

COPELAND SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE



COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. Introduction	1	5.3. How is the signage designed?.....	15
1.1. Purpose of this document.....	1	5.4. Choice of timber	15
1.2. Do I need a new shopfront?.....	1	5.5. Historic colour schemes.....	16
1.3. Do I need permission?.....	1	6. What to Avoid	17
2. Policy Context.....	2	6.1. Bad Practice Example.....	18
2.1. National Legislation.....	2	6.2. Poor Proportions.....	19
2.2. National Policy.....	2	6.3. Oversized Fascias	20
2.3. Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD	3	6.4. Garish Colours and Patterns	20
2.4. Copeland Local Plan 2017-2035 Preferred Options Draft Policies.....	5	6.5. Clutter and Poor Quality Projecting Signs.....	21
3. Some Key Parts of a Shopfront.....	7	6.6. Poor Maintenance	22
4. How Shopfronts Have Changed Over Time	9	6.7. Unattractive Shutters.....	23
4.1. Georgian Period (approx. 1700-1840)	9	6.8. Flatness	23
4.2. Victorian Period (approx. 1840-1900).....	10	7. Good Practice.....	24
4.3. Edwardian Period (approx. 1900-First World War)	11	7.1. A Checklist, arranged from simplest to most involved.....	24
4.4. Modernist Period (First World War-approx. 1980).....	12	7.2. Good Practice Example	26
4.5. Contemporary Shopfronts (Since 1980s)	13	7.3. Some Good Practice Case Studies	27
5. Things to consider.....	14	8. Contact Details.....	32
5.1. Proportions and detailing.....	14		
5.2. How will it be lit?.....	15		

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

This guide is a supplementary planning document, meaning it is a material consideration in the planning decision-making process.

It applies to the part of Copeland that's outside the Lake District National Park. There are many settlements in this area with historic shopfronts, and many more with historic buildings that have lost their shopfronts.

This document highlights the importance of these often overlooked and poorly adapted elements – maintaining them, repairing them, and creating well designed replacements where necessary.

It will be of use to anyone involved in altering or creating a shopfront.

1.2. Do I need a new shopfront?

Repair is far better than replacement in cases where historic shopfronts survive, even when they have been damaged in localised areas, lost historic features such as glazing bars, or have had detail obscured by layers of paint. Unlike plastic, timber can be easily repaired.

1.3. Do I need permission?

Proposals that make a material alteration to the external appearance of a building may need planning permission.

Additionally, if the building is listed, proposals that could affect its special historic or architectural interest will need listed building consent.

Straightforward maintenance such as splicing in replacement timber or repainting will not need planning permission and is unlikely to need listed building consent.

Advertisement consent is required for some forms of signage.

Most work to shopfronts won't require approval under the Building Regulations, however, changes that affect the access or make structural changes may require approval.

The Council offers advice for free, so please get in touch to ask and we'll be happy to help.

See Section 8: Contact Details

2. Policy Context

This section will be updated to reflect Copeland's new Local Plan 2017-35.

In this transitional edition of the Design Guide, both the current and the emerging Local Plan policies are reproduced together.

2.1. National Legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

- Section 16(2) establishes a need “in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works [for the Local Planning Authority to] have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest”.
- Section 66(1) also extends this to the granting of planning permission affecting a listing building or its setting
- Section 72(1) states that “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of [a conservation] area.”

2.2. National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework:

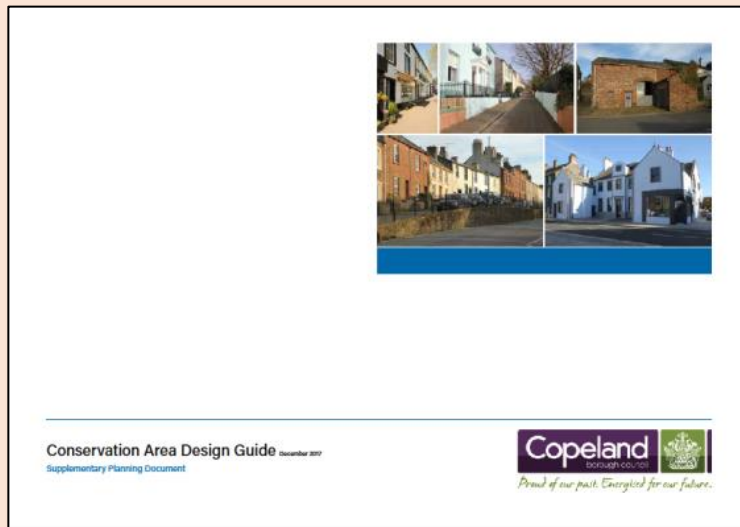
- Paragraph 192 states that “In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation...”
- Paragraph 193 states, in the case of designated heritage assets [e.g. listed building], “great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.”
- Paragraph 197 states the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset [e.g. a historic but unlisted building] should be taken into account when making decisions.
- Paragraph 200 urges that, in new development opportunities should be sought to enhance or better reveal the significance of conservation areas.
- Paragraph 201 refers to heritage assets in conservation areas, stating that loss of an element that makes a positive contribution to the area should be treated as either substantial or less-than-substantial harm.

2.3. Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD

- **ST1C(ii)** highlights the importance of protecting, enhancing and restoring the Borough's cultural and heritage features and their settings.
- **ST1D** emphasizes the council's commitment to creating and retaining quality places.
- **ST3B & C** places regeneration sites in south and central Whitehaven (the town centre and harbourside, Pow Beck Valley, Coastal Fringe and the South Whitehaven Housing Market Renewal Area), and town centre renewal areas in Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom, as strategic development priorities
- **ENV4A** stresses the importance of protecting designated heritage assets, including conservation areas and other features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value.
- **ENV4C** aims to strengthen the distinctive character of Copeland's settlements through high quality urban design and architecture that respect character and setting.
- **ER7B & C** contain development objectives, including to:
 - Support Whitehaven's role as a tourist and visitor destination linked to its unique heritage and independent and specialist retailers;
 - Protect and where possible enhance the services and facilities provided in the Key Service Centres of Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.
- **ER8I** Development in Whitehaven Town Centre should maintain a high standard of design consistent with a conservation area of national significance.
- **ER9** Retail and service development which promotes the vitality and viability of Key Service Centres, Local Centres and other smaller centres, and is consistent with the spatial development strategy as defined in Policy ST2 and Figure 3.2, will be supported.
- **DM6A** The Council will protect and promote the vitality and viability of the defined town centres by requiring non-retail uses in premises with shop frontages to incorporate a suitable window display.
- **DM10** emphasises the need for high quality design and quality places.
- **DM27A** outlines support in principle for developments that "protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the borough's historic sites and their settings".
- **DM27C** outlines the restriction in principle of development within conservation areas to that which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.
- **DM27D** highlights the necessity of avoiding disrespectful alterations, substantial demolition, adverse effects on setting or views, or changes of use that harm the conservation or economic viability of a listed building.
- **DM29** contains policies on appropriate advertisements

The Conservation Area Design Guide is a supplementary planning document adopted in 2017, which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within conservation areas.

It offers more general design guidance, not focused solely on shopfronts, and should be read in conjunction with this guide.



2.4. Copeland Local Plan 2017-2035 Preferred Options

Draft Policies

- **DS4PO: Strategic Development Priority Projects**

Development that helps establish the Lake District Coast brand and enhances the experience economy and our natural and built environment is a strategic priority that will help transform our Borough, support economic growth and diversification and improve social and community infrastructure

- **DS5PO: Development Principles**

- Protection, enhancement and restoration of the Borough's valued natural and cultural assets
- Creation and retention of quality places

- **DS7PO: Design Standards**

The Council will expect all new development to meet high quality standards of design

- **E1PO: Economic Growth**

Promoting investment in the public realm of employment sites and working with owners to achieve improvement and regeneration of appropriate sites

- **R1PO: Vitality and Viability of Town Centres and other Identified Villages within the Hierarchy**

The Council will seek to enhance the vitality and viability of town centres and other defined villages identified in the settlement hierarchy by working with partners and applicants

- **R5PO: Whitehaven Town Centre**

Development that supports the role of Whitehaven Town Centre as the Principal Town will be encouraged and supported where it:

- Provides improvements to public realm, shop front aesthetics, linkages and signage;
- Improves the aesthetics of shop frontages and/or historic attributes;

- **R6PO: Whitehaven Town Centre Primary Shopping Area**

Whitehaven Primary Shopping Area is the focus for retail use in Copeland. To support and promote the vitality and viability of the centre, proposals for other main town uses (i.e. non A1) will be supported within the defined primary shopping area where the proposal complements the retail function and makes a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the town centre, in terms of maintaining well designed active, continuous frontages, appropriate signage and hours of opening

- **R7aPO: Cleator Moor Town Centre**

Development that provides opportunities to reduce the high level of vacancy rates, improve the viability, vitality and community spirit of Cleator Moor Town Centre will be encouraged and supported where it accords with the Development Plan and results in the repair, regeneration and refurbishment of derelict buildings within the centre;

- **R7bPO: Egremont Town Centre**

Development that provides opportunities to reduce the high level of vacancy rates, improve the viability, vitality and lack of investment in the Town Centre will be encouraged and supported where it accords with the Development Plan and:

- Results in the repair and renovation of derelict buildings;
- Involves the repair and renovation of vacant units in the gateways to the town

- **R7cPO: Millom Town Centre**

Development that provides opportunities to decrease the need to shop on line, reduces the high level of vacancy rates, and improves the viability and vitality in the Town Centre will be encouraged and supported where it accords with the Development Plan and:

 - Results in the regeneration of historic buildings;
 - Results in the repair and renovation of derelict buildings
- **R10PO: Non-retail development in Town Centres**
 - Proposals should make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the town centres in terms of maintaining active continuous well-designed frontages, appropriate signage
 - The proposal should not give rise, either alone or cumulatively, to a detrimental effect on the character and amenity of the town centres
- **R11PO: Shopfronts**

Well designed and appropriate shopfronts, whether original or reproduction, should be retained wherever practicable and restored when opportunity arises. Shopfronts should relate in scale, proportion, materials and decorative treatment to the façade of the building, conservation area and relate well to the upper floors and adjacent buildings and/or shopfronts. Proposals relating to shopfronts should accord relevant design guidance prepared by the Council
- **R12PO: Hot Food Takeaways**

Hot food takeaways (use class A5) will not be permitted where they harm the amenity of neighbouring uses and the character and appearance of the environment
- **BE1PO: Heritage Assets**

Heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced by:

 - Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to local character and history
 - Promoting heritage-led regeneration initiatives in the Borough, particularly within the town centre
 - Supporting proposals that increase the enhancement, promotion and interpretation of the Borough's architectural and archaeological resources
 - Strengthening the distinctive character of the Borough's settlements, through the application of high quality design and architecture that respects this character and enhances the setting of heritage assets
- **BE2PO: Designated Heritage Assets**

Development should preserve or enhance heritage assets and their setting. Proposals that better reveal the significance of heritage assets will be supported in principle
- **BE4PO: Non-designated heritage assets**

Development should preserve or enhance heritage assets and their setting. Proposals that better reveal the significance of heritage assets will be supported in principle. Proposals affecting heritage assets or their setting should demonstrate that consideration has been given to the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. Where the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset outweighs the benefits of the proposal the development will be resisted

Copeland Shopfront Design Guide 3 Some Key Parts of a Shopfront



1

Alignment of shopfront with façade – Here, the entrance lines up with façade elements above and the divisions of the shopfront respect the proportions and rhythm of the windows and bays above.

2

Fascia signage – The fascia is the horizontal band at the top of the shopfront. Signage should be slim, discreet and not overwhelm the proportions of the façade.

3

Mullion (vertical) and transom (horizontal) – These elements divide up the expanse of a window into smaller areas, allowing for smaller panes to make up a bigger area of glass, and introducing directional emphasis. Note how the transom lines up with the lintel over the entrance door. The small panes above the transom are called transom lights.

4

Engaged column – A curved shaft that is attached to the wall and typically load bearing. Here, the engaged columns are used to emphasize the entrance and support the arch above.

5

Enrichment of entrance – Details create elaboration at the entrance, introducing hierarchy, a sense of occasion and clarity to the front of the building.

6

Fanlight – This is positioned over, not in, the door and makes the entrance appear taller while allowing light access.

7

Pilaster – Similar to an engaged column but not structural, pilasters are an ornamental remnant of the classicism of many shopfronts, and they also provide framing that divides up the façade.

8

Console – Consoles and corbels are often confused, but whereas corbels are structural elements that support something above them, consoles are decorative only. They often appear on Victorian fronts, curved, scrolled and otherwise decorated.

9

Stallriser – The solid element of the wall below the window sill, typically divided up by the bases of pilasters. Earlier shopfronts tend to have taller stallrisers as they were more closely related to domestic architecture

4. How Shopfronts Have Changed Over Time

The following section is intended to be helpful in the creation of a new shopfront. How old is your building? What style might be appropriate?

4.1. Georgian Period (approx. 1700-1840)

Georgian shopfronts are characterised, mostly, by simplicity, with small panes of glass (as manufacturing processes for larger panes had not been developed) and taller stallrisers. Shop fronts, generally speaking, draw origins from the temple architecture of classical antiquity.



Figure 1 A Georgian-style shopfront, showing the connection to its classical origins. The labels are elements of a classical façade, showing how they are present within this design. The diagram features an earlier bay window on the left and a later bow window on the right

4.2. Victorian Period (approx. 1840-1900)

Victorian shopfronts are usually more elaborate. Arches may feature across the main panes of the shopfront window, and cast ironwork, often in the form of colonettes.



Figure 2 A Victorian style shopfront reminiscent of the latter 19th century. (A) An iron colonette serving as a mullion; (B) The pilaster is fluted, meaning it has grooves that introduce rhythm and lightness

4.3. Edwardian Period (approx. 1900-First World War)

The Edwardian period was short but has its own distinct character as a result of technological advancements and the First World War. The Edwardian period is characterised by full-sized panes of glass, lower stallrisers, but still a richness of materials and proportion that is today viewed as characteristically historic. Entrance doors were often centrally mounted and recessed, sometimes with a lamp above and/or mosaic design on the step.



Figure 3 An Edwardian style shopfront with retractable blind. You may wish to consider incorporating a blind of this design on your own shop.

4.4. Modernist Period (First World War-approx. 1980)

Following the First World War, modernism became the predominant overarching typology, moving away from the classicism that had characterised two centuries of shopfronts by that point. This lasted until about 1980.

Art deco could be seen as a kind of stepping stone between generally late-19th century styles such as Arts and Crafts and the sweeping, high-tech modernism that characterised much of the 20th century. It evolved, from its lavish inception in the 1920s, into the more restrained industrially influenced Streamline Moderne that was internationally popular in the 1930s and 40s. It evolved again into the more locally-responsive Brutalist solutions popular in the 1960s and 70s.



Figure 4 An Art deco style building, which might have been built in the 1930s. Interwar cladding (faience, Vitrolite glass, granite etc.) is fragile and often difficult to repair/replace, so great care should be taken with it.

4.5. Contemporary Shopfronts (Since 1980s)

Contemporary shopfronts tend to be characterised by large areas of glazing, bold, clear graphics and flat areas of aluminium cladding. Ornamentation is not in fashion and hasn't been for decades, but this is perhaps due for a change as the pared-back, catalogue-specified and cost-driven shopfronts that have typified recent years start to appear lifeless.

The Apple Store model has been very influential since the millennium, with the shopfront designed in a way that is as transparent as possible, emphasising the interior of the shop. However, many imitators have failed to attain the carefully contrived level of design needed to pull this off, resulting in a shopfront that lacks presence without the compensation of a truly frameless effect or an interior worth showing off.



Figure 5 A shopfront of the 1980-2020 period. There is little in the way of philosophy or craft underpinning this design. It is simple and highly transparent, but is not committed to any particular ideas about what a shop is or how it should function. Note the unattractive external rollerblind shutter. A better security solution may be possible, e.g. an internal shutter.

5. Things to consider

5.1. Proportions and detailing

Symmetry – Where does the door go?

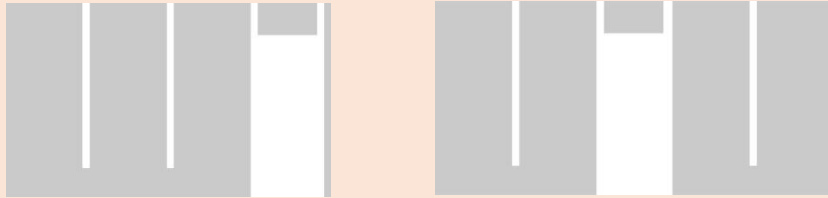


Figure 6 (L) A shopfront with the door on the right hand side and three windows, splitting the area into quarters. (R) A wider symmetrical shopfront where the door is central

Lining up elements with the rest of the façade to create a unified whole.

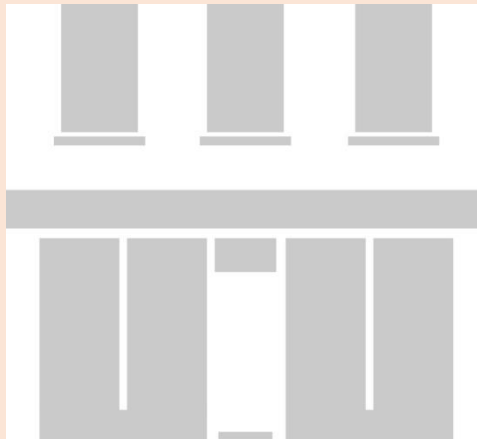


Figure 7 Alignment with the facade elements above

Should the windows be subdivided by transoms, mullions, glazing bars?

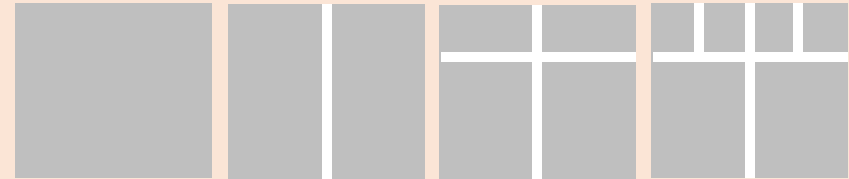


Figure 8 Four different styles of window: (1) A plain picture window; (2) A single mullion; (3) Mullion and transoms; (4) Mullion, transoms and glazing bars

Should the door be recessed? If so, is there a step? If so, is the step decorated e.g. by a mosaic?

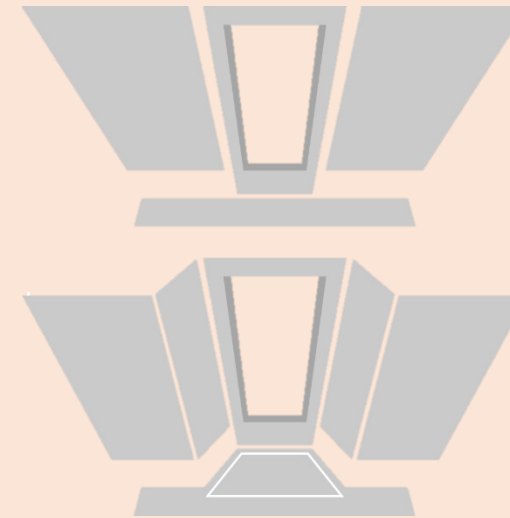
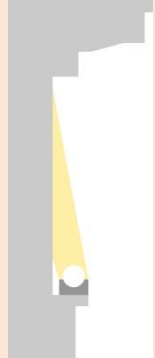


Figure 9 (Top) A flush door; (Bottom) A recessed door

5.2. How will it be lit?



Poor lighting can be a major factor in causing light pollution and amenity issues, and affect the character of the place.

It is also possible that objects projecting over the highway will need a license from Cumbria County Council, so this should be considered.

Figure 10 Lighting should be discreet. Here, uplighting is hidden above a fascia sign's architrave

5.3. How is the signage designed?



Figure 11 (Top) The most attractive option is often hand-lettered signwriting painted straight onto the fascia; (Bottom) However, a modest and proportionate fascia sign is generally fine too

5.4. Choice of timber

Modified timbers have excellent rot resistance and dimensional stability, meaning a shopfront so constructed will not decay, warp or split for years if well maintained. These are typically softwoods that have been modified by heat or acetylation.

Embodied energy and woodland management should be considered when specifying. Many treated woods require large amounts of energy to treat and are also shipped large distances.

The “Grown in Britain” certification provides an impetus to reduce transport waste and encouraging management of British broad-leafed woodland.




Heat treated timber is often difficult to work, so would probably be unsuitable for ornate ornamental work such as a console bracket. Sustainably sourced hardwoods such as sapele or iroko are also viable options.


Only certain plywoods are suitable for external use. Orientated strand board (OSB) is unlikely to be suitable for building a shopfront.

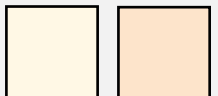
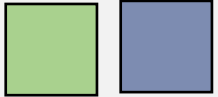


See the Timber Research and Development Association for comprehensive info: www.trada.co.uk





5.5. Historic colour schemes

There is flexibility with colours, but these samples show a few shades that would have been used historically.

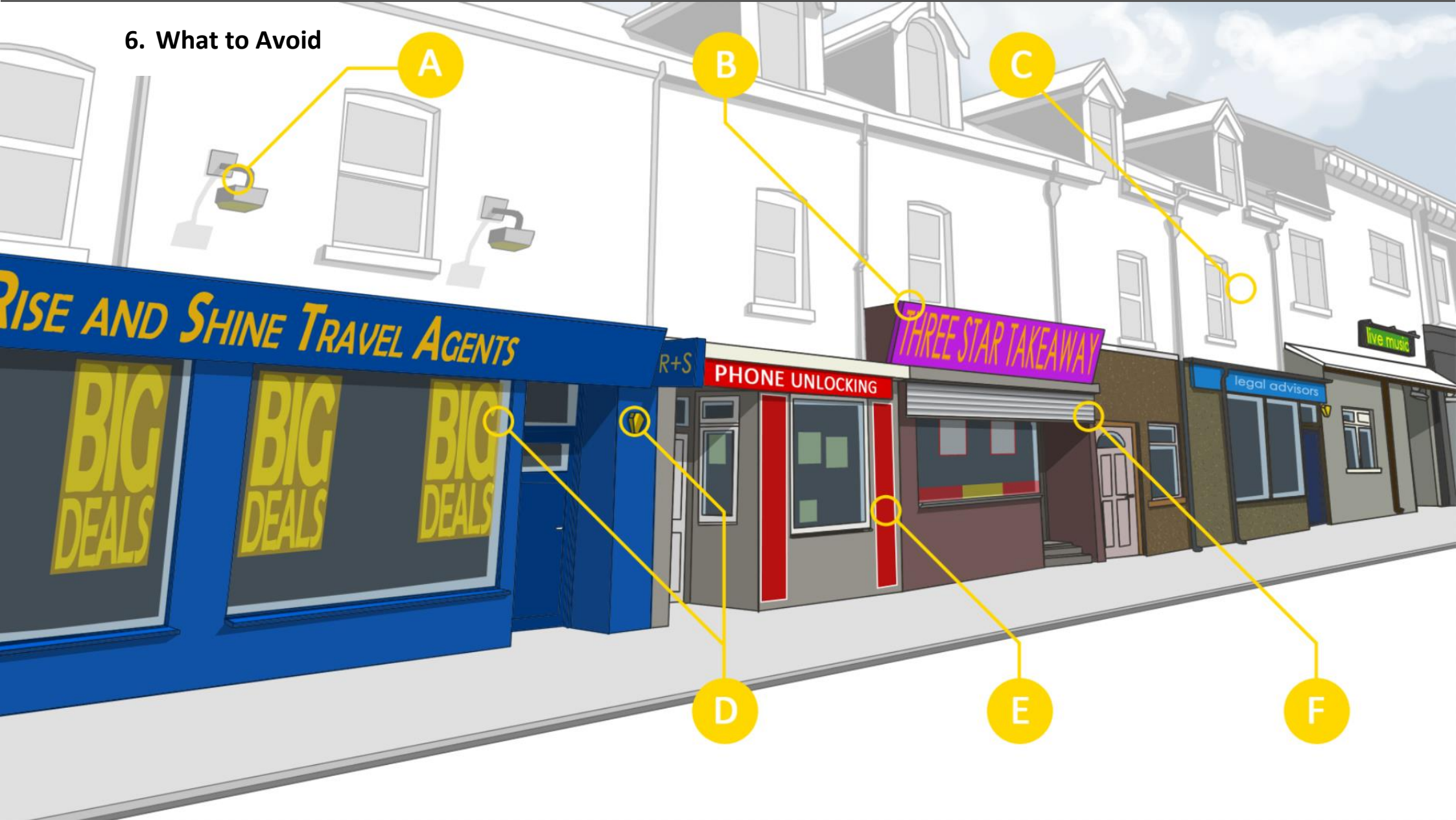
	Georgian Sash windows and render Off-white, cream or pale stone shades
	Doors/woodwork Dark saturated brown, murky green Furniture is black, not polished brass
	Railings Blue-grey

	Victorian Sash windows and render Off-white, cream or pale stone shades
	Doors/woodwork Brunswick greens, bronze greens, dark reds/maroons, purple-browns
	
	Railings Blue-grey (early 19 th century) or bronze-green (later 19 th century)

	Edwardian Sash windows and render Off-white, cream or pale stone shades
	Doors/woodwork A range of greens, blues and creams was popular. Sometimes etched glazing
	
	Exterior metalwork Brass became popular

	Art Deco Doors/woodwork Gloss black
	Metalwork Stainless steel, brass
	Cladding This became a major departure – black granite, marble, travertine, faience (glazed terracotta tiles) and structural glass (e.g. Vitrolite)
	

6. What to Avoid



6.1. Bad Practice Example

- A** **Poor quality lighting** that clutters the façade and causes light pollution. Is lighting really necessary? If so, how can it be concealed?
- B** **Signage is intrusive**, badly designed and dominates the shopfronts. Signage should generally not reach as high as the first floor window sills.
- C** The shopfronts have **no relationship to the facades** above, lacking any rhythm or cohesion. They appear chaotic and cobbled-together.
- D** **Posters, alarm boxes, cables, brackets etc.** can create clutter that detracts from a frontage. Care must be taken to site additions discreetly, remove redundant accretions. Posters in windows should be avoided where possible, and attractively designed where needed.
- E** **Colour schemes that are lurid** and discordant. They dominate the street and project an unsophisticated image.
- F** **Security** shutters should preferably be of attractive design and located internally. External steel roller shutters present an unwelcoming appearance when closed and are often unattractive when open, if not integrated well.

The following sub-sections show pitfalls to look out for in real life

6.2. Poor Proportions

A shopfront is a part of the frontage of a building, and each building frontage is a part of the entire street.

It is therefore important to understand the rhythm and form of the frontages on the street, and how the building sits within it.



Figure 12 This shopfront has lost its original corner door, undermining the architectural effect.

Additionally, the fascia is unsympathetically designed and the arrangement of openings underneath is both unbalanced in its own right and dissociated from the forms of the building and the street.



Figure 13 The distinctive arrangement of buildings in a streetscape will tell you something of how a shopfront should fit in.



Figure 14 These shopfronts are not accordant with rules of proportion. The lack of pilasters causes vertical emphasis, and definition of bays and plot widths, to be lost.

6.3. Oversized Fascias

The fascia is the horizontal strip at the top of the shopfront. It corresponds to the frieze in the entablature of a classical temple façade (See page 9).

It should not be too large or overbearing. It should generally stop short of the first floor window sills, and not dominate the proportions of the shopfront.



Figure 15 This fascia is oversized. It occupies almost half the vertical height of the shopfront.

In most cases, the fascia should not reach as high as the first floor window sills.

6.4. Garish Colours and Patterns

Bright colours should be used carefully. Care should be taken that the numbers of different colours is fairly minimal and that they are chosen to complement.



Figure 16 This fascia design combines various bright colours.

Although bright colours can have a warming and cheerful effect used sparingly, they can easily become overwhelming and detract from the rest of the façade.



Figure 17 This design would benefit from a simpler and more toned-down colour palette. When text is added, the effect is rather busy. This shopfront is also composed only of its signage: framing and organising elements would help its readability.



Figure 18 As a general rule, the brighter the colour the more cautiously it needs deploying; tangerine and lime green are particularly volatile in combination.

6.5. Clutter and Poor Quality Projecting Signs

Shopfronts can become overwhelmed by small additional elements like standalone signs, railings, cables, lights, alarm boxes etc.

Care must be taken to incorporate these as neatly as possible, and dispense with those that are not needed.



Figure 19 This building has accumulated a number of accretions over the years that prevent it looking as good as it might: signage without a consistent appearance including projecting signs, lighting, cables, a litter bin, alarm boxes, and external shutter boxes.

In cases like this it may be possible to remove elements that are no longer necessary or integrate them more discreetly.

6.6. Poor Maintenance

Water damage is a major issue.

Rainwater goods that are not properly cleaned and maintained can overtop and run water down the entire front of a building. Defective lead flashing across the top of a shopfront will allow water to penetrate down the back.

Most softwoods compound this problem as they are not durable.



Figure 20 A shopfront where the right pilaster has been rotted away by a missing rainwater pipe that has run water over it without being fixed.

The shopfront was brand new only eight years before this photo was taken. Longevity and maintenance need factoring in.



Figure 21 Algae and dirt caused by rain splashing on the base of the render. This is an easy fix with cleaning and repainting, if the render is sound.



Figure 22 This shopfront's difficulties are compounded by the dilapidation of the building it's attached to.

6.7. Unattractive Shutters

Security is important, but not all security measures are equally impactful.



Figure 23 Heavy-handed external shutter. This projects a poor appearance when closed and necessitates the fitment of bulky housings for when it's rolled up.

Installing laminated or toughened glass may be justifiable in critical locations. Where shutters can be justified, an open mesh design on the inside of the glass should be used.

Mullions, transoms and glazing bars are their own form of security – smaller panes are harder to access through and cheaper to replace should they become broken.

6.8. Flatness

This is one of the most common problems affecting new shopfronts: there should be relief, elements that stand out. If not, the shopfront appears flat, almost “painted on”.

Consider how your design looks in section, or from the side. Which elements stand forward? Which take a framing role? Which are more recessed?



Figure 24 Here, the gablet (small gabled element) is deep enough to have its own lead capping, with the downpipe neatly integrated behind, between stone blocks that subtly resemble the curved console brackets underneath the gablet.

Note the depth of the cornice, the projecting moulding at the top, with small blocks – called dentils – underneath it.

Recall the parts of an entablature shown on page 9.

7. Good Practice

7.1. A Checklist, arranged from simplest to most involved

1. Keep the shopfront clean. Gentle cleaning is a good opportunity to notice where damage is beginning to occur without accidentally making it worse.
2. Ensure your building's gutters are clear and there are no plants growing out.
3. Repair an existing historic shopfront if possible, rather than replacing it.
4. Review the signage and consider whether its size, colour and style could be made more attractive.
5. Review the colour scheme of the whole shopfront. External timber generally needs repainting every few years, so this can be a good moment.
6. Consider whether clutter can be tidied up. Can redundant cables be removed, and others secured more neatly? Are there additional signs that are no longer really necessary? Are the shutters providing the right balance of security and welcomeness?
7. If creating a new shopfront:
 - a. Bear in mind that it's part of the entire façade, and the façade is a component of the streetscape;
 - b. Don't limit your imagination. Good design can take a variety of forms. A shopfront does not have to take a traditional style, however this may be the most appropriate choice for a traditional shop on a traditional street;
 - c. Use timber that is durable and will last many years;
 - d. Consider how to add to local character and your street's sense of place;
 - e. Make sure the shopfront appears designed for the building. It should articulate separate bays of the frontage, suit its proportions, and have a clear entrance. Make sure signs, lighting, shutters etc. are discreet and well integrated. Colour schemes should be harmonious across shopfronts and the façades to which they belong;

- f. Ensure signage is attractive and fits well with the shopfront and surroundings. House styles/branding should be adapted as necessary;
- g. Understand what you are aiming for in advance. Do not achieve something half-hearted or watered-down for lack of a detailed plan;
- h. Remember, a shopfront is a framing device. It is intended to make the building more beautiful and inviting to visitors. It adds definition to the front of the building, provides rhythm and colour to the street scene, and displays the contents, style and character of your shop. A well designed and maintained shopfront is one of the best adverts to passers-by;
- i. Shopfronts are cumulative: groups of attractive shopfronts create an attractive street where people will want to be. By contrast, poor, dilapidated shopfronts harm the business of everyone in the area, and can, when widespread, lead to people losing faith in their town or village.



Shopfronts should respect the rhythm of the building, and not span multiple bays in unbroken expanses.

Signage is carefully designed, discreet and complementary to the surroundings.

Quantity of posters, stickers, images, banners and adverts in windows should be minimised.

Colour schemes are chosen to be attractive and harmonious, not merely bright

7.3. Some Good Practice Case Studies



Figure 25 An example on Wellington Street in Millom

A simple, attractive colour scheme and discreet signage make the most of this original Victorian shopfront.

This is interesting in making use of sliding sash windows, allowing a view in but also conveying a cosy appearance.

The effect has been complemented by some neat etched-style signwriting and a selection of decorations – pastel-hued bunting and pot plants – to show off the purpose and character of the shop.

The frontage itself is in a good state of repair, clutter is kept to a minimum, and the entrances are clear and inviting.



Figure 26 A larger shop just opposite on Wellington Street,

This impressive Victorian shopfront is also largely complete, and complements the grander status of this building.

This shopfront would benefit from redecorating and a different arrangement of glazing bars, but would nonetheless provide an excellent window onto the interior if occupied.

This clearly demonstrates the role of a shopfront both as a framing device for the shop contents – a kind of display case – and an architectural feature of the building façade.



Figure 27 This shop on Lapstone Road in Millom is unusual in being fronted by a pair of canted bay windows.

Here, the fascia and cornice visually tie the bays and the entrance between them together, and the symmetry matches the symmetry of the façade.

The shopfront is clearly a designed part of the overall building, and the colour scheme and mouldings unite the composition.

The windows are not obscured by images or adverts, but are simply signwritten and used to display produce.



Figure 28 An impressive example on South Street in Egremont

Large, broad and richly ornamented pilasters with triangular gables, fluting and swags (the pendant decoration) to mark out the three bays of the façade. Note that even though the shopfront is tall, it still stops well short of the first floor window sills.

This example also makes clear the effect poor quality refenestration and choice of colour can have. The black scheme is likely not a reflection of the original, but the brilliant white section inserted on the right obscures rather than reveals the qualities here.

The colour schemes outlined on page 16 would be a good starting point for redecoration ideas.



Figure 29 A more modest example that is nonetheless positive

This shopfront is not executed perfectly, and the building it's attached to is of no great elegance, but this image demonstrates what can be achieved fairly simply by focusing on signage, colour and general neatness.

It's simple, understated, and makes the most of this property.



Figure 30 An attractive Victorian building in Cleator Moor

This makes use of large display windows with arched tracery and simple signage to show off its collection of wares.

The symmetry of the shopfront matches the façade above and looks designed for it, rather than an afterthought.

The location of the entrance is clear. Note the gate providing security – an attractive alternative to a shutter.

One small change that could improve this example is switching from brilliant white to a colour that suits the red sandstone better.



Figure 31 Surviving Victorian elements on King Street in Whitehaven

This may initially not seem very special as the fascia is completely blank, but on closer inspection you will notice the wonderful Composite-style pilasters at either side, with their curled volutes at the top, leafy foliation, vertical fluting strokes and inlaid panels.

Also very fine are the iron colonettes between the panes of glass. They feature pierced spandrels at the top, which flare out to create the impression of graceful arches. A great deal of attention has been put into creating something beautiful here.

Brilliant white paint has been avoided, and the pilasters retain an authentic Victorian colour scheme, and there is no clutter of signage and graphics; just a display of produce and a pair of hanging flower baskets.



Figure 32 The shopfront as it appeared in the early 20th century: T. Glessal's outfitters.



Figure 33 This building on Tangier Street, Whitehaven, dates from the turn of the 19th/20th centuries. It retains almost all of its original detailing, including this excellent shop front.

Although a dark colour scheme has been used it is not black and does not obscure and flatten the detailing; the signage in the windows is fairly minimal. The sign above the door is small and fitted to the fascia; corporate colours have been avoided for the background and limited to the logo only. The sign on the side is minimal: just a logo on a background that matches the shop front colour.

The shop front is subtly curved to follow the curve of the building, and pilasters are used to frame the two sections.

If tempted to dismiss shopfront design as “traditional”, meaning outmoded, fusty or backward-looking, it’s all too easy to also dismiss the attention to detail and pride that went into them.

Rediscovering this dedication to design – whether in classical, modernist or more contemporary forms – is one of the keys to regenerating our high streets.

8. Contact Details

Guidance prepared by:

Dr Sammy Woodford
Conservation and Design Officer
Copeland Borough Council

Contact:

Copeland Borough Council
01946 598 300
info@copeland.gov.uk

Visit our front desk, or write to Development
Management using the post box located at:

Market Hall
Market Place
Whitehaven
CA28 7JG