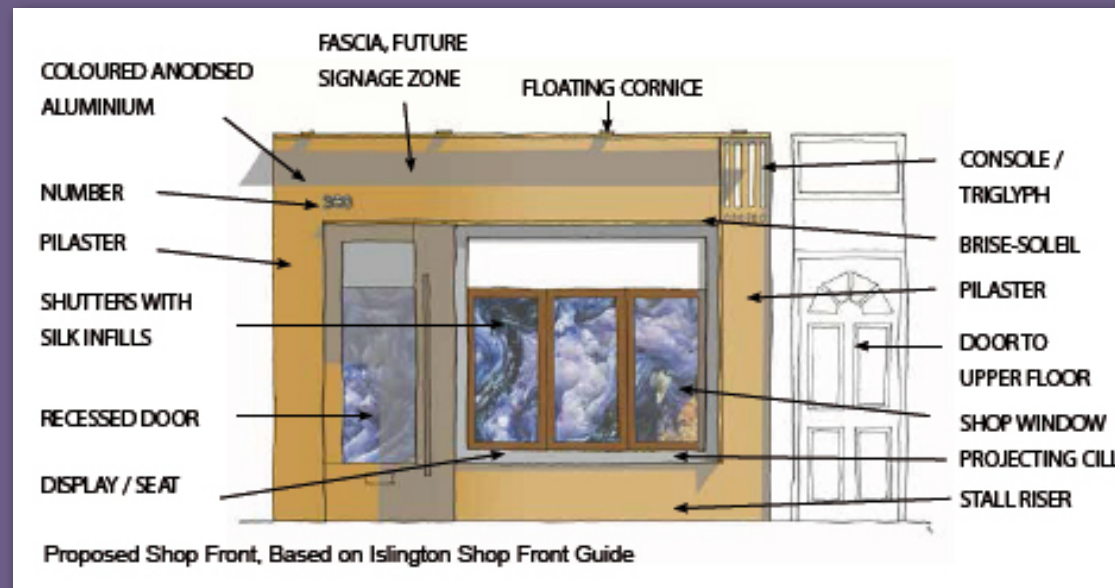
Contemporary design can easily complement the character of historic buildings. Successful schemes reflect key components and proportions of traditional design, such as the pilasters, fascia and projecting cornice, but reinterpret them in a modern way.

Contemporary design based on historic patterns

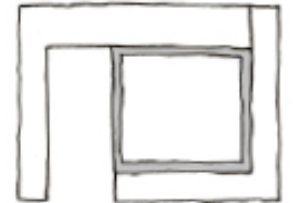
These diagrams show how a contemporary design by Satish Jassal Architects reflects the traditional proportions and components of shopfronts as shown in the sketch to the right. The architects design works because details and materials are of a high quality and the depth of traditional shopfronts is recreated by recessing planes and inserting a modern cornice to create shadows. The Triglyph is a classical motif found on the frieze. A similar approach could be used to reflect traditional decoration and detail found in Cornwall.



Right: The diagrams illustrate how a framework encloses the shop window and is overlaid with projecting elements. Below and left: The complete shopfront, identifying its main components and historic references. See photos on page 17.



Frame



Shop Bay Window



Cornice Lines



Privacy Screen

Contemporary design in new buildings



A lot more flexibility can be applied in a newer buildings to enhance and enliven the local shopping environment. However, these only work well if there is a high degree of architectural or graphic design input into the scheme.

Accessibility



Jericho's at Liberty's in Launceston has an automatic push pad, an assistive handrail on the ramped threshold, wide door access and lift to the first floor restaurant.

Key principles of good design

- Goods and services in shops should be accessible to everyone.
- Entrances should be level (A high threshold strip can still be a barrier and a trip hazard, choose a door without one).
- Ramps can be located at entrances with maximum 1:20 fall or 1:12 for a short ramp.
- Ramps can be installed inside the shop.
- Modifications to the pavement could overcome a small step.
- Everyone should be able to use the same entrance.
- Doors should have a minimum clear opening width of 800mm (Can a double buggy get through the entrance?).
- Recessed doors should have a minimum 300mm space alongside the handle side of the door, to allow a wheelchair user to reach the handle.
- Push pad electronic door controls can be used
- Automatic doors can make shopping easier for everyone.
- Do not clutter the shopfront with unprotected displays, seating or "A" boards (these are a hazard to blind or partially sighted people and can narrow routes for wheelchair users and buggies).
- The interior design and the shop service is also important to consider, making the layout easy to navigate and providing assistance for people with hearing, visual physical or mental impairments.



This shopfront in Falmouth has been created with a ramped, tiled threshold. The recess is splayed to improve access and the door is wide.

Consultants can offer an advisory visit to help your design be more inclusive, or you can obtain a full Access Audit of your premises. The Links page at the end of document gives contacts for useful consultants and legal requirements.

Remember: listed buildings CAN be modified to allow inclusive access, with suitable detailing - it is not an excuse to do nothing.

Security

Businesses who require a high degree of security may consider the installation of shutters. However some possible negative impacts should be noted.

Solid shutters or external shutters and their boxes are often very detrimental to the appearance of the building and the street. They can give the impression of a dead space when closed down, put off visitors to the area and affect the night-time economy. They can also become a target for graffiti and lead to further decline and anti-social behaviour.



Other suitable solutions are available. Laminated glass of suitable thickness can prevent break-ins and reduce breakages. Internally, open mesh roller grilles behind the shopfront glass can be installed (e.g. in a brick bond metal link). These will allow surveillance of the inside of the shop and not affect the appearance of the outside when closed. Improving light and visibility will make the shopping areas more attractive out of opening hours and will encourage more evening activity.

A shopfront with a recessed doorway can potentially lead to anti social behaviour because the recess may be sheltered and out of view of the main street. Avoid including a recess in a new shopfront design for this reason.

However, many historic shopfronts do retain recessed entrances, some very ornate and part of the special character. In these instances, it may be preferable to include a collapsible gate or a short section of open mesh shutter to allow some visibility inside. Alternatively, a bright floodlight with movement detector could act as a suitable deterrent.



The police have produced technical advice for securing retail premises which is available here

[Secured by Design Retail](#)

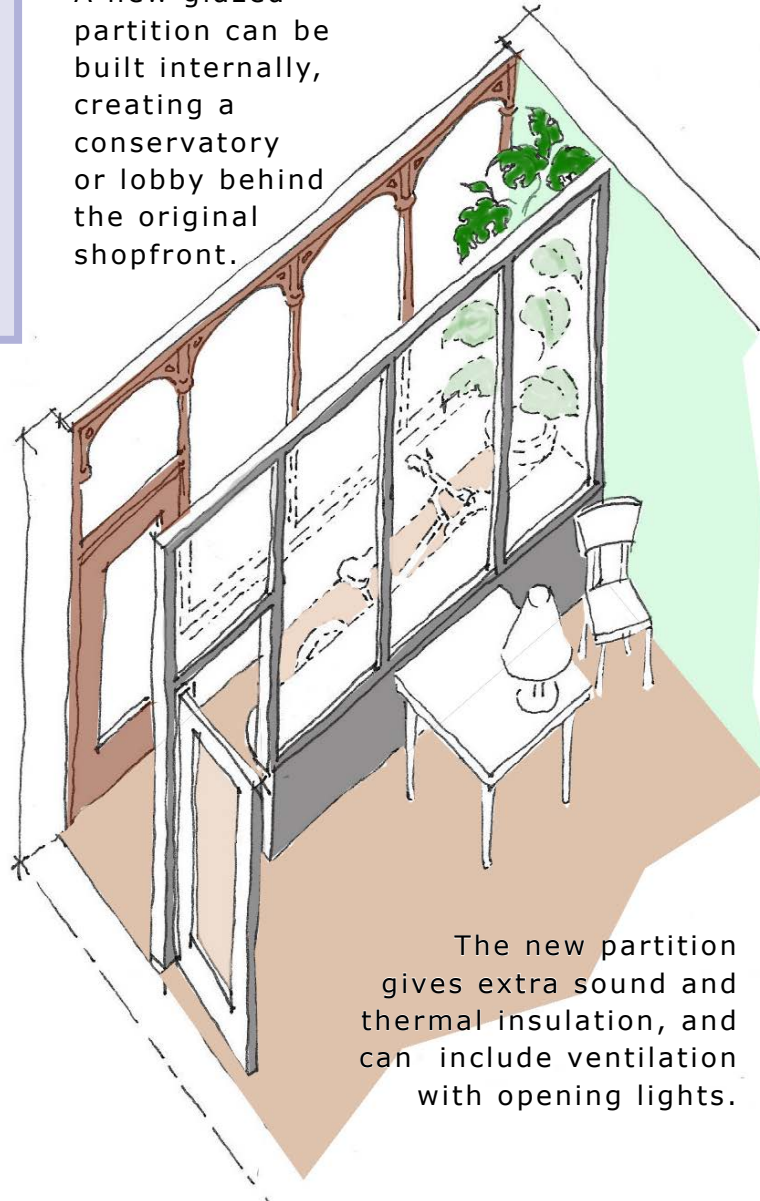


Adaptability and conversion

Many town or village shops are closing down, but they can be converted to other uses, such as residential or workspace, without losing the special character of the original shopfront. These examples, below left, from St. Day keep the original shopfront and local distinctiveness.



Option 1 below:
A new glazed partition can be built internally, creating a conservatory or lobby behind the original shopfront.



The new partition gives extra sound and thermal insulation, and can include ventilation with opening lights.



Option 2 above: In this adaptable new design by Satish Jassal architects, additional folding shutters are included behind the "shop window" which can be obscured by art glass or printed film. This can bring some privacy, sound and thermal insulation.

In the future, needs may change again. If some care is given to the design, then these buildings can be converted back once more or adapted to another use. A new residential or business unit can also be built in a way that will be flexible enough to adapt in the future.

Colour in shopfronts

Shopfronts are a great way to incorporate colour into an environment. With some artistic direction and sensitivity to historic character our shopping streets could be made more attractive for visitors and shoppers. Paint scrapes can give evidence for historic colour schemes to assist a restoration scheme.



Special features

Special crafted signage, such as timber carved signwriting, period lettering and painted glass are locally distinctive and worth retaining as a historic reference.

Truro



Recessed thresholds to shops were designed to create a welcome on narrow streets. They often incorporate valuable terrazzo or tiled floors.

Falmouth



Large hand painted signs directly on the upper walls of buildings are traditional and becoming more popular today. They demand a high degree of signwriting skill.



Curved glass is a wonderful feature of many shopfronts animating the streetscene

Redruth

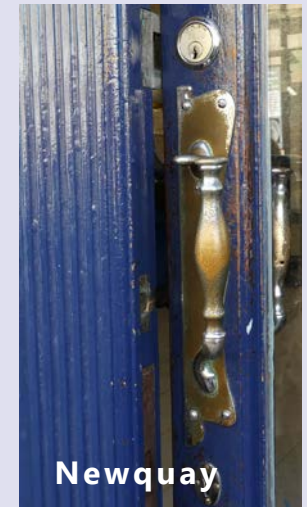


Ceramics, such as mosaic, glazed tiles and faience, are a traditional and colourful material for shopfronts, which can be used in creative ways.



Quality ironmongery, such as handles, letterboxes, hinges, gates, plaques, lettering and numbers are definitely worth retaining, even incorporated into a new design.

Newquay



Repair and maintenance

Timber shopfronts

Historic shopfronts can survive for over two hundred years. This shows that if you construct one with good details, high quality timber and undertake essential repairs it is a very good investment. Timber has a flexibility in that it can be relatively easily repaired without replacing the whole construction.

A very important tip is to use softwoods that are suitable for external use and use hardwoods for the cill. It is good practice to ensure the timber is sustainably sourced and FSC certified. It will lengthen the life of your joinery if all the joint faces (especially the end grain) are primed before construction.

The use of modern microporous paints may help wood that gets damp to dry out, but also bear in mind that the more traditional linseed oil paints are more flexible and less likely to crack. A good paint system, using long life paints, will mean less repainting over time and that includes good quality primers.

Incorporating trickle vents or opening lights into a new shopfront is important to maintain some ventilation.



Maintenance

Maintaining a timber shopfront to a good standard, will require yearly checks and touching up of the paintwork, especially around the cill and the joints in the framing.

For larger repairs, timber can be scarfed-in around the joints, and minor areas of repair could be undertaken using resins.

Rendered or timber-panelled stallrisers will be subject to a lot of damage, especially if they are carried down to the ground without any gap or damp proof course. Splashback from the road and pavement surface are a constant problem leaving them dirty and stained. Using stone or glazed brick, with a damp proof course, is a very good long term solution.

Clearing out gutters at the top of the building can be a great benefit, avoiding spillages down the facade and onto the shop. The flashing over the cornice must be regularly checked to ensure it is not cracked and properly tucked in to the wall above. Also, ensuring downpipes are kept clear means that they will discharge properly into a drain and won't splash back onto the shopfront.

Links

Click the [pink](#) headings below to link to the webpages:

[Shopfront Appendices for local towns and villages](#)
To be added as produced by Cornwall or local councils.

[Cornwall Design Guide](#)

Companion guide for all forms of development and external works.

[Secured by Design](#)

Police technical advice for securing retail premises is available here.

[Building Regulations: Access to and use of buildings](#)

[Disability Cornwall](#) or [Accessibility Cornwall](#) Local accessibility consultancies.
[What equality law means for your business](#) and [National Register of Access Consultants](#)
for national accessibility advice.

[Historic England: Easy Access to Historic Buildings](#)

Historic England advice and design solutions for historic buildings.

[Historic shopfront details](#)

English Historic Towns Forum: Book of details and good practice.

Guidance for making applications:

[Planning applications](#)

[Advertisement consent applications](#)

[Building regulations approval](#)

[Cornwall Local Plan](#)

Note Policy 12: Design and Policy 24 Historic Environment.

Funders:



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