

SHOP FRONT AND ADVERTISEMENT DESIGN GUIDANCE

for

MORECAMBE TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (THI) 2: A VIEW FOR ERIC and MORECAMBE CONSERVATION AREA.



www.lancaster.gov.uk/viewforeric

Introduction

This guidance has been produced as part of *Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative 2 (THI 2): A View for Eric*, a scheme to help rejuvenate a specific part of Morecambe Conservation Area, thereby helping to enhance the overall Conservation Area's character and appearance. Further information about the scheme can be found in **GRANT GUIDANCE NOTES** available to download at www.lancaster.gov.uk/viewforeric.

Like many other towns, Morecambe has suffered from economic decline over a number of years. Many of Morecambe's buildings are now in need of enhancement to help bring character and vitality back to the area.

The purpose of this guidance is to promote and encourage good shop front and advertisement design within Morecambe Conservation Area. The guidance therefore goes beyond simply the THI area and is equally relevant to the whole Conservation Area.

The purpose of the following guidelines should provide a general approach which should be adopted when considering alterations to existing shop fronts and new shop fronts and advertisements.

Background

Historically, much of the THI 2 boundary area developed during the mid-later C19. Many of the retail properties in use today will have started life as boarding houses, only later seeing their ground floors converted to retail units, and the insertion of shop fronts, in the later C19 and early-mid C20. This is certainly true of both Skipton Street and many of the properties on Victoria Street. There is also evidence of this along Marine Road itself.

In a number of cases, some fine examples of shop fronts survive, others have been reinstated. In several cases, whilst the majority of an historic shop front might have been lost, remnants survive, such as scrolled console brackets, a cornice running over a fascia, pilasters and capitals. Many have often been covered over with box fascias during the C20, in an attempt to modernise shop fronts or signage. This sort of evidence, as well as photographs, can provide the basis for reinstatement, provided this does not involve the removal of later features of interest.

Design Principles:

In considering a shop front design, it is crucial to consider the building as a whole.

Ground floor shop fronts should have a good relationship with the upper floors of the building and should not attempt to divorce the shop front from the building of which it is part, thus altering the established architectural pattern.

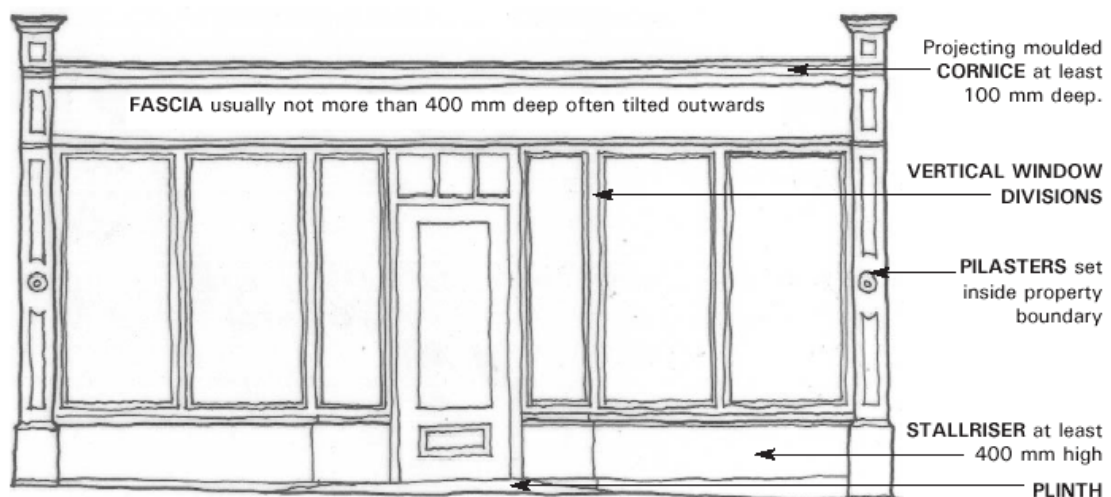
Unfortunately, the introduction of modern construction techniques and materials has often resulted in the loss of this concept when buildings were 'updated'. For example, the insertion of steel beams meant that the whole ground floor could be removed and a new shop front inserted with no visual means of support.

Similarly, high ground floor ceilings are often fitted with suspended ceilings, resulting in the shop front fascia becoming far too deep, and the signage oversized accordingly.

It is not uncommon for retailers to compete for attention leading to larger signs becoming the desired norm, and more lighting, generally resulting in visual clutter.

Shop front security is an issue which can also adversely affect the appearance of the street, with the addition of external steel shutters and grilles. Not only are they often poorly designed and pay little regard to the proportions and bays of the shop front and upper floors, result in the addition of unsightly and bulky shutter boxes, and further visual clutter, but they also give the street scene a hostile appearance and prevent casual surveillance.

The City Council's policy position on shop front security within conservation areas is set out in the adopted ***Policy Information Note & Design Guidance – Shopfront Security in Conservation Areas.***



Summary of Good Practice:

- All work should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Morecambe Conservation Area;
- A shop front design should respect the style and proportions of the overall building and relate to the upper floors;
- Over-sized fascias which are out of scale with neighbouring fascias or obscure shop windows are unlikely to be supported;
- Fascia signs should sit neatly within the fascia, and clear of any framing details. Projecting box fascias are rarely acceptable;
- Where two shop units have been merged to create one, the shop fronts should remain visually separate, with strong vertical divisions between shop fronts;
- The use of quality materials will be expected;
- Shop front design should be based on research into the historic shop front, relating to the specific building; and
- Internally illuminated signed is unlikely to be supported. Where illumination is necessary, it should be restricted to subtle external lighting of high quality.

Fascias:

Traditional shop fronts tend to incorporate a fascia to display the name of the shop.

Scale and design of the fascia should be appropriate to the character, height and period of the building and in proportion with the design of the shop front.



A fascia should be kept well below the cills of first floor windows. They should not extend down too far, not cover up any architectural details.

Fascias should not project into the street in a box-like fashion.

As a general rule, a fascia should not be larger than 400mm in depth.

Where a false ceiling has been inserted, a fascia should not be extended down merely to conceal this. A false ceiling should be concealed via a separate element below, usually by the use of obscured transom lights.

Cornice:

This is the moulded projection which runs along the top of the fascia, throwing water clear of the shop front. The cornice is traditionally topped with lead flashing. A cornice is a necessary feature of most shop front designs.



Console/corbels:

These features provide the visual supports for the cornice and usually frame each end of a fascia, often placed as a capital to the pilaster below.



Pilasters:

Rectangular in plan form, these implied piers project slightly from the wall. However, they have no structural function, but are used for architectural and decorative reasons, and give the impression of supporting the fascia and cornice above. They are usually topped by a decorative capital with a wider base on a plinth.

Stallrisers:

Stallrisers complete the framing of the shop front and help achieve a well-balanced design. Stallrisers also perform a functional role, providing protection from damage at a low level.



Stallrisers are formed in a variety of materials. Traditionally throughout Morecambe, they have tended to be rendered or timber panels.

Windows

Large areas of glass may provide too much horizontal emphasis to the otherwise vertical character of the upper floors. Vertical mullions or glazing bars can therefore be used to subdivide the glass. Horizontal members (transoms) can be used to subdivide the glass horizontally, where necessary, such as where there is a need for transom lights to perhaps obscure a false ceiling behind.



Doors

Any doors should match the overall design of the shop front. For example, the lower panel of the the door should follow the line of the stallriser and similarly, any fanlight over the door should be positioned to follow the line of any transom lights. Original architectural details such as decorative mosaic entrances should be preserved.



Access

This should form an integral part of the design process. For example, the principal entrance should be level where possible and have a minimum clear opening of 775mm for existing buildings (1000mm for new buildings). Glazed doors should have clear contrasting manifestations to ensure perception by people with visual impairments. All proposed schemes must be fully compliant with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010, and the Building Regulations 2010 (amended 2011), and associated guidance and British standards.

Materials

In Morecambe, the majority of shop fronts are traditionally timber, though some examples of fine metal frontages exist. The materials for new shop fronts should be consistent with and respect the original building's age and character. Glossy or reflective materials will be discouraged.

Where aluminium is deemed appropriate, matt or satin finished powder coating can be applied to achieve a high quality finish and appearance.

Occasionally, modern materials such as aluminium or acrylic and perspex can work well as individual signage letters, when applied to a modern frontage where it has been well-designed.

Colours

Colours are a distinctive part of the character of seaside resorts. However, unrestrained application of colour can have an accumulative negative effect and therefore colours for shop front improvements should be selected from an approved palette, which will add to rather than detract from the character of Morecambe.

Signage

Generally speaking, the simpler the message, the greater the impact that can be achieved. An excessive amount of advertising creates a cluttered and unsightly appearance.

Carefully designed signs can enhance the quality of a shop front or building.

Signage should generally be restricted to a fascia, and signs above this level or on gables will normally be discouraged. It is rarely necessary to fill the fascia with signage and it should ideally be restricted to the shop name only.

Where there is no fascia, individual letters applied directly to the wall can be an effective method of advertising.

Traditional hanging signs and trade symbols might be appropriate in many instances, provided they are kept to an appropriate scale. However, A-boards or sandwich boards are not appropriate since they create clutter in the streetscape and can be hazardous to the disabled and visually impaired.



The use of quality traditional materials will be encouraged. Hand painted signs can be very effective.

The use of glossy signage is unlikely to be supported and signage with a matt or satin finish is encouraged.

Illumination

Internally illuminated box signs are obtrusive and will be discouraged. Instead, subtle external lighting of high quality should be utilised where signage is deemed necessary.

A narrow trough light, powder coated to match its background, and located only above the lettering, can sometimes be appropriate.

Ideally, lighting should be contained within shop windows, focussing on the display of goods, rather than shop frontages.

Window displays

Shop windows should not be obscured by a proliferation of advertisements, window transfers or posters.

The method of display is crucial, not only for attracting the customer but also creating a lively street atmosphere.

Contemporary designs:

Existing and contemporary shop fronts which are themselves of interest and which contribute to the character and appearance of the building should be retained.