

COUNTY KILDARE SHOPFRONT GUIDELINES



Planning and Economic Development
Kildare County Council
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Shopfront Guidelines

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1.0 Preface

One of the shared virtues of successful shops across the country is the almost universal high quality of their shopfronts. Whether it's the delightful Victorian frontages of Lillyput Stores in Dublin and the immaculately presented Emporium Kalu in Naas, most fronts exhibit the basic rules of good shopfront design and presentation. These are based on restraint in signage, sophisticated use of colour, and a complete harmony with the upper floor facades of their buildings. It is remarkable how simple interventions displayed by these businesses have contributed so much to their respective towns and streets.

The art of good shopfront design in Kildare as with the rest of the country has declined in recent years. Retailers have sought to dominate the streetscape with over-scaled fascias, garish colours and over use of signage. Similarly, the plethora of inappropriately detailed reproduction frontages did a disservice to the genuine historic shopfronts, while many contemporary interventions failed to accommodate signage adequately or relate to their wider host building.

The architectural merit of buildings and the collective townscape qualities of the street are being eroded by poor quality shopfronts. As a result our commercial streets are experiencing a marked decline in the quality of presentation. Our urban areas could benefit enormously from greater shopfront design guidance as part of a county-wide initiative. This will help to improve the public face of our towns and villages thereby maximising the potential of our commercial streets. This is especially relevant when supporting local trade has become so important.



This Design Guide is intended to encourage and guide shop owners and designers to maintain the character and appearance of traditional shopfronts, and to improve the quality of new shopfront designs so that they respect and enhance their surroundings. In addition, this Design Guide also explains how improved access can be satisfactorily incorporated into shopfront design.

The majority of shopfront alterations, including the removal of old shopfronts and the installation of signage and advertisements will require planning permission. Part 4 of this document provides further details regarding necessary planning approvals.



2.0 Shopfront Styles

Shopfronts play a key part in establishing and defining the visual character of our streetscape. Kildare has many good examples of shop front design ranging from the mid-nineteenth century through to today. The preservation of these early examples is important for maintaining our highly valued built heritage and links with the past. Emphasis should also be placed on ensuring high standards of design for all shopfronts, be they traditional or contemporary in style. Shopfronts are subject to substantial change over time and are one of the most variable aspects of our built environment.



2.1 Context

2.1.1 Traditional Shopfront Design

Much of the traditional shopfronts which survive within the county are from the mid to late nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century. The style of the majority of 'traditional' shopfronts was inspired by classical architecture. The components of the traditional shopfronts are cornice, fascia, pilasters and stallrisers.



This particular style was successful in achieving a balanced relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole. The style was also flexible enough to allow for variations in the extent of fascia size and console placement that took place between the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods without adversely affecting the overall composition of the shopfront, building or streetscape.



Some traditional shopfronts were influenced by the Art Nouveau movement in architecture, which developed in the 1890s. It was characterised by curving lines and asymmetrical organization, often with foliage constituting a principle design motif. Common materials used on traditional shopfronts included brick, render and terracotta, with glass and timber windows. Brass, lead and iron were used for hanging signage and ornamentation.

2.1.2 Modernist Shopfront Design

The 20th Century was one of rapidly changing ideas, fashions and tastes which saw a great diversity of architectural styles and expressions. Advances in glass technology and the availability of a wider palette of materials such as marble, neon, aluminium and chrome lead to a new era of shopfronts known as Modernist shopfront design (approximately 1920s – 1940s). Emphasis was placed on the extensive use of glazing to showcase an increasing amount of products available for sale and display.

A new form of shop, the department store, emerged during this period. These stores highlighted and made popular the trend for large, open shop displays. The standardisation of shopfronts also began during this period.

There are few existing examples throughout the country of early twentieth-century Art Deco or Modern Movement style chrome, steel, marble and glass panelled frontages. O'Connell's Medical Hall in Ennis, Co. Clare is a fine example of an Art Deco style steel and Vitrolite shopfront. In Kildare most of the existing modernist shopfronts occur in converted cinemas such as 'The Dara' cinema in Naas and 'The Grove' cinema in Athy.



2.1.3 Contemporary Shopfront Design

Contemporary shopfronts do not consist of one easily defined style due to the large range of materials and technology currently available. Fully glazed frontages and doors are popular features of contemporary shopfronts, which enable shops to fully showcase their products.

Apart from the functional role of displaying the goods and services available there is also an increasing emphasis on the visibility, branding and creative design of the shopfront itself. This has given rise to shopfront designs that seek to compete along the street in terms of their eye-catching ability. These shopfronts are sometimes installed with little consideration to their relationship with their host building or the remainder of the streetscape. This is particularly an issue when they are located in historic buildings and streetscapes. The design of contemporary replacement shopfronts must be of a high standard in order to bring vitality and diversity to the street.



3.0 Shopfront Design

This section provides design guidelines for the repair, alteration and construction of shopfronts. The format of these guidelines is as follows:

- Desired Results
- Shopfront Design Principles
- Specific Design Guidance
- Universal Design Guidance



3.1 Desired Results

The following desired results are envisaged by this Design Guide. It is expected that the principles, specific and universal guidance measures will assist with achieving these.

3.1.1 A High Standard of Design for all Shopfronts

All shopfronts either within existing buildings or in new developments should provide a positive contribution to visual amenity and the character of their surroundings.

3.1.2 The Preservation of Good Examples of Traditional Shopfronts

Where historic shopfronts exist, special care should be taken to ensure they are preserved. The presence of well crafted and historic shopfronts contributes to the character of our towns and villages. Architecturally valuable shopfronts whether original or from a later period should not be demolished or removed even if a change of use is proposed which will make the shopfront unnecessary.

3.1.3 The Preservation of Architectural and Traditional Shopfront Features

Important and traditional architectural features on buildings should not be removed or concealed by the installation of new shopfronts. Missing features should be reinstated. Should a new shopfront be proposed, it should respect the host building and shopfront's original framework.

3.1.4 Sensitivity to Qualities of Protected Structures and the Character of Architectural Conservation Areas

Any alterations or additions to shopfronts in protected structures will require skill and care in order to avoid damage to the historic building and to ensure new additions are in keeping with the character and setting. Similarly shopfronts in Architectural Conservation Areas will need to have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. In both cases the preservation and enhancement of these buildings and areas is the principal consideration. Shopfront proposals will be judged in terms of how well they comply with these values. This does not mean that the design of the new shopfront should be an imitation of past styles.



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3.1.5 Maintaining and Providing Independent Access to Upper Floors

To ensure the occupation of upper floors, independent access is a necessity. The lack of independent access to upper floors can render the building above the shop redundant. Each independent access should be retained and the Council will require the reinstatement of independent access in new and replacement shopfronts.



3.1.6 Excellence in Design Quality and Materials

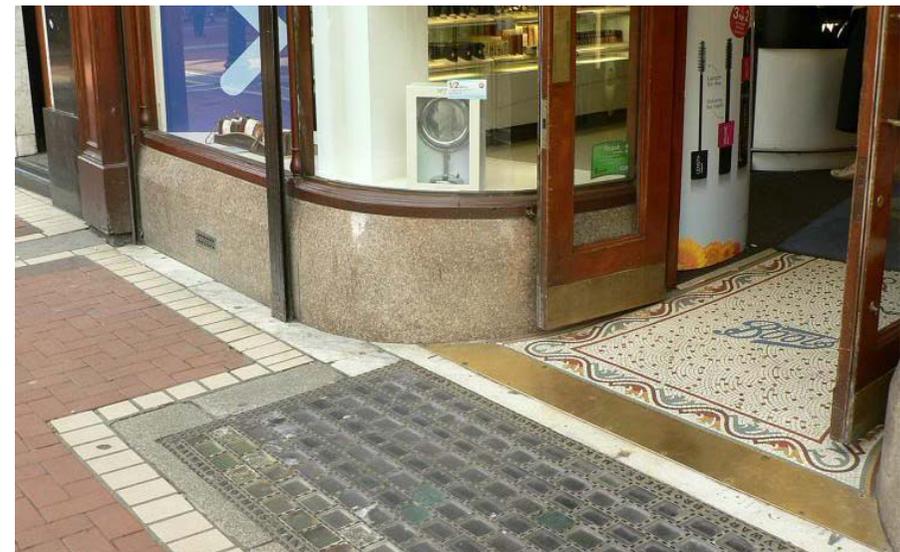
All shopfronts will be expected to exhibit excellence in both the design and the choice of materials. Emphasis must always be placed on quality and craftsmanship irrespective of whether the design is traditional or contemporary. By their nature shopfronts are viewed from close range as well as from a distance. As a result, the design of each component as well as the overall appearance is important.

3.1.8 Ensure Signs and Advertisements are kept to a Minimum and Co-ordinate with the Overall Shop Design and Streetscape

Fascias should only contain the name of the trader and street number. If necessary the nature of the trade may also be indicated. Excessive signage and unnecessary content on signage is discouraged. The placing of numerous advertisements and posters on the shopfront or adjacent walls or railings result in shopfronts appearing cluttered and should be avoided.

3.1.7 Providing Universally Accessible Shopfronts

The shopfront should provide direct and straightforward access to the premises for users of all abilities through the principle entrance of the shop.



3.2 Shopfront Design Principles

The following design principles provide a starting point when planning a new or replacement shopfront irrespective of whether the host building is traditional, modern or contemporary. Contemporary detailing may reduce these basic elements to their simplest forms. These principles form the foundations of good shopfront design.



3.2.1 The Streetscape

It is important to consider the effect of the shopfront design on the rest of the street and the immediate area. New designs should not draw attention away from or dominate the streetscape and surrounding buildings. Proportions, materials and details should maintain the rhythm, character and hierarchy along the street.



3.2.2 The Building in Entirety

Shopfronts should enhance the individuality and character of the entire building not just the ground floor. The shopfront should not be designed in isolation. It is important to understand the architectural character of the whole building including the proportions of the upper floors.

3.2.3 The Shopfront

Shopfronts should have a distinctive style while respecting the form and scale of the whole building and adjoining buildings and shopfronts.

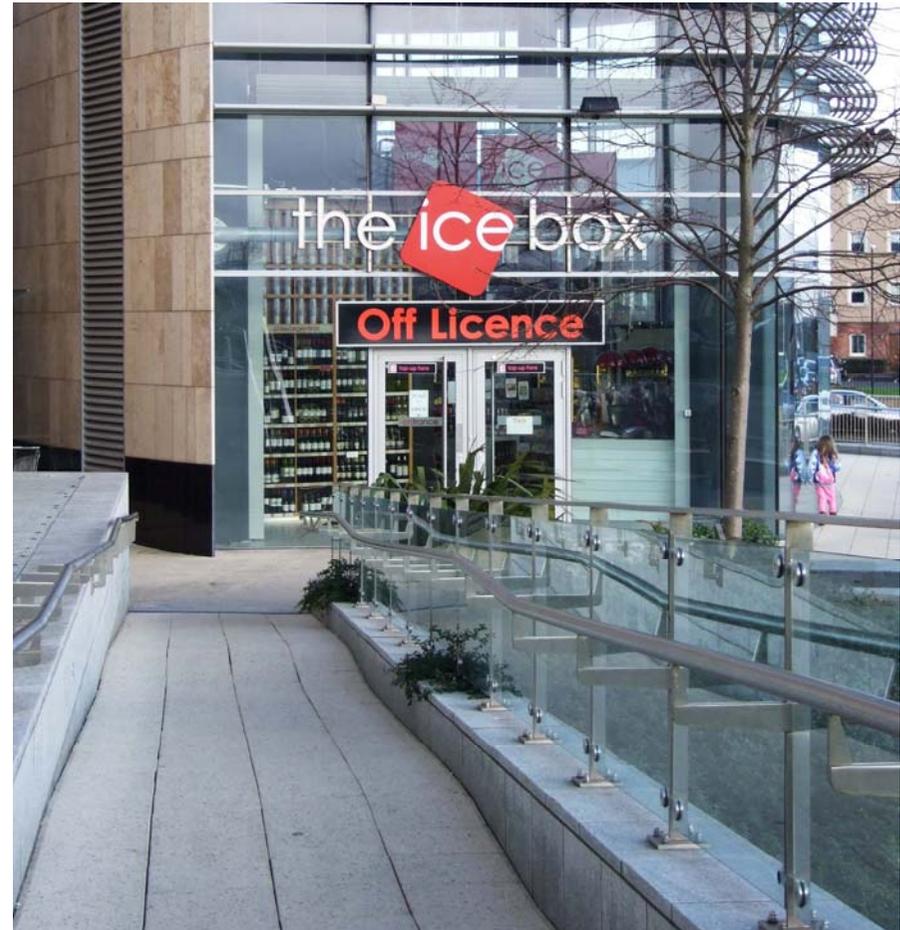
3.2.4 The Details

Details should not be designed in isolation but should respect the details of the host building as well as the architectural detail of adjacent buildings and those along the street. Attention to detail should be placed on windows, doors and signage.



3.2.5 Accessibility

Ease of access should be provided for all. Where existing shopfronts do not provide satisfactory access, improvements should be explored to resolve such problems. New shopfronts should always where practicable, provide direct and straightforward universal access to the shop.



3.3 Specific Guidance

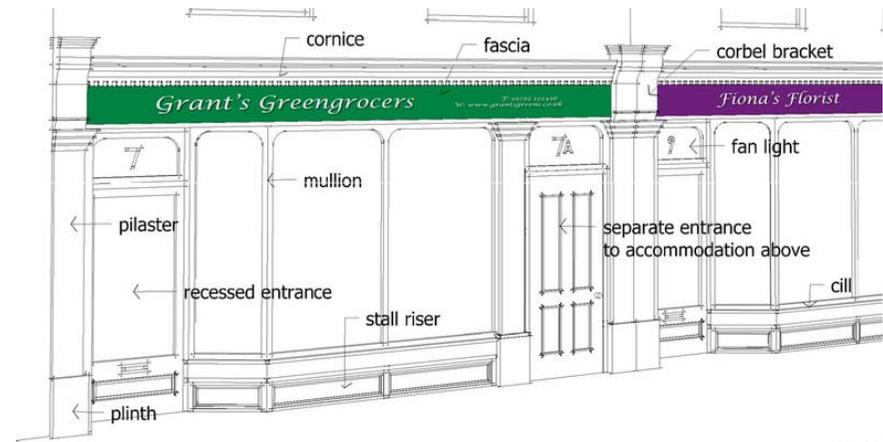
3.3.1 Shopfronts in Traditional Buildings

The following section considers each of the elements of traditional shopfront design. This guidance applies to existing traditional shopfronts and new shopfronts in traditional buildings.



The Shopfront Surround and Frame

A crucial element of a traditional shopfronts is the proper definition of the framework of the shopfront. Within this framework variations of design and arrangement of doors, glazing, colours and materials can occur.



Traditional shopfronts were inspired by classical architecture and therefore typically consists of pilasters either side which are usually capped with a corbel and joined by an entablature or fascia and cornice and held together by a strong visible base or stall riser.

Key Design Recommendations

- The features of the traditional framework should be retained and if necessary restored and a new shopfront design incorporated within it.
- When shop units are combined, the individuality established by this framework should still be retained in order to maintain the proportions of the shopfront and buildings. A fascia should never stretch uninterrupted across a number of distinct buildings or architectural units.

Fascias

Fascias are the most prominent aspect of the shopfront. Apart from forming an important design element in the framework of the shopfront, their role includes conveying the name, trade and number of the shop. Fascias also distinguish the shop from the upper floors of a building.



Key Design Recommendations

- The depth of the fascia should be in proportion to the rest of the shopfront and relate to the entire building.
- The fascia should not extend below the head of pilaster or above the perceived first floor level. Corbels attached to the pilasters have traditionally contained the fascia and also determined its height. Where corbels no longer exist, their reinstatement should be considered.
- Windows and architectural details such as string courses, cornices and pilasters should not be obscured, altered or defaced by new fascias.
- The use of large areas of acrylic or other shiny materials in fascias should be avoided. On a nineteenth century buildings a painted timber fascia is the most appropriate solution with either painted lettering or individual letters of another material.
- Box fascias, which are usually constructed of plastic and/or metal that often project out of the existing fascia panel are too large, bulky and unsympathetic to the style of most buildings in Kildare, and should not be used.
- Highly reflective signage on fascias should be avoided. Exceptions may be made where Victorian painted glass fascias are being restored or faithfully copied. The most legible signs typically comprise simple lettering and good contrast.

Pilasters

Pilasters vertically frame the shopfront and also visually support the fascia and the upper floors of a building. As such they need to be of sufficient size and be appropriately located to achieve this. Pilasters have a base, a shaft, and a capital resembling a flat column. They are rectangular, projecting from the wall between shops. In most cases the projection from the wall is one third of its width, or less.

Key Designs Recommendations

- Pilasters should always be incorporated into the design of traditional shopfronts. The width of pilasters will vary between shopfronts, but will normally include a base, shaft, capital and/or console bracket.
- Where a new shopfront is proposed, they should not be concealed.
- The opportunity should be taken to reinstate missing pilasters where possible.



Consoles/Corbels

These are decorative brackets at each end of the fascia, which help to visually terminate the top of the pilasters.

Key Design Recommendations

- Consoles/Corbels are a feature of traditional shopfronts and should always be retained or restored.



Stall risers

The stall riser provides a solid visual base to the shopfront, forming a plinth at ground level. The stall riser completes the shopfront by providing balanced proportions and providing some protection against accidental knocks.

Key Design Recommendations

- New and replacement shopfronts in traditional buildings should incorporate a stallriser.
- Stallrisers should not exceed the base of the pilasters (approximately 450mm in height) or the depth of the fascia, whichever is less (in order to provide balance to the shopfront).
- Existing stallrisers should be retained and restored if necessary.

Glazing

Traditional shopfronts typically have small divisions of glazing divided by transoms and mullions, however, there are also some instances of large sheets of plate glass which occurred in the mid-Victorian period.

Key Design Recommendations

- Generally a transom should divide the window at the same level as the line between the door and fanlight. Mullions should line up above and below the transom and may reflect the vertical alignment of windows on the upper floors.
- Extensive areas of unrelieved glazing should be avoided as this creates the visual effect of a void at the base of the building.

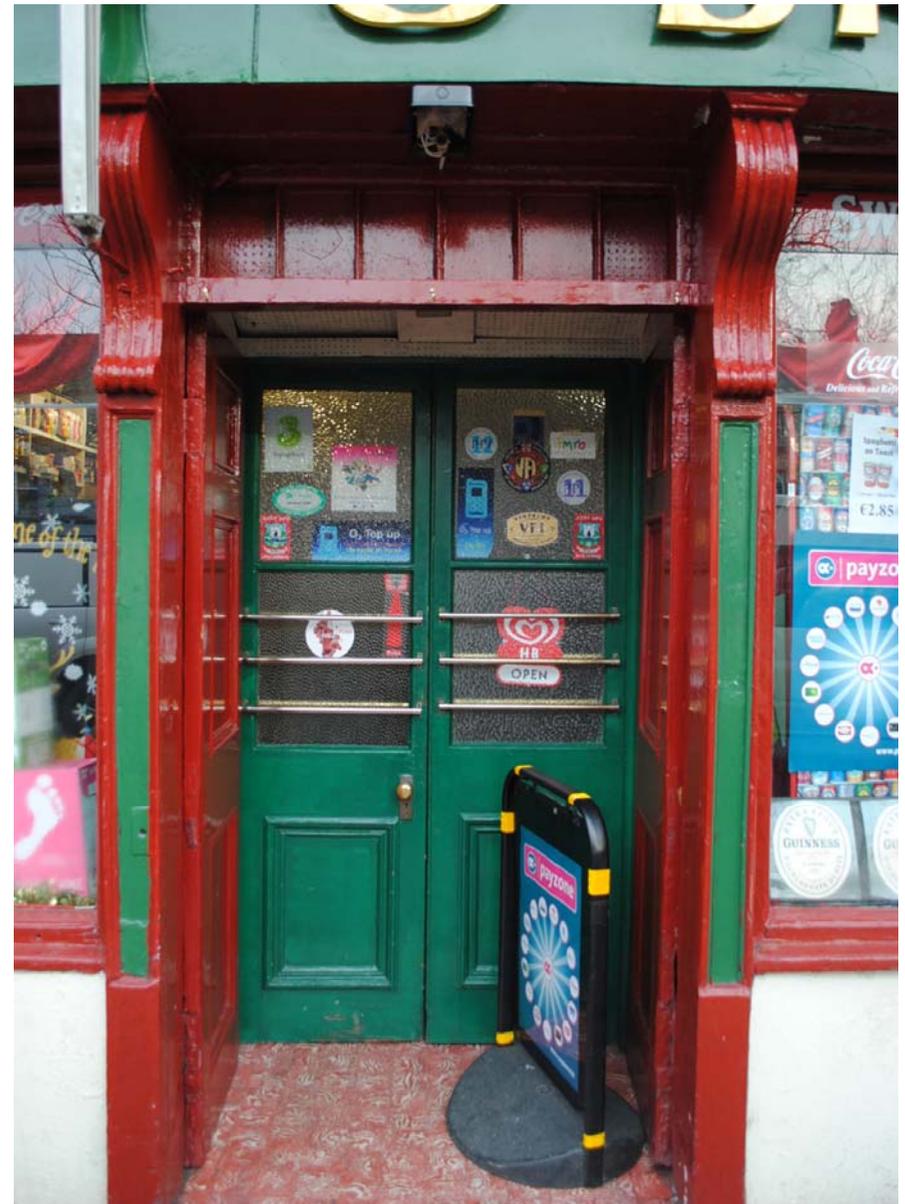


Doors on Shopfronts

Recessed doorways are a common feature of traditional shopfronts, providing depth and relief to the façade of the building. The opportunity to improve physical access to traditional buildings may arise as part of the repair, improvement or adaptation of the shopfront and should be undertaken in a way that maximises accessibility without compromising the historical significance or characteristics of the building.

Key Design Recommendations

- Good quality examples of recessed doorways particularly those decorated with mosaics or tiles should be retained.
- Where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour, doors which are flush with the shopfront may be the best option.
- The design of the entrance door must be integral with the design and layout of the whole shopfront.
- The material used and the finish should match that of the main shopfront frame e.g. a solid panel at the base of a glazed door should correspond with the stallriser
- Door furniture should be appropriate to the character of the door, shopfront and building.
- Ensuring access for all is important, and Section 3.4.8 of this Design Guide should also be referred to



3.3.2 Contemporary Shopfront Design

Nearly all new shopfronts on recent buildings (most buildings after 1945) and in new buildings should be of contemporary design. It is inappropriate to consider a traditional or period shopfront from a past age on a recent building or in most new-build developments. The use of modern materials and technological advances allow for innovative and interesting designs.

The general considerations contained in section 3.4 apply to contemporary shopfront design. In addition, contemporary shopfronts should be designed so that they substantially meet the shopfront design principles.

A degree of flexibility is permitted regarding contemporary shopfronts, however it is advisable for applicants and designers to read the contents of this design guide to understand the sensitivities of shopfront design. The basic criterion in good shopfront design is to respect the architecture overhead and adjacent to, in terms of proportion, scale and materials.



The Shopfront Surround and Frame

The essential element of a successful contemporary shopfront is the proper definition of framework.

Key Design Recommendations

- To ensure balance, designs should include a well defined fascia or nameplate and have a clear vertical emphasis, held together by a strong base or plinth.
- The individual elements of a contemporary shopfront may be influenced by the composition of the proportions of upper floor details or window openings.
- The alignment and scale of elements may be suggested by similar elements in adjacent shops.



Fascias

In certain contemporary shopfronts it may be possible to dispense with the fascia completely with lettering applied directly to the building or windows. Where a fascia is a design feature of the shopfront the following design recommendations should be taken into consideration.



Key Design Recommendations

- The fascia should aim to respect the alignment of neighbouring buildings and should not cut across more than one frontage.
- If a shop occupies more than one building, the fascia should be sub-divided emphasising the individual character of each building.
- Secondary fascias should be avoided. If the ceiling level internally falls below fascia level, an alternative means of concealment must be considered, including the setting back of the bulkhead, the stepping up of the ceiling line adjacent to the window, or the detailing of the transom to conceal this. Tinted or opaque glazing could also be incorporated at this area.
- Fascias should never be more than 900mm deep. The normal height is 600mm from top of shop front to window below.



Details

The key to sustainable contemporary design is an emphasis on flexibility and fine detailing. Craftsmanship was a feature of the traditional shopfront that should be carried into contemporary designs. The importance of good detailing cannot be over stated.

Key Design Recommendations

- Technological advances now allow fully glazed shopfronts acting also as a display window and allow a living connection with the street.
- The common theme in successful contemporary detailing is restraint in signage and type. A 'less is more' approach is desirable for superior streets.



3.3.3 Integration of the old and new

Many existing traditional shopfronts have been unsympathetically altered in the past. Where no original features have survived a contemporary solution is preferred.

Key Design Recommendations

- Contemporary detailing should be achieved within the constraints of a traditional building without altering the original structure.
- The contemporary shopfront should be relevant and enhance the historic fabric without compromising the original character of the host building or the area.



3.3.4 Protected Structures

It is recommended that any proposals for works to protected structures be discussed with the Local Authority in the early stages of the design

process. It is further recommended that specialist conservation advice be sought when dealing with alterations, repairs and improvements to a protected structure. Any proposals for works affecting a protected structure must preserve the elements of special interest attributed to the structure and should actively enhance the architectural character of the building. All applicants for work to a protected structure are advised to contact the Conservation Officer at Kildare County Council who will be able to offer further advice.

Key Design Recommendations

- Architectural restraint will allow the character of the protected structure to dominate.
- Any works must be carried out by specialist craftsmen and must ensure that the historic fabric is not damaged in any way
- Where no original detailing exists a modern solution may be adopted, provided this respects the integrity of the existing building and enhances the character of the streetscape.
Note: The use of reproduction traditional shopfront is to be avoided in such a situation unless the elements can be dictated by adjoining buildings or those of a similar age.
- Any original details of quality must not be removed or concealed.
- Any work is to be reversible.
- All signage is to be kept to a minimum. Corporate signage is not normally permitted on protected structures. Projecting signs are not normally permitted. If necessary, a traditional hanging sign is preferable to a modern box sign (see section 3.4.6 Projecting or Hanging Signs)
- If no fascia exists lettering should be individually mounted directly onto the building and back lit to avoid further visual clutter.
- The introduction of shutters or canopies is not normally permitted.
- Materials and colours should respect the historic character of the area.

3.4 Universal Design Considerations

3.4.1 Use of Colour

Color can have a profound impact on users of the built environment. Colour influences how we interact with our townscapes based on cultural as well as emotional associations.

Care should be taken when choosing shopfront colours as colour can make a building appear pleasant or oppressive, well proportioned or distorted, stimulating or monotonous, in harmony with its surrounding or individual in appearance and therefore has a direct affect on the entire streetscape.



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Key Design Recommendations

- Lurid and loud colouring should be avoided.
- Successfully applying a colour to the built environment requires the designer to understand the implications and perceptions of colour with regard to psychology, symbolism and trends.
- Colour can be used to differentiate, unite, equalise and accentuate important elements of the design such as mouldings and lettering.
- The successful application of colour is not typically formed around one single colour, but around choosing an appropriate colour scheme which should complement the colour scheme of the entire street.
- It is helpful to emphasise the location of shop entrances for people with visual impairment. This can be done through the use of colour and textural contrast, particularly on doors and at entrances and underfoot to emphasise the change from pavement to shopfloor.



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3.4.2 Materials

Much of the character of Kildare's towns and villages is derived from the use of traditional materials including render, brick and stone with glass and timber windows.

Key Design Recommendations

- Materials should complement the character of the buildings and the street.
- The type and number of materials used should be kept to a minimum and should be durable and easy to maintain. Shiny, highly reflective materials such as plastics and acrylics should be avoided.
- Aluminium is a modern material that comes in a variety of powder-coated finishes which may be acceptable as a cheap alternative to steel where a modernist or contemporary design is appropriate. Natural and some forms of anodised aluminium weather badly and are not acceptable for shopfront frames, doors or windows.
- The widespread use of synthetic materials such as vinyl, perspex or fibreglass (also known as glass reinforced plastic) is not appropriate.



3.4.3 Doors to Upper Floors

Independent access to upper floors is important in order to ensure that a mix of uses can occur within the entire building. Where access is currently provided, shopfront design should respect its existence and encourage its use.

Key Design Recommendations

- The provision of independent access should be integrated into the overall shopfront design and a suitably different but complementary door appearance is appropriate.
- In most circumstances a solid, unglazed door is suitable, however the chosen material and finish should relate to those used in the shopfront and overall building design.
- Access should preferably be recessed slightly from the front wall of the building to denote its secondary function along a retail street.



3.4.4 Canopies

Canopies provide weather protection to shoppers and shop windows. They can be lively additions to the streetscape provided that they are as an integral part of the shopfront.

Key Design Recommendations

- The erection of plastic, fabric 'Dutch' type canopies will be discouraged.
- Where canopies are required the use of rectangular sun blinds/awnings of the retractable type may be permitted.
- Canopies should not act as a permanent and prominent substitute for a fascia or projecting sign.
- Canopies should be kept free from signage. Any additional signage if required should be applied directly to the glass or installed behind glazing.
- Care should be taken with canopies to ensure that their size, shape and position are compatible with the character of the building.
- Architectural details should not be obscured with the installation of the canopy.
- The colour and material should be constant with or complementary to the materials of the shopfront and building.
- It is essential that the blind box is incorporated into the shopfront design and not simply applied. Retracting blinds should always retract fully into the fascia and should provide safe and adequate ground clearance (minimum 2.4m above ground level).
- Canopies should not interfere with the visibility of traffic signals and signs.
- Canopy supports should not interfere with or detract from the appearance of a shopfront.



3.4.5 Security

Security shutters can introduce an inhospitable atmosphere after dark and detract from the appearance of buildings and shopfronts. External or solid shutters are not appropriate as they prevent the opportunity for passive surveillance and attract graffiti.

Key Design Recommendations

- Internal lighting can be used at night to add to the feeling of security in a shopping area and reduce the impact of crime.
- Security glass is encouraged as it has no detrimental effect on the shopfront. Toughened and laminated glass can also give very high levels of security and has the capacity to remain intact when broken.
- Internal shutters require no external additions to the shopfront, in particular the open link grille type allows a clear view into the shop and gives an open appearance from the street.
- If solid shutters are used the window display should be able to be viewed. The shutter box housing should always be integrated within the shopfront or be recessed and flush with the shopfront. Shutter guides should either be removable or integrated into the shopfront design and colour coated to match.
- Burglar alarms should be sited as unobtrusively as possible. Alarms should be centred below the windows of the first floor or on the soffits of recessed doorways. They should never be located on architectural features such as consoles or pilasters.



3.4.6 Signage

Signage contributes to the animation of lively streets creating a sense of identity and place. It adds interest to facades and defines frontages of buildings. Shop signs can either clutter or add richness and variety to the streetscape depending on their position, design and quality. Signage also promotes accessibility and is useful in defining private and public space.

Key Design Recommendations

- The effect of signage on the character of the area should be considered. This is to ensure that signage does not appear dominant, nor cause an obstruction in the streetscape. All signage is to be proportionate to the scale of its surroundings. The design of a sign, the materials and colour used are to be in keeping with other elements on the streetscape
- Signage is to be designed as an integral part of the building on which it is displayed. The location, size, design and materials of the sign are to relate to the architectural detailing, scale and character of the building.
- Signage should normally be restricted to the ground floor of the building, with signage above fascia level only permitted where it will not cause significant harm to the character of the building or area.

Note refer to the following section High-Level Signage

- Where no fascia exists, individual lettering applied directly to the building is encouraged. Alternatives to this include hanging a name board in the window or applying etched or painted letters directly to the glass. Under no circumstances must a shop window be blocked by signage. Any other internal signage is to be more than one metre away from shop window.
- Signage must only advertise goods/services available at the particular premises.
- All signs are to be constructed in high quality, durable materials and must bear reference to existing materials within the area.
- Colours must be sympathetic to the host building and the streetscape.



High level Signage

Mixed development ultimately leads to different uses on the upper floors of the building. Upper floor signage will be considered in relation to the character of the building and the surrounding area. However in all instances the following recommendations will apply.

Key Design Recommendations

- Signage above street level must relate solely to that floor, rather than floors above or below.
- Upper floor signage is to be applied on windows.
- Projecting signage located above the first floor window cill will not be permitted. Further guidance on projecting signage is provided in the following sections.
- Where there are a number of different uses at upper floors, an integrated sign at a communal entrance is to be used.



Signage on Glazing

Signage placed on glazing may be particularly suitable to buildings which do not lend themselves to the addition of fascias or large external signs. However, unnecessary signage on windows can make them look cluttered, especially when combined with additional advertisements and posters.

Key Design Recommendations

- Signage can be painted or etched onto the internal surface of the window.
- Signage might also be placed behind the glass.
- Large areas of advertising or painting behind the glass can stifle a frontage.



Projecting or Hanging Signs

Projecting or hanging signs should be simple and limited to the name of the shop or a graphic indication of the type of shop. In conservation areas or on protected structures, projecting box signs are unsuitable, non – internally illuminated hanging signs are preferred for their traditional appearance and simplicity, as can be seen in the image below.



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Key Design Recommendations

- No more than one projecting sign will be allowed per building.
- Hanging signs should be located below the level of the first floor window sill and in such a position as not to damage or obscure corbels or other architectural details
- Signs should co-ordinate with the colour scheme and lettering styles of the overall shopfront design
- The maximum size should generally be 600x400mm, but a smaller sign may be required.
- Signs should provide at least 2.4m clearance from ground level.
- Hanging signs should not project more than 1.2m from the face of the building.
- Signs should be located at fascia level and should not obscure architectural details.
- Projecting brand signs are unacceptable.

The images below show how an abundance of projecting signs add to the visual clutter of the street.



Corporate Sign Styles

A good starting point of shopfront design is that architectural context should take priority over corporate branding. Company logos, signs and standard shopfront designs are often not suitable for traditional shopfronts, particularly those within listed buildings or in conservation areas. Corporate shops and institutions need to co-operate with the Local Authority in modifying their standard 'corporate' lettering or signage or adapt their standard shopfront designs to ensure the character of the host building and streetscape are maintained and enhanced.

Key Design Recommendations

- The authority recognises the need to convey corporate image and the desire to create a strong presence on the streetscape. Often the colours and graphics of corporate branding do not translate easily the streetscape, particularly in conservation areas.
- The toning down of branding is recommended in order to respect both the individual architectural composition of the host building and the character of the surrounding environment.
- Suggested modifications may include:
 - Reduced branding size and scale.
 - Toned down colour
 - The use of materials appropriate to the streetscape such as bronze, brass, lightweight cast iron, stainless steel, carved or relief stone.
 - The integration of signage with the architectural details of the building.
 - Integrated lighting, for example backlighting or subtle spotlighting.



Lettering

Lettering should be part of the shopfront design and should respect the character of the building and the street.

Key Design Recommendations

- The size of lettering should be determined by the need to be legible to shoppers, but not too large to swamp the fascia or the shopfront.
- The style of lettering can help convey the image of the shop but should not conflict with the other elements of the buildings.
- Each shop must have its street number clearly displayed. Numbers can be positioned on the fascia, on glazing above doors or on the door itself.



Illumination

A well designed and lit window display is a positive addition to the streetscape at night and is also a very effective method of advertising. Illumination should be treated as an fundamental part of the overall design of the shopfront and not merely as a means of highlighting an advertisement.

Key Design Recommendations

- On traditional shopfronts, illuminated fascias and projecting signs can be out of character. In particular illuminated box fascias and projecting signs will not be considered appropriate.
- Illuminated individual letters are an appropriate alternative.
- Illuminated fascias and signs where appropriate, should present a neat appearance during the day with all switchgear and wiring properly concealed.
- Illumination should be appropriate to the context and the general character of the street as well as being discreetly sited on the building itself.
- The intensity of the illumination should allow the sign to be easily read without causing a distracting glare.
- Shop signs do not need special illumination if there are sufficient levels of street lighting and light from within the shop window display.

3.4.7 Shopfront Forecourts

Shopfront forecourts form part of the public realm of our towns and villages. Where a shopfront is being replaced the Council may seek improvements to the forecourt to ensure that the quality of the public realm is maintained to a very high standard.

Key Design Recommendations

- The forecourt of the shopfront should be well maintained.
- The forecourt should be finished with appropriate materials which complement the footpath on the street and allows for the safe passage on pedestrians to the shop.



3.4.8 Access

People of diverse abilities should be able to use buildings and places comfortably and safely, as far as possible without special assistance. Level entry (Step-free) entrances facilitate not just wheelchair users but also people with buggies; people with suitcases or shopping trolleys; people using walking or mobility aids; and people with visual difficulties.

Further information with regard to access can be found in the series of booklets “Building for Everyone – A Universal Design Approach,” and in Part M (2010) of the Building Regulations and associated Technical Guidance Documents related to Part M.

Key Design Recommendations

- Ensure entrances are clearly visible and prominent.
- Make sure all entrances in new buildings are universally designed.
- Design alternative entrances to existing buildings to meet universal requirements.
- Provide adequate space inside and outside entrance doors.
- Establish clear landing space outside entrance of 2440mm x 2440mm.
- Arrange outward-opening doors so that they are recessed or guarded.
- Ensure threshold to entrances are level or no greater than 10mm with chamfered, pencil-rounded or ramped profile.
- Provide canopy or door recess for weather protection.
- Leave a clear space of 600mm adjacent to handle-side of door.

4.0 How to Approach Shopfront Design

4.1 Why do you need a new shopfront?

Before deciding to replace an existing shopfront it is worth considering carefully why a new shopfront replacement is necessary. The most likely reasons may be:

- The shopfront is in poor repair.
- A higher quality shopfront is required to improve the appearance of your business.
- A change of use that requires a different frontage – for example a change of use from a betting office to a flower shop where more display area is required, or from a butchers to a jewellery shop where more security is required.

If the existing shopfront is a distinctive and well designed one that has fallen into disrepair, then repair work should be all that is required. This is most always the case with timber shopfronts and repair work may be less expensive than replacement. If a completely new shopfront is required the following checklist will help focus you on the type of considerations that will help inform your shopfront design.

4.2 How to appraise your shopfront

The first step in designing a shopfront is to make a careful appraisal of the street, premises and existing shopfront.

Streetscape

- What is the rhythm of the street elevation in which the shopfront will be located?
- Is there a consistent pattern to the shopfronts along the streetscape, within which the host building is located?
- What are the materials and colours used in local buildings?
- How would a shopfront fit into the surrounding streetscape?

The Building as a whole

- Is the host building a protected structure?
- Is the host building located in an Architectural Conservation Area?
- What are the qualities and proportions of the rest of the building?
- Does the building have a distinctive architectural style or character e.g. Victorian, Georgian etc?
- How would a shopfront fit into the host façade?

The Existing Shopfront

- Is the shopfront of special importance as a piece of architectural heritage? If so, consultation with the local authority will be required.
- Is the shopfront original to the building? If so, does it still retain its original architectural details/features?
- Define the state of repair and condition of the shopfront.
- What is the proposed use of the shop, and is the shopfront appropriate to this usage?

- Does the shopfront sit comfortably within the façade of the host building?
- If the shopfront is of recent construction, in what manner does it contribute to the overall visual appreciation of the street, if at all?
- Can any alteration to the shopfront be readily accommodated without having a negative impact on the character of the host historic structure?
- What are the potential benefits of any proposed alteration/addition if any?
- Does the shopfront allow access for all users in accordance with Building Regulations 2010 Technical Guidance Document M and Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach.

4.3 Planning Approvals

Applicants are advised to consult Chapter 19, Section 19.11 Shopfront Design and Advertising, of the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017 (or any amendment/review) which provides further direction for works to shopfronts.

Works requiring planning permission

- New shopfront.
- Any alterations to an existing façade including an existing shopfront.
- Change of use from shop to other use.
- Works to a protected structure.

- Any work which will materially affect the character of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

Making an Application

It is advised that any application for a shopfront proposal should be accompanied by clear and concise information. Outlined below is a brief checklist of the type of information which your application should include:

- A site plan to a scale of 1:1000 with the site outlined.
- An existing elevation of the shopfront and the host building together with adjoining properties.
- Drawings of the shopfront – plans, sections and elevations at a scale of 1:50, showing its relationship to the host building.
- Joinery or stone details to 1:10 or 1:5
- Details of shutters, housings, materials and fittings
- Specifications for signs and materials
- Shopfront finish
- Illumination design
- Photographs of the existing shopfront and adjoining premises. Aspirational photographs to depict the 'look and feel' you would like to achieve with your shopfront will also help convey your ideas.

Pre-Planning Design Advice

Kildare County Council holds regular pre-planning information meetings for prospective applicants' for small-scale development. This will give an opportunity for interested parties to meet a planner or senior official who can advise them in broad terms about their proposal. The dates of the

meetings are advertised in advance in local newspapers and on our website, and are by appointment only.

Kildare County Council will always encourage the retention, conservation or restoration of period shopfronts. However, where a new shopfront is deemed appropriate by the Local Authority, the new shopfront shall have regard to the design guidance set out in this booklet.

Useful Contacts:

Kildare County Council
Tel: 045 980200
Website: www.kildare.ie/county council

Planning Department, Kildare County Council
Tel: 045 980843
Fax: 045 980834
E-mail: plandept@kildarecoco.ie

Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)
www.riai.ie

The Heritage Council
www.heritagecouncil.ie