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City of Brechin THI - SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Important: The applicant should make sure that these guidelines are drawn to the attention of the professional agent that will tender for and carry out the design. A grant aided shopfront design might require more work and the production of more detailed drawings than usual.

General

Creating a historic shopfront design will involve more than understanding the client's requirements. There will be additional preparatory work that should include a survey of the existing shopfront and its underlying structures, a historical investigation and an appraisal of the character of the surrounding buildings. The synthesis of this knowledge and ideas should result in the quality of design, which demonstrates that the choice of materials and detailed construction has been carefully considered.

So called "low maintenance" materials like self-coloured plastic and aluminium are often unsatisfactory. They dull quickly and cannot be readily maintained to their original pristine appearance. A quality shopfront constructed from traditional materials will, with reasonable maintenance, retain its positive image for many years. The maintenance of traditional materials is usually cheap and simple to carry out.

Any existing historic evidence or photographic records should be used to reinstate the original shopfront design. Only if there are definitely no historical references can a modern shopfront be considered for grant aid. Please make sure that you contact the project manager immediately should that be the case.

The design of good shopfronts revolves around symmetry, proportion and respect for the shop's place and function. A well-designed shopfront should be sympathetic to its surroundings, attract the customer and provide a positive image to promote the goods being sold.

Please make sure that all statutory consents have been sought. Angus Council's Planning Department can provide advice notes for shopfronts and signs in conservation areas, listed buildings and conservation areas, Dutch canopies/ sunblinds and shop window security.

Fascia boards

The fascia board is located over the whole shop. It is usually between 300-600mm high. The top of the fascia board is finished with a cornice. This cornice can be richly detailed with shaped mouldings, dentils or egg and dart. The top of the fascia is located directly under the stone string course or should be no closer than 150mm from the stone window cill above. Sometimes fascias are seen set at an angle to protect them from weather.

Console Brackets

Console brackets mark the end of the fascia. They are bold and ornate with all three faces elaborately carved, sometimes with symbolic icons. Console brackets are larger at the top tapering down to the base. They start under the cornice and finish below the fascia board.

Columns & Pilasters

Visually, columns and pilasters form the main structure of the shopfront. They should be designed to look as if they are serving this purpose. The columns should be located in line with the structural elements of the whole building, not underneath the upper windows. Columns are round or half round and can be plain or fluted. Pilasters are flat and can be fluted or panelled. The fluting or panelling should be bold and can include embellishments such as a central medallion.

Capitals & Plinths

The top of a column ends with a capital. The capital widens out as if to “receive” the weight of the fascia and the building above. Where it extends across the fascia it should widen further to join the cornice at the top. The capital can be one of the classical orders or a stylised cap and collar. The plinth is the base of the column. It should be wider than the column as if providing it with a stable base.

Mullions & Transoms

Mullions are the vertical intermediate glazing bars, while transoms are the horizontal intermediate glazing bars.

Mullions can be slender or substantial like small columns. They can be useful for creating smaller glazed window panes, which can be an important security consideration. If slender they will not reduce the overall window display.

Window mullions, which are designed like small columns, should have a capital supporting the fascia and a plinth on the stallriser. The area between transoms and fascia is traditionally decorative glass. Sometimes carvings are integrated or the glass is painted.

Doors

Doors should match the design and character of the shopfront. Outer “storm doors” should be incorporated into the design of the entrance to improve security. The entrance should be recessed and part glazed with a glazed panel above a gunstock-moulding door.

Traditional doors should be framed and panelled. This panelling should match the panels of the stallriser and have mouldings appropriate to the period such as beaded panels or bolection mouldings. Never attempt to fake these details by applying mouldings to flush panel doors.

All doors should be fitted with quality ironmongery in keeping with the design and period of the shopfront.

Security

Storm doors, which can be closed at night, are good for security. Doors and windows can be detailed to house removable timber or metal lattice shutters which cover the glass.

Open lattice grilles may be fitted inside the window within a concealed housing. Smaller panes of glass will be easier to replace if broken. Opening up display area will give a better view from the shop floor to the street and vice versa.

Stallrisers

The height of the stallriser varies from 75-1000mm depending on the nature of the goods being sold. Each stallriser should be designed to relate to the rest of the shopfront and the adjacent stallrisers. Ventilation grilles can be incorporated into the design of the stallriser. This can be ducted ventilation to the shop or basement areas.

Colour, Painting & Maintenance

The colour of a shopfront requires planning consent. Acceptable colours will usually be darker and more restrained ones. Bright colours can be used in moderation, particularly in small areas as a complementary colour. Details should never be so small that they cannot easily be cleaned, painted or maintained.

Sign, Lettering & Numbering

Lettering is an important feature of shopfront design. It communicates the nature of the business and the corporate image of the trader. Lettering should suit the corporate style of the shop and, when used on a traditional style shopfront, be historically accurate.

Property numbers should be in a visible position and incorporated into the design to identify each property.

Hanging Signs & Illumination

Traditionally, hanging signs are a trade symbol or a decorative signboard. Hanging signs are particularly useful where a shop has no, or only a small fascia. They should never be self-illuminated and always made out of good quality traditional materials.

Hanging signs should be of artistic quality – their origins lie in visual communication to the illiterate. The sign should be located over the shop entrance; at least 2400mm clear above the pavement.

External lights should only light shopfronts and signs in rare circumstances. Please contact the Planning department regarding the regulation about signs and illumination.

Much of the above information has been taken from the Old Town Technical Guidance for Shopfront Improvements with kind permission of the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.

