

# Lichfield Shopfront Design Code

Supplementary Planning  
Document

May 2026



Lichfield  
District  
Council



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	3	3.10. Lighting.....	39
1.2 Some context.....	4	3.11. Greenery.....	41
<b>2. Using the design code</b> .....	8	3.12. Ventilation.....	42
2.1 Hierarchy of shopfront works.....	10	3.13. Security measures.....	43
2.2 Different types of consent.....	13	3.14. Maintenance and repair.....	44
<b>3. The design code</b>		3.15. Living above a shop.....	44
3.1 Street composition and public realm.....	14		
3.1.1 Assessing the building's façade.....	15		
3.1.2 Sustainability.....	16		
3.2 Architectural elements.....	17		
3.3 Materials and colours.....	28		
3.4 Doorways and accessibility.....	30		
3.5 Signage.....	31		
3.6 Lettering.....	34		
3.7 Hangingsigns.....	34		
3.8 Advertisements.....	36		
3.9 Awnings and canopies.....	37		

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This design code supports Lichfield city centre's beautification. It provides shop owners with ingredients to create simple, well designed, attractive and street-enhancing shop fronts. The aim throughout is to support Lichfield's place quality and prosperity.

The code will provide clarity and ground rules for shopfront works – from small improvements to entirely new shopfronts - and setting key design requirements which come from local planning policy. This code must be followed by any shop owner in the city where the shopfront is to be substantially repaired or replaced and where planning permission/ listed building consent is required, and where a grant for the works to the shopfront is applied for from the Local Authority.

As a Supplementary Planning Document, it should be followed - alongside other policy and design guidance - for any planning application that affects a city centre shop front.

Please use this code to celebrate the best qualities of our city centre, encourage investment in its future and build 'pride in place' for residents, businesses, visitors and all those who love Lichfield.



*"We strongly support the aims of the Heritage Shopfront Design Code and the Grant Scheme. Enhancing the appearance of historic buildings is vital to strengthening the character of the city centre and supporting the independent businesses who work hard every day to serve residents and visitors."*

**Duncan Hindley, director, Hindley and Son Ltd**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.2 Some context

A summary of relevant national and local policies is listed below. This list is not exhaustive but presents a synthesis of background policies that form the legal basis for planning regulations within high streets and conservation areas. If you need to know more about the planning guidance affecting your building, these are a good place to start.

### National planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied to local plans that underpin high-quality places in which to live and work. At the time of writing, the 2025 draft NPPF is at pre-adoption stage. The NPPF supports development within town centres that reflects the distinctive character of the local area and contributes to their vitality and viability (draft NPPF, Policy TC1 and TC2).

It promotes the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings and suggests using design guides and design codes to support local authority vision for the development of town centres (draft NPPF TC1.2).

The draft NPPF emphasises that good design is a key component of sustainable development and should be a fundamental consideration in both the development and assessment of planning proposals (draft NPPF, Policy DP1). It places emphasis on the importance of clear design expectations, including the use of design codes and guidance, to secure design

outcomes (draft NPPF, Policy DP1.1b)

The draft NPPF also lays out policies for development plans that support the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, with design codes identified as an opportunity to 'draw on the contribution which the historic environment can make to the character and quality of development' (draft NPPF, Policy HE1).

Policies HE4–HE7 of the draft NPPF establish that heritage assets should be conserved and enhanced in line with their significance, with development avoiding harm wherever possible and only permitting it where there is clear and convincing justification. Proposals must be supported by proportionate assessments of an asset's significance and the impact on it.

The draft National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025) is currently subject to consultation and is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b6bc6aacd0dc9777b4fd2/December\\_2025\\_NPPF\\_Consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b6bc6aacd0dc9777b4fd2/December_2025_NPPF_Consultation.pdf)

The draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance identifies the use of design codes as a primary tool for achieving well-designed places. It identifies design codes as a key mechanism for setting locally specific requirements across a range of design issues, following the seven features of well-design places (draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance, pp.72–90). This approach seeks to

translate high-level design principles into clear and deliverable parameters.

A central theme of the guidance is the role of design codes in providing greater certainty and consistency within the planning process. It states design codes should be 'measurable using visual and numerical parameters rather than detailed policy wording,' (draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance, p.91)

The draft Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance is currently subject to consultation and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/design-and-placemaking-planning-practice-guidance/design-and-placemaking-planning-practice-guidance>



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Local planning policy

The Development Plan for Lichfield District currently comprises the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy (2008–2029), adopted in February 2015, and the Local Plan Allocations document (2008–2029), adopted in 2019. At the time of writing, Lichfield District Council are drafting a new local plan, currently at Regulation 18 phase.

The following policies are a non-exhaustive outline of relevant local planning policy context for shopfront renovations, alterations and works to buildings within town centres and conservation areas.

- Policy BE1: Policy BE1 states in part: ‘All development proposals should ensure that a high quality sustainable built environment can be achieved. Development will be permitted where it can be clearly and convincingly demonstrated that it will have a positive impact on: the significance of the historic environment, such as archaeological sites, sites of historic landscape value, listed buildings, conservation areas, locally listed buildings and skylines containing important historic, built and natural features.’
- Core Policy 14: Core Policy 14 states that ‘The District Council will protect and improve the built environment and have special regard to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment through positive action and partnership working.’
- Core Policy 14: Core policy 14 also states ‘The

historic environment contributes to sustainable communities, including economic vitality, and new development must make a positive contribution to the historic environment’s local distinctiveness.’

- Core Policy 8: ‘Leisure uses, cultural development, attractive spaces and a balanced night time economy will be encouraged in both Lichfield City and Burntwood town centres. Management programmes, including environmental enhancements, will be implemented to support existing retailers and attract visitors.’

For the full list of policies see the adopted Local Plan documents:

<https://www.lichfelddc.gov.uk/performance-efficiency/adopted-local-plan>

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening has been undertaken for the Shopfront Design Code SPD. The screening concluded that the Design Code is not likely to result in significant environmental effects, and a full SEA is therefore not required. The three statutory bodies were consulted on the draft Screening Statement and agreed or did not comment.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Lichfield City Centre Conservation Area

The Lichfield City Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) identifies the elements that contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the city centre and, as part of the area's management plan, informs planning decisions affecting the area.

Within conservation areas there is a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character and appearance (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Shopfront alterations and new commercial frontages should therefore respond positively to the character and of the conservation area.

The historic character of Lichfield city centre is strongly influenced by its medieval street pattern and narrow historic 'burgage' plot structure (p.5). Buildings in the centre typically occupy these plots to create a fine grained development and narrow frontages along the principal streets.

The appraisal highlights the importance of building scale, proportions and architectural composition in defining the character of the conservation area, saying new development will not be permitted where 'the detailed design of buildings, including height, density, mass, layout, proportions, or materials would not respect the character of an area.'



*Above: Sandford Street, Lichfield (date unknown);  
Bottom: Market Street (date unknown)*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## Lichfield District Design Code

The Lichfield District Design Code SPD was adopted in 2024, providing design standards across the district for new development. The code is based on different area types, from City Centre to Rural Area types. The key (but not exhaustive) relevant sections from the district design code are in the City Centre Area Type (CC3.1 – 3.8, CC4.1 – 4.10 and CC6.1 – 6.5).

The shopfront design code will complement the district design code, with its shopfront requirements expanding on - and not conflicting with - the district code. While the district code is not prescriptive on architecture and building design detail, the following requirements are relevant to this code:

### Built Form (CC3.1 – CC3.8)

- CC3.3 Urban Form: 'The traditional form of the City Centre is based on courtyard blocks with buildings joining to each other to the side and sometimes also to the rear. This should be replicated in new development. All buildings must face onto the public realm taking their main entrance from it.'
- CC3.4 Building Line: 'Lichfield centre has a strong building line, accordingly 'where development proposes to depart from this proposed building line this will need to be justified by a master planning exercise.'

### Identity (CC4.1 – CC4.10)

- CC4.3 Conservation Area: 'The code should be read alongside the Conservation Area Appraisal.

'Applications will require a heritage statement to assess the impact of the proposal on the Lichfield City Conservation Area and any other heritage assets that would be impacted by the development.'

- CC4.4 Architecture: 'The district code does not provide strong architectural control, however it does state 'schemes are encouraged to fit in to their surroundings...in a historical or contemporary style.'
- CC4.5 Ground Floor Design: 'The district code encourages defining a 'tripartite structure (bottom, middle and top)' through the use of materials, as well as noting colonnades are a feature in Lichfield.'
- CC4.6 Windows: While not specifically for shopfronts, the code states 'shopfronts should include at least 75% glazing'.
- CC4.8 Entrances: 'The design of shopfronts should respect the scale and proportion of existing shopfronts in the town...These should be painted timber with a clear fascia. Hanging signs projecting from the wall are acceptable as are shop awnings and occupation of the pavement with chairs and tables or displays.'

### Building form and façade design (CC6.1 – CC6.5)

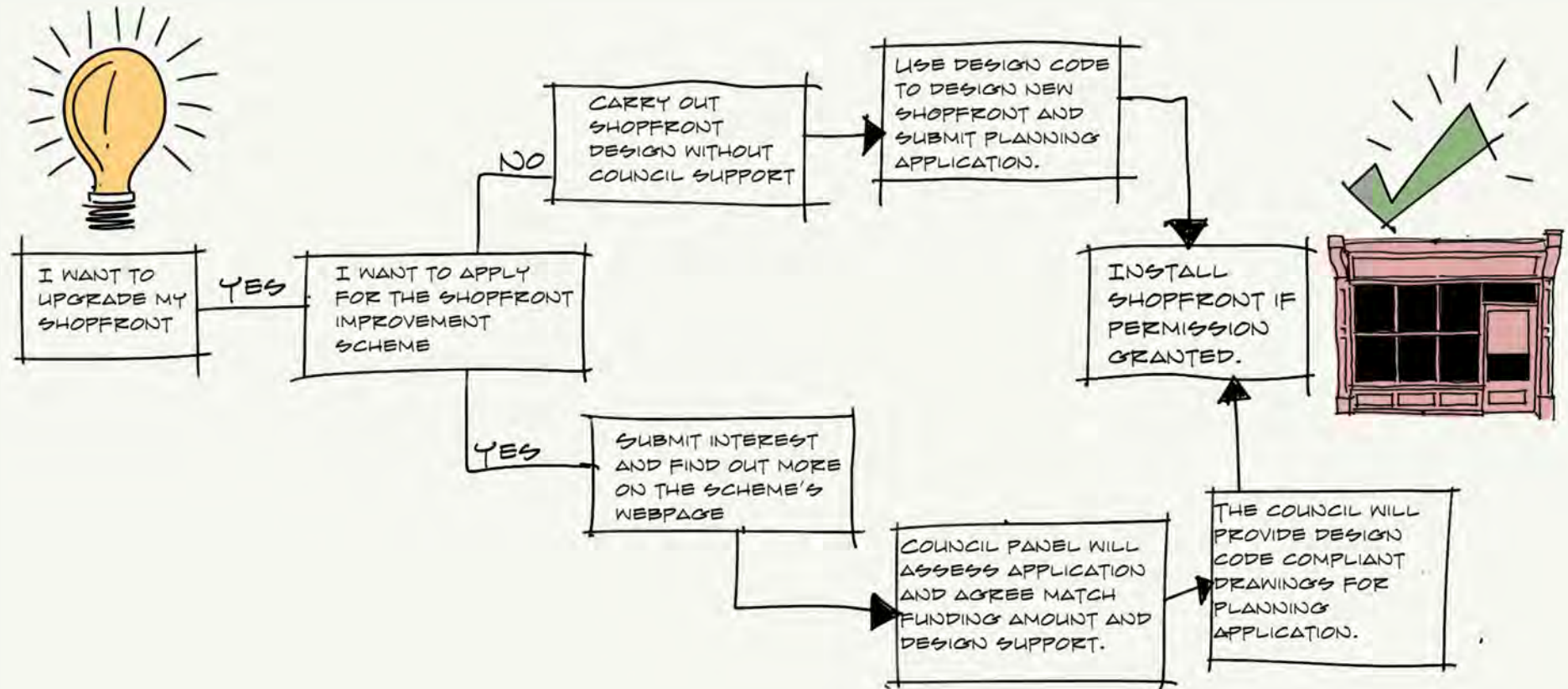
Section 6 of the city centre design code contains the key shopfront design elements for new shopfronts. It outlines the broad design requirements for new shopfronts, for which this code provides greater detail

on achieving those requirements.

- CC6.4 Active frontage: 'Active frontages are defined as shop fronts, commercial or community uses with glazing at the ground floor level so that activities within the building are visible from the street.'
- CC6.3: Elevations should be articulated to reflect the traditional plot structure and vertical rhythm of historic streets, avoiding large monotonous façades.'
- CC6.5 Shopfront Design: 'Where new development involves the creation of new shopfronts or alterations to existing shopfronts, these should be designed to reinforce the identity of the shop, neighbouring frontages and the wider street scene. Retaining and enhancing windowed shop frontages is vital to ensuring the historic character of the City Centre is maintained. Where historic shopfronts retain traditional elements, these must be preserved and enhanced where possible.'
- CC6.5 Shopfront Design: 'Where new signage is proposed, these should be in proportion to the shopfront and main building and reflect the materials of the original building. New signage must not overlap moulding details or cornices.'
- CC6.5 Shopfront Design: 'Poor quality shopfronts that harm the character of the area and provide an unattractive environment for visitors will not be acceptable, this often comes in the form of overly large plastic fascia boards.'

## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

If you are a shopowner, business, or freeholder of a building with shops, how can you go about the seemingly daunting task of upgrading or restoring your shopfront—whether a small change, such as adding new lighting, or installing a whole new façade? The key aim of this design code is to make the process as simple as possible with support from the council. The flow chart below outlines the whole process in broad terms:



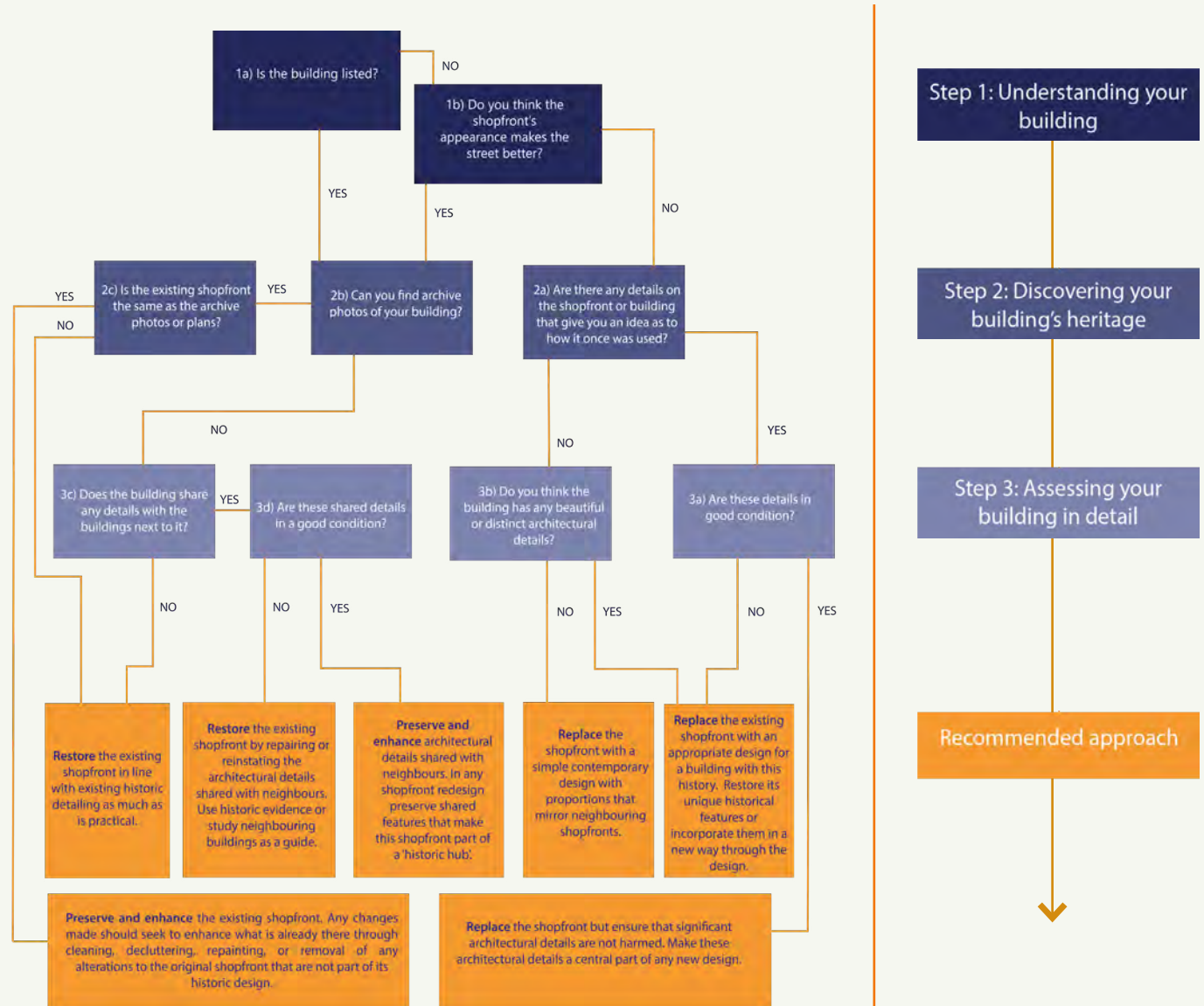
## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

So what is the right shopfront upgrade for you?

If you are a shopkeeper or landlord of a commercial building within Lichfield city centre the next flowchart takes you through a step-by-step process to help you approach a redesign or refurbishment of your commercial building:

- Step 1. Understanding your building
- Step 2. Discovering your building's heritage
- Step 3. Assessing your building in detail

As you make your way through the step-by-step process, the flow chart will suggest a recommended approach based on your building's current condition. This code applies to all shop fronts in Lichfield, including national chains, who usually have their own uniform branding designs and palette. Standard designs by national retail chains may not always be appropriate and may need to be adapted to comply with the design code and Lichfield's local character.



## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

### 2.1 Hierarchy of Shopfront Works

With shopfronts, as with the rest of a building, even minor alterations can have a major effect on the character and appearance of the host building and on the surrounding area. The type of work chosen to the shopfront is dependent on a full assessment of the existing shopfront and ability to conserve as much of the historical detail as possible and the funds available for the works.

The optimum level of works right for each shopfront will vary on a case-by-case basis. Below are the three tiers of interventions that should be considered.

#### 1. Cosmetic refresh

A cosmetic refresh is an affordable and effective way of improving a shopfront's appearance and can often be done without needing planning permission or building regulations approval (although Listed Building Consent may be required). Normally, this should be the first option you consider.

#### How?

- Keep signage to a minimum.
- Keep window displays simple but interesting. Avoid window vinyl advertising that blocks out whole windows and doors.
- Avoid unattractive wiring and ensure necessary features such as burglar alarms are sensitively located.
- Repaint stallrisers, pilasters and window frames.



## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

### 2. Repair and reinstatement

Sometimes a building that has lost its architectural details or is in a poor state of repair can be given a new lease of life through a programme of repair and reinstatement.

By showcasing how long-lived and well-integrated within the local area a building is, new tenants or potential purchasers can be assured that their building has character, will work for their brand and business, and will encourage customers who are attracted to the historic frontage.

Collectively, well conserved and maintained historic shopfronts add to an area's 'place appeal' and its ability to attract pedestrians and shoppers. Restoring architectural features can also indicate that an area is 'on the rise'. Supporting and enhancing a neighbourhood's established character can demonstrate that a business is making a serious local commitment and is likely to 'stick around'. By contrast, less well integrated commercial frontages can often indicate impermanence and detract from the local sense of place.

Repair and reinstatement involves limited changes to the existing shopfront, depending on the scale of modifications to the original design. It may require planning permission, listed building consent, advert consent or building regulations approval depending on the degree of change. Reusing existing features is a cost effective and environmentally friendly method of upgrading a shopfront. It is also an effective way

to ensure modifications are well integrated into the existing frontage. It is important to always repair or replace on a like-for-like basis with any original shopfront details being reinstated. The exception to this being that some changes for greater sustainability may be desirable. This is particularly important where shopfronts contribute to the character of conservation areas or are listed. Technical drawings from library archives and photographic records online can help identify original shops design and details if lost. If original records cannot be found, use designs that are in-keeping with the character and detail of similar buildings and shopfronts.

#### How?

- Repair and reuse existing features.
- Smaller repairs, sanding, repainting, or paying a joiner to reinstate a lost detail should be less expensive than installing a whole modern shopfront. It is also more likely to meet planning requirements.
- Check online and in local library archives for authentic original shopfront designs that could be reproduced or photographic evidence of lost features.
- Select appropriate materials in coordinated colours
- Remove or relocate roller shutters or grills inside.

- If there is a step or slope, consider ways to improve accessibility.
- Upgrade doors to be assisted opening for mobility aid users.



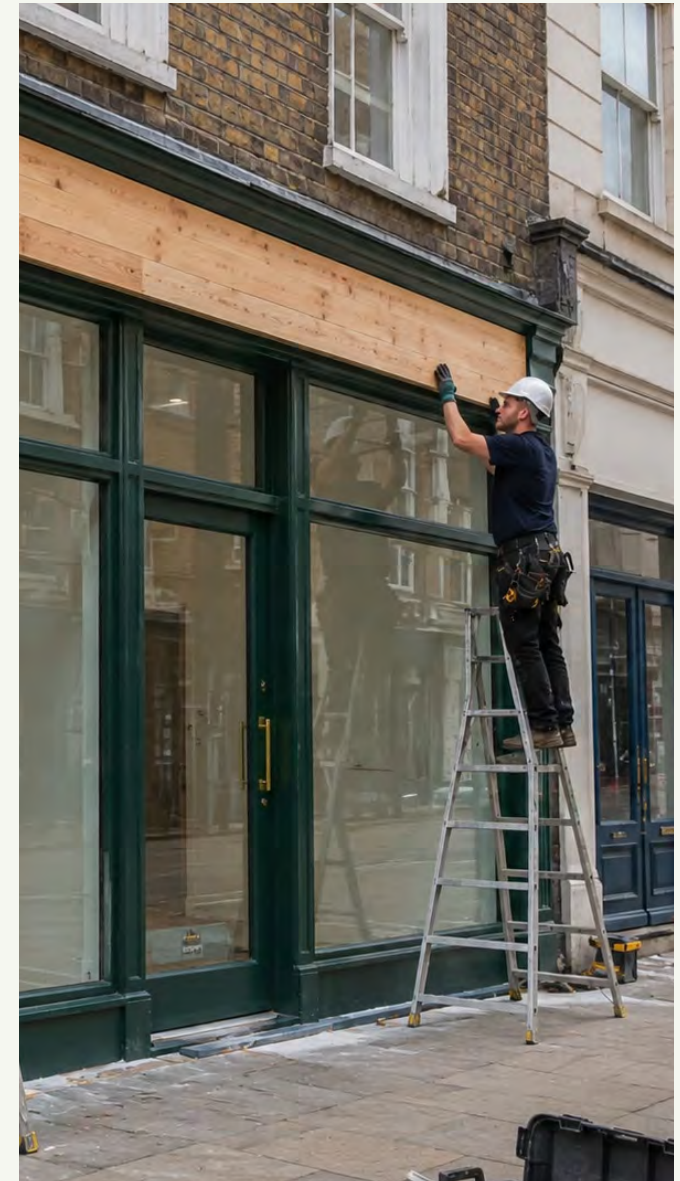
## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

### 3. Renewal

Shopfront renewal usually involves significant, sometimes structural, changes. It will almost certainly require planning permission and building regulations approval.

How?

- Start by considering the shop's proportions. Think about the symmetry of the overall design.
  - Design windows to balance the shopfront. Windows on a single shopfront should all be the same in design.
  - If there is not separate access to the upper storeys of the building, consider if it is possible to create new access at street level without compromising the appearance of the shopfront. This will increase the useability and value of the building as a whole. Reinstating residential use above and reducing the shopfloor size can significantly reduce the rates payable for a shop premises.
  - Select appropriate materials and colours. This is particularly important in conservation areas. Where appropriate bright colours can be used, but saturated colours may be overly garish. A consistent colour palette should normally be used with a limited number of coordinated colours.
  - Ensure fascias are proportionate to the rest of the shopfront, where possible using the proportions of historic shopfronts as a guide.
  - Ensure projecting and hanging signs are appropriately located and sized not protruding more than 750mm from wall to sign edge. There should be no less than 3m in height from the ground to the top edge of the sign. The dimensions of the sign should not exceed 750mm by 750mm.
- Avoid using bulky internally illuminated box signs. Externally illuminated signs and hanging boards may be more acceptable, although wiring and lamps will need to be carefully located. Halo illuminated individual letters may also be more acceptable. The latter could, for example, reflect the signage used for some inns and 'warehouses' (actually just larger shops) in Lichfield in the late nineteenth century.
  - Design the doorway and inside of the shop to ensure access for all including wheelchair users and prams and to be easily identified as the entrance for users with visual impairments. Using a slight recess to the doorway can help to make its location more evident and help to accommodate a ramp in the entrance if needed.
  - Ensure canopies and awnings suit the character and period of the building. However, any brackets need to be sufficiently visible and at a height that they will not impede pedestrians. They may also require planning permission and listed building consent.
  - Keep shop windows visible at night, preferably by using security glass windows and window displays illuminated by low level LED lighting. If security shutters and grilles are required, they should be open in design.



## 2. USING THE DESIGN CODE

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### 2.2 Different types of consent

Most shopfront alterations require planning permission. This section outlines which approvals apply to different types of works. All applications are considered against relevant planning policy and legislation. Specialist advice should always be sought regarding the need for consent.

- **Planning Permission** is required for most alterations to a building's exterior, including alterations to the shopfront. Completely replacing a shopfront will require planning permission. However, using the design code significantly increases the likelihood of a successful application. Conversion to residential will require planning permission or prior approval from the local planning authority. Planning applications should include:
  - Detailed drawings of the existing and proposed shopfront at a scale of no less than 1:50
  - Section drawings and large-scale details (1:20 or larger) illustrating key elements such as joinery, fascia, stallrisers etc.
  - Specifications of proposed materials, finishes, and colour schemes
  - Full details of all signage, including illumination, materials, and method of fixing
  - Details of any external lighting, fixtures, and security elements.
- **Listed Building Consent** is required if a shop is part of a listed building under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for any minor or major alterations to any aspect of the shopfront, building exterior or building interior. Specialist advice should be sought for proposals affecting listed buildings at the earliest possible stage. Unauthorised works to a Listed Building are a criminal offence, and can result in either enforcement and/or prosecution.
- **Area of Special Control of Advertisements** may be required depending upon the type and location of the advertisement and whether it would be illuminated. Canopies or awnings with signage (lettering for advertising purposes) are considered advertisements and may require advertisement consent, rather than planning permission. It is advisable to seek specialist advice at an early stage to establish if consent is required. The council is exploring the introduction of an Area of Special Control for Advertisements within Lichfield City Centre to provide strong control over the display of shopfront advertising.
- **Prior Approval Application** may be necessary to be eligible for permitted development rights allowing a conversion of a shop to a residential use. This enables the local planning authority to consider the proposal and, if within a conservation area, where the impact of residential conversion may be more pronounced, to assess the effect on the character of the conservation area and the amenity of the future residents. Specialist advice should be sought at an early stage.
- **Building Regulations Approval** is required for new

shopfronts when alterations affect the building's structural stability, means of escape, or the position of the entrance or doorway. Replacing windows, doors or roof coverings on pitched and flat roofs requires Building Regulation Approval. Specialist advice should be sought at an early stage.

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.1 Street composition & public realm

While the design of individual shopfronts is important, their relationship with neighbouring shopfronts along a commercial street should also be considered. The following diagrams illustrate examples of good and poor practice.

The shopfront forms only one part of a building's façade, so improvements should be considered in the context of the entire structure. Refurbishing a shopfront alone may have limited impact if the upper storeys remain in poor condition. Conserving original upper-storey features is usually essential. Where these elements have deteriorated, they should be repaired or restored with reference to the original design wherever possible. If features have been lost, they may be replaced on a like-for-like basis or with modern alternatives that remain sympathetic to the building's character. Where listed building consent or planning permission is required, restoring the building's historic and architectural interest is generally preferred.

**Windows.** The condition and design of window frames and glazing significantly influence the appearance of the building. Historic windows should be repaired wherever possible or replaced like for like if beyond repair. Poorly proportioned modern replacements should be substituted with windows that match the original proportions. If the original design is unknown, guidance should be sought from similar buildings of the same age or style.



Large undivided panels of glass

Disproportionate fascia covering historic detailing

Poor quality vinyl or uPVC sign fixed to wall with no relationship to building

Small window with interior hidden to passerby



Large window displays divided by mullions

Fascia and stallrisder are proportionate

Horizontal and vertical lines match surrounding building

Window display appropriate to style of building

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

**Maintenance.** Walling materials, such as brick or render, along with rainwater goods like gutters and downpipes, should be regularly cleaned and maintained to prevent decay and water ingress.

**Paintwork.** External joinery, including shopfronts and elements such as bargeboards, was traditionally painted in dark colours, often black. Historically, dark tones were common for window frames until white became more widespread from the 1860s onward, although darker frames persisted into the mid twentieth century. Dark green was particularly popular as it resembled verdigris bronze, echoing the bronze frames used on prestigious buildings. As a result, dark green or similar tones may be appropriate for buildings constructed before the 1860s. Creams and neutral shades are also suitable. Light pastel colours may be appropriate in some cases, but dark paintwork on upper storeys should generally be avoided unless supported by historical evidence.

**External fixings.** Additional fixtures unrelated to the historic shopfront, such as canopy brackets, should be minimised to preserve the building's texture and appearance. Security devices should be discreetly positioned, and unnecessary fittings avoided. Redundant fixings should be removed and the masonry repaired to prevent damage and improve the building's overall appearance.

### 3.1.2 Sustainability

Upgrading our building stock to reduce energy use will make an important contribution to the country's

targets to achieve a zero-carbon economy. In December 2019 Lichfield Council declared a climate emergency. The Lichfield District 2050 strategy which outlines environmental priorities can be found here: <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/performance-efficiency/strategic-plan>

Heritage-led design honours the history of a place and climate-conscious design safeguards a place for the future. Shopfront design can help support climate action in a number of simple but effective ways:

- **Longevity.** Buildings and shopfronts that last the longest are the most sustainable as the carbon embodied in their design is not lost but remains in use. The greenest building is the one that already exists. It is nearly always more energy efficient to repurpose a building than to start again.
  - Investing in long-lasting materials safeguards the building for the future. Properly maintained traditional materials can last many years without needing replacement.
  - Buildings designed with flexibility in mind are more likely to be used in future. Buildings that can work as either homes or shops and offer street level access to the upper storeys allow the use of the space to evolve over time. Overly precise purpose-built shopfronts become defunct once the business moves or closes down.
  - Reusing existing features not only preserves the historic character of the building frontage,

but also bypasses the need to produce new features.

- **Street use.** By making shops and the street a more comfortable place to be, more people are encouraged to spend time in their local high street and shop locally rather than, perhaps, drive to a less sustainable out of town option.
  - Awnings can be used to reduce 'solar gain', making the interior of the shop more comfortable and protecting the goods being sold, preventing waste.



*Shopfronts that last the longest are the most sustainable*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

- Awnings can be used to provide shade on the street, allowing people to dine and shop outside.
- **Energy Efficiency.** Historic buildings perform differently to modern buildings in terms of energy efficiency. Measures shopfronts can adopt to improve energy efficiency include:
  - Awnings and canopies can provide a front to back-through draft with positive pressure that draws air through the shop.
  - Insulation. Insulating shopfronts is difficult owing to the large windows. But where possible, insulating the upper storeys is an effective energy efficiency measure.
  - Ventilation through opening transom lights is a cost-effective and natural way to improve air flow through a shop, helping to control temperatures. This reduces the need for electronic air conditioning.
  - Double glazing helps to regulate the temperature of the shop's interior. Particularly using slimline, evacuated glass double-glazing reduces the thickness of frames needed to accommodate it.

See further guidance from Historic England on energy efficiency and historic buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/energy-efficiency-and-historic-buildings/>).



*Awnings are a good way to provide a front to back through-draft with positive pressure that draws air through the shop.*

# 3. THE DESIGN CODE

## 3.2 Architectural elements

### Console bracket/corbel

Most traditional console brackets in Lichfield are curved. This will form the basis of design requirements for shopfront corbels in Lichfield.

**MUST**

A straight, angular console bracket must not be used, except for reasons of historic precedence.

**SHOULD**

Modern cornices are more basic in construction but should still serve to add texture and protect the fascia from dripping water.

**SHOULD**

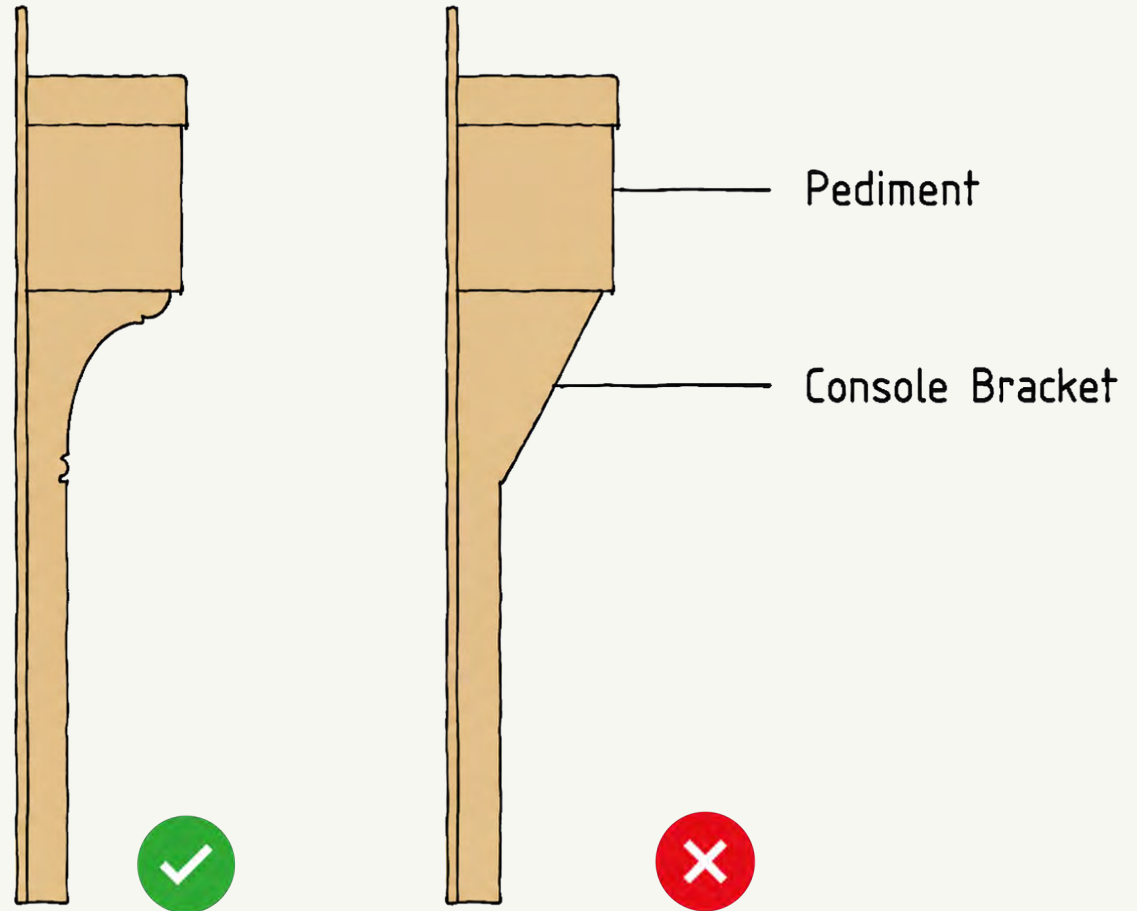
The cornice should not sit proud of the console bracket.

**SHOULD**

Traditional cornice profiles should be used when undertaking a restoration or constructing a new shopfront in a traditional style.

**SHOULD**

Modern shopfronts should also have a projecting cornice with enough embellishment to achieve shadow lines, add interest to the streetscape and ensure that dripping rainwater is kept away from the fascia and shop window.



*A straight, angular console bracket must not be used, except for reasons of historic precedence.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### Cornice

Most traditional console brackets in Lichfield are curved. This will form the basis of design requirements for shopfront corbels in Lichfield.

**MUST**

Cornices must not extend beyond the outer edge of the pilasters.

**SHOULD**

Cornices should have a deep projection to give strong shadow lines and to protect the fascia from rainwater.

**SHOULD**

Modern cornices are more basic in construction but should still serve to add texture and protect the fascia from dripping water.

**SHOULD**

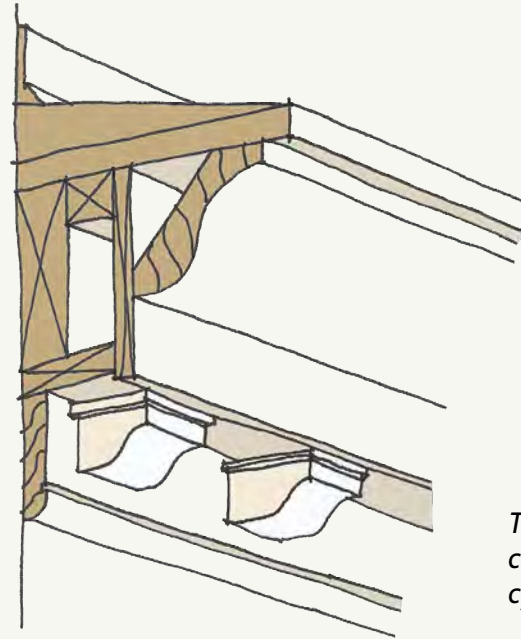
The cornice should not sit proud of the console bracket.

**SHOULD**

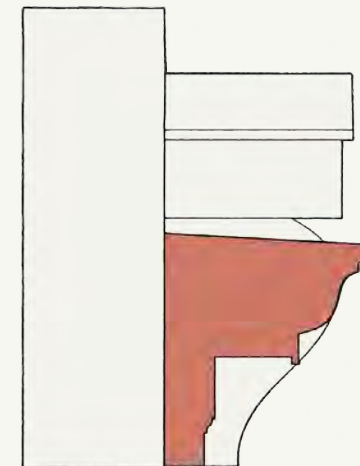
Traditional cornice profiles should be used when undertaking a restoration or constructing a new shopfront in a traditional style.

**SHOULD**

Modern shopfronts should also have a projecting cornice with enough embellishment to achieve shadow lines, add interest to the streetscape and ensure that dripping rainwater is kept away from the fascia and shop window.



*Traditional dentilled cornice construction with cyma recta moulding.*



*Cornice overhangs (left) should be contained within the extent of the console bracket.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### Fascia

Most traditional console brackets in Lichfield are curved. This will form the basis of design requirements for shopfront corbels in Lichfield.

**MUST**

The fascia must not be built over historic architectural details such as cornices, awnings or ventilation panels, or the sills of first floor windows.

**MUST**

Fascias must not project forward from the building façade more than 150mm.

**MUST**

Box fascias constructed as deep projecting sign boxes must not be used.

**SHOULD**

The height of the fascia should not be more than 20 per cent of the entire shopfront height

**SHOULD**

The fascia should be kept within the extent of the original design and not extend further out, below, or above.

**SHOULD**

In cases of shopfront replacements or refurbishments, the height or depth of any new fascia should not exceed the height or depth of the original fascia.



*Shown above are some general, recommended proportions for shopfront design based on local precedent.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

SHOULD

If there is evidence of the position of the original fascia on the shopfront these boundaries should be respected.

SHOULD

The fascia on modern shopfronts need not be angled, but if the fascia being replaced was tilted then the replacement should also be tilted, both to reflect the original design and to make it more visible to pedestrians

CAN

In cases where a low false ceiling is unavoidable, historic fascia proportions can be kept by adding false transom lights which can be glazed and blacked out.

SHOULD

In situations where false ceilings are unavoidable, fascias should not be made deeper to cover over transom lights.

SHOULD

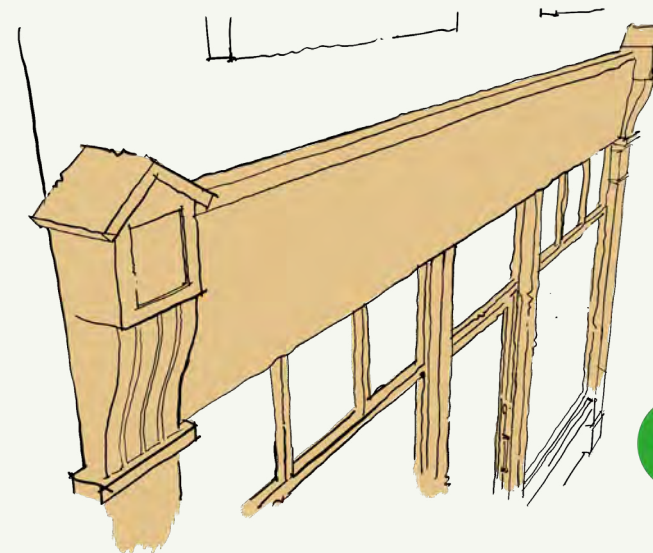
The fascia should be kept within the extent of the original design and not extend further out, below, or above.

SHOULD

Splayed ceilings should be used where possible or blacked-out transom lights should be used to hide the ceiling void behind. With both solutions, the original fascia depth can be retained



*Box fascias that project more than 150mm and cover historic detailing must not be used.*



*Fascias should be kept within the extent of the original design and sit within the console brackets, cornice and top of the window frame.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE



*(Left) A poor example of a modern fascia mounted on, and obscuring architectural detail of heritage value. (Right) An example of an additional horizontal, timber batten supported by vertical post and used to achieve an angled fascia.*



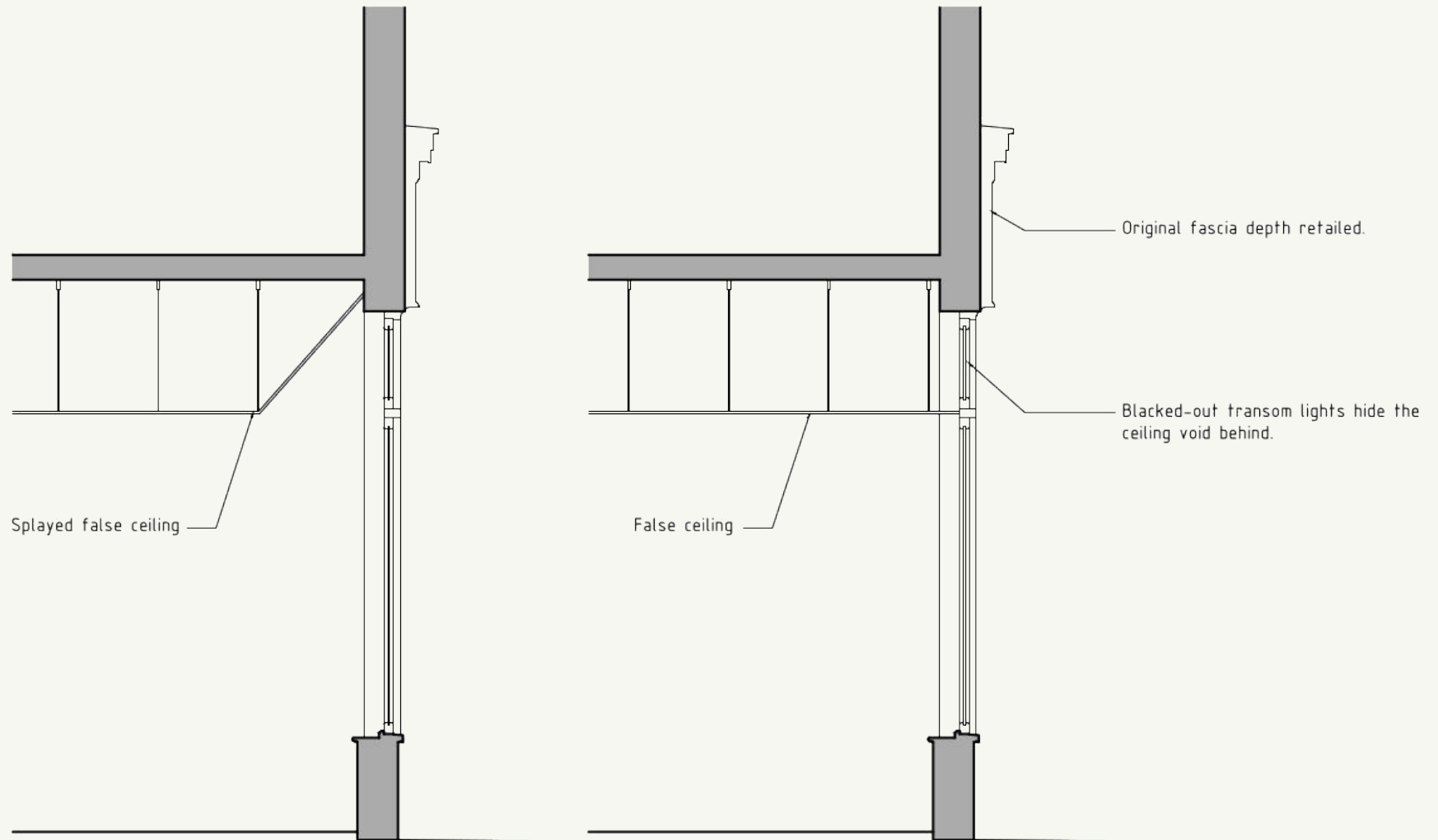
*A poor example of an excessive fascia that takes up about 50 per cent of the entire shopfront. This dominates and makes the shop look like a billboard rather than a commercial premises*



*Well designed fascias sit within the corbelling and are proportionate to other shopfront elements.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

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*In situations where false ceilings are unavoidable, fascias should not be made deeper to cover over transom lights.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### Mullions

**SHOULD**

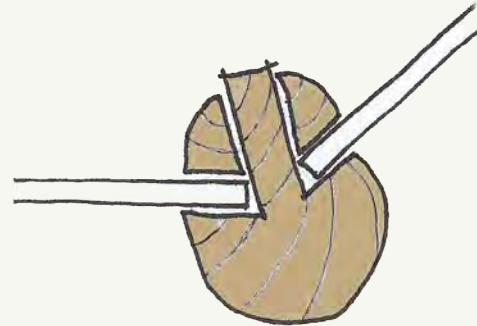
Mullions on new designs should include some form of embellishment such as fluting, beading or splayed edges rather than being entirely plain.

**SHOULD**

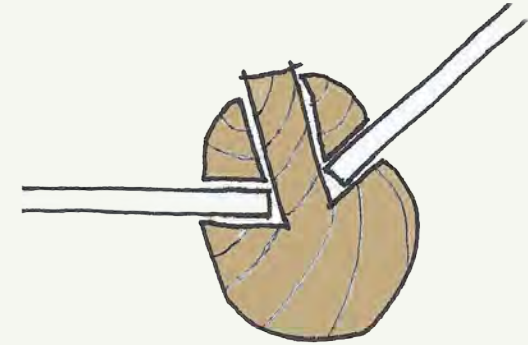
Mullions and any glazing bars should be of the slenderest construction possible to maintain the fine texture associated with historic timber framing on shopfronts.

**MUST**

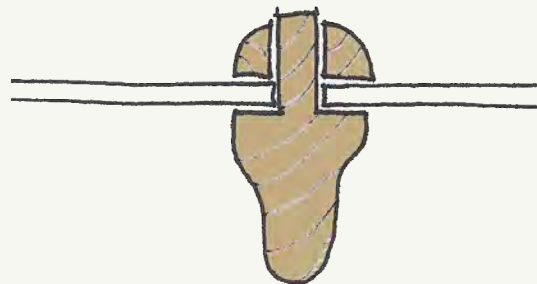
Broad, over-sized members generally associated with PVC or aluminium frames must be avoided.



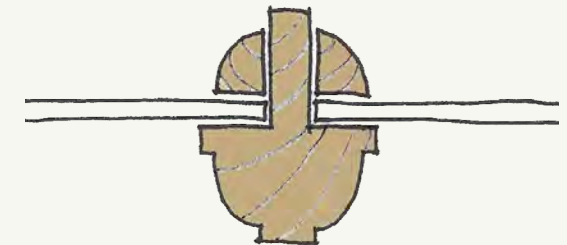
Ogee Moulding



Round Section



Lambs Tongue



Ovolo Moulding

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### Pilasters

Masonry or timber pilasters may already exist as part of the building fabric, in which case a new shopfront will form an infill between them. Timber pilasters can be useful in retrofitted shopfronts for covering over abutting building work.

**MUST**

Pilasters must be proportionate to the shopfront width, usually 8 – 12% of the total shopfront width, and must not be more than 600mm wide.

**MUST**

Pilasters must not appear as oversized box sections or deep structural casings that cover oversized structural frames or retail shopfront systems.

**MUST**

Pilasters over 400mm must have detailing, such as fluting or panelling, to break up the pilaster width.

**CAN**

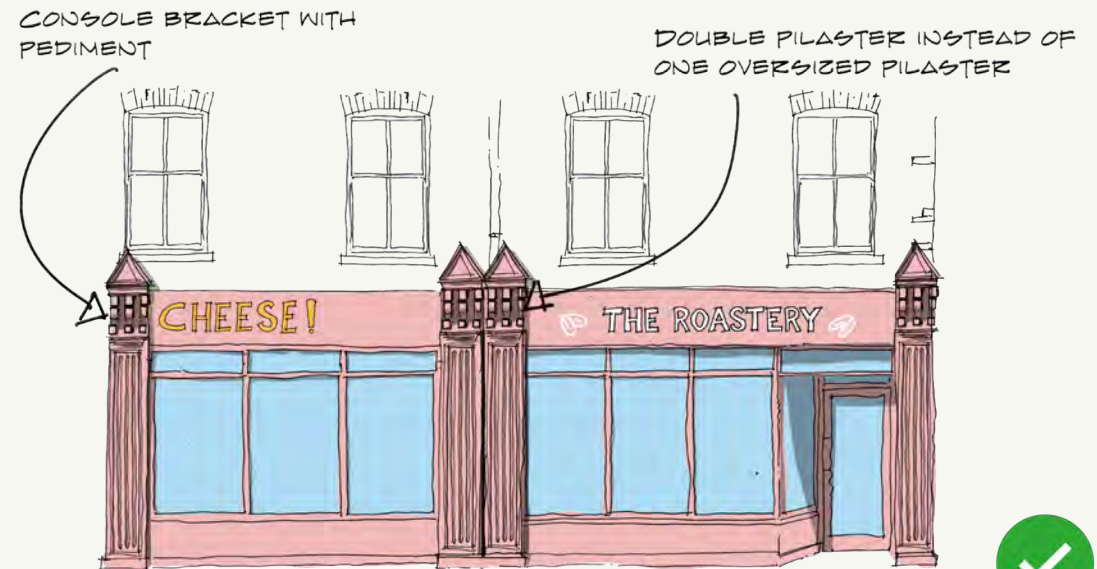
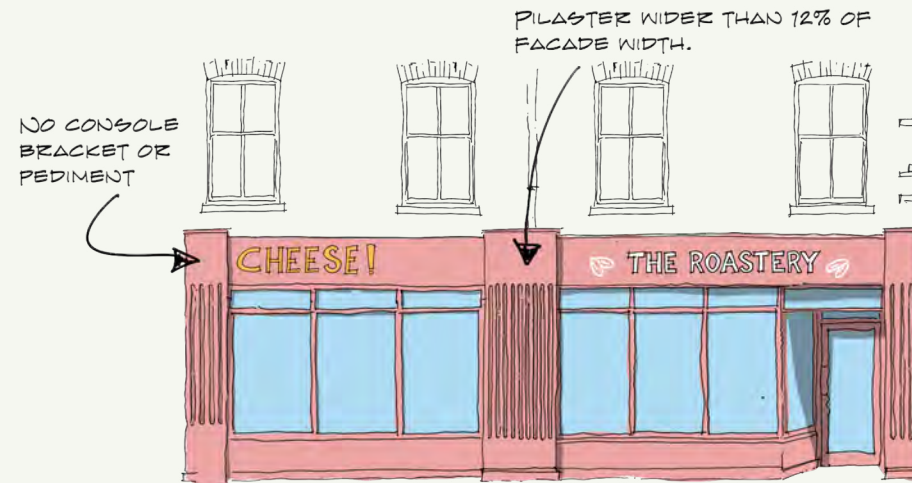
For pilasters of 500mm or over, turning it into a double pilaster could be considered.

**SHOULD**

All pilasters on the shop front should be of the same width.

**SHOULD**

Where a shopfront is missing historic timber pilasters, they should be reinstated and should form part of the restored or new shopfront.



Above: pilasters must not exceed 8-12% of shopfront width and must not be more than 600mm.

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

**CAN**

Timber boxing can be used to masque thick masonry piers by using a traditional pilaster design.

**CAN**

If the steel columns do not disrupt the shopfront they can be left on display.

#### Spandrels

**SHOULD**

Use of spandrels on new shopfront designs should be considered when some embellishment is needed to make a plain design more interesting. They can be manufactured and fitted independently of the window frame

**SHOULD**

Care should be taken to ensure that spandrels form an integral part of the shopfront design and are fitted with longevity in mind.



*Elegant spandrel example in Lichfield with quatrefoil insets.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### Stallrisers

**SHOULD**

Stallrisers should have a minimum height of 500mm from the internal finished floor level.

**SHOULD**

A skirting to a stallriser should be considered as it provides practical protection to a timber stallriser as well as providing 'visual tidiness.' In maintenance terms this may be a sacrificial element that is replaced every few years rather than replacing the stall riser as a whole.

**SHOULD**

Panelled stallrisers add interest and texture and should be considered when appropriate for the building's age and in keeping with neighbouring shops.

**CAN**

Glazed ceramic decorative tiles can be considered as a finish for stallrisers.

#### Transom lights

**SHOULD**

Transom lights should be used help create well-proportioned glazing, or in cases where they were part of the historic shopfront design.

**CAN**

Transom lights that can open are a practical way of catering for natural ventilation.



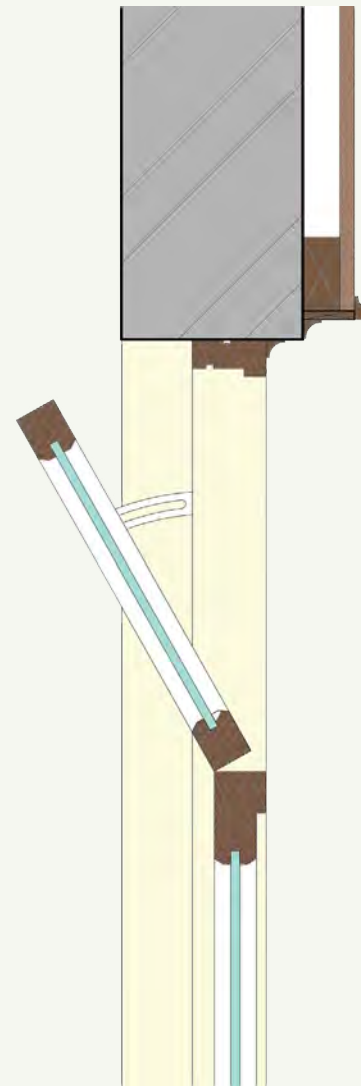
*Examples of panelled and brick stallrisers in Lichfield*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

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## CAN

Transoms are usually located at door head level but are sometimes higher in historic examples. The historic use of transoms was to break up tall shop windows to strengthen large areas of glazing and, by placing them above head level, avoid interfering with views of displayed goods in the shop window. However, they can also add to the beauty of the design, for example through use of decorative moulded sections or more intricate design such as bowed lines, adding interest and framing to the shopwindow display.



*Bottom hung, opening inwards transom light.*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.3 Materials & colours

Georgian shopfronts used timber frames and detailing, sometimes with iron for detailing such as window grilles. Victorian shops increasingly used wrought iron for more elaborate designs such as slender mullions, ornate spandrels and ventilation grills.

Common wall materials on Lichfield shop fronts include red brick, stucco or render. Common ornamentation materials on Lichfield shop fronts include joinery, metal grillwork and masonry or stucco mouldings. Historic shopfronts were painted with pigment-based colours (bound with linseed oil) giving them the 'earthy', soft and muted tones that also complement brick or stucco buildings.

**MUST**

To ensure good quality, long-lasting construction of new shopfronts, solid timber panels must be used and budget plywood avoided.

**SHOULD**

Where the use of plywood is unavoidable, high quality marine ply should be used and should be strictly treated according to manufacturer recommendations.

**SHOULD**

Shopfronts should not contain too many different materials but should use two or three (for example: stone, glass and metal trim, or glass, timber and tile).



*Examples of historically informed colours in Lichfield clockwise from top left: pale cream; this row of shops on Market Square demonstrates a well-harmonised colour ensemble; lead gre and charcoal black.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

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**SHOULD**

Non-traditional sand, lime or cement renders should not be used on historic buildings.

**CAN**

Vibrant colours can be used on a shopfront but excessive use of gaudy colours (for example to conform to a national brand or without deliberate design intent) should be avoided.



*A pigment-based colour palette that reflects the earthy tones shopfronts in Lichfield would have historically been painted.*



*A recommended contemporary colour palette showing muted colours.*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.4 Doorways & accessibility

Shopfront design should be as inclusive as possible, ensuring that everyone can access the shop.

**MUST**

For all elements of design relating to shopfront accessibility, Part M1 of the national building regulations for England must be complied with.

**MUST**

Doorways to new shopfronts must have a minimum effective clear width of 1000mm.

**MUST**

New shopfronts must have level access with the pavement.

**SHOULD**

If this is not possible, ramp access should be provided.

**SHOULD**

Shopfronts located on slopes: To obviate the need for a step or a ramp when on a slope, every attempt should be made by the designer to locate the door at a point where the pavement level is the same as the internal floor level of the shop.

**SHOULD**

All shops should avoid permanent barriers around the shopfront.

**CAN**

Automatic doors can be installed to aid with mobility.

**CAN**

Careful use of colour contrast can help to identify the location of an entrance to a visually impaired user, whilst ramps instead of steps also help to reduce the potential for trip hazards at shop thresholds.



*Shops on a slope should aim to locate the door at a point where the pavement level is the same as the internal floor level of the shop.*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.5 Signage

Shop signage is a crucial ingredient for getting shopfronts right. It announces the shop name and suggests the type of business while being a key element of how the shop integrates into the building. Most shop signage will be within the fascia of the shopfront.

**MUST**

Shop signage must form an integral part of the fascia design and must not be installed as separate projecting sign panels or boxes.

There are also many shops where a historic shop frame or fascia board is not present or practical to implement. Examples include pubs, hotels, banks, and churches. These commercial frontages do not necessarily display the four integral components of a shopfront: frame, stall/shop window, doors and signage. However, they can still be recognisably commercial through careful design. In Lichfield there are several shops without typical shopfronts (such as converted historic buildings or new buildings) that either have lettering attached directly to the building, or in worse scenarios large, irregular vinyl or plastic billboards or 'floating fascias' fixed to the building. These tend to have no relationship to the building or its proportions. They are often of low-quality design, colouring and text.

**MUST**

Where a 'floating' sign or fascia is to be fixed directly to the building (and not part of a shopfront frame) then plastic or vinyl 'billboard style' signs must not be used.



*(Top) Separate panel attachments to the fascia must not be used;  
(Below) signage must be either painted or fixed lettering.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### MUST

Where a 'floating' shop sign is to be fixed directly to the building one of the following approaches must be taken:

- A quality timber fascia board with border detail (such as fluted trim, or corbelling)
- Fixed lettering using metal or timber materials, in an appropriate and sympathetic font for the building. Plastic materials must not be used.
- High quality 'mural' by a professional painted directly onto the wall



#### SHOULD

Floating fascias should be proportionate to the shop's openings. Where possible they should cover the shop plot's length or the full gap between openings.



The most successful non-standard frontages are those that make the least invasive changes to the building's exterior. The building's heritage must be preserved despite change in use. That said, as non-standard frontages were designed for different purposes, care is often needed to ensure that the business in the building is clearly legible to people on the street. As a general principle for converting non-standard commercial frontages for a different commercial use, less is more.

*(Top) On non-standard commercial frontages, vinyl or uPVC 'floating' billboard-style fascias must not be used. (Top right) metal fixed lettering can be an elegant sign. (Bottom left) a well-designed timber fascia with detailing may be used, as can a professionally painted mural sign.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

**SHOULD**

Signs hand-painted directly onto render have proved historically popular and could be incorporated into non-standard frontages and represent an opportunity to add artistry to the frontage, nevertheless such proposals should be discussed with the council.

**SHOULD**

When using traditional lamps, they should be orientated to light up the signage only.

**SHOULD**

The original windows and window frames of the building should be preserved, or, if necessary, restored to their original design.

**SHOULD**

Frosting out windows should be avoided as this creates a blank frontage and less inviting atmosphere on the street.

**SHOULD**

The colour and materiality of the existing building should not be changed.

**SHOULD**

Original raw materials, such as stone, should not be touched.

**CAN**

If there is existing joinery or brickwork, these can be painted in appropriate, not overly saturated, colours if preferred.

**CAN**

For individual 3D lettering signage, halo-lit signage can be an effective method.

**CAN**

Awnings can be used to display the name of the company in a way that does not block out the whole window.



*A non-standard commercial frontage fixed to walls on Dam Street*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.6 Lettering

**MUST**

Lettering must be applied directly to the fascia rather than applied to a board then fixed to the fascia.

**MUST**

The lettering on shopfront signs must be easily legible, but within proportion of the fascia..

**SHOULD**

The letters' colouring should stand out against the colour of the fascia board.

**SHOULD**

Signage materials should be robust and suitable for outdoor use as well as sensitive to the architectural heritage.

### 3.7 Hanging signs

Hanging signs are not mandatory, but create an attractive addition to any shopfront.

**SHOULD**

Hanging signs should not protrude more than 750mm from wall to sign edge.

**SHOULD**

There should be no less than 3m in height from the ground to the top edge of the sign.

**SHOULD**

The dimensions of the sign should respect the size of the shopfront they represent and not exceed 750mm by 750mm.

**MUST**

Consideration must be given to the occupants of the first floor if hanging signs are proposed above shop front level.



*This Costa Coffee is an example of a poorly retrofitted shopfront onto a non-standard commercial frontage which used to be a local inn.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

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*Examples of attractive hanging signs and brackets which help add character, interest and a sense of playfulness.*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.8 Advertisements

Advertisements are not directly controlled through this Design Code and are subject to separate regulations under advertisement consent. However, the Council is considering the introduction of an Area of Special Control for Advertisements (ASCA) within Lichfield City Centre. Should this be implemented, advertisement control will be applied in a manner that supports and aligns with the principles of this code, particularly in reducing visual clutter and maintaining high-quality shopfront design.

**MUST**

Third party advertisements and product advertising must not be present on fascia.

**MUST**

The fascia must be reserved for the name and details of the shop only.

**SHOULD**

Advertisements on shops' elevations should be in keeping with their overall character.

**SHOULD**

Advertisement should normally depict a trade or service that is relevant to the business displaying the advertisement.

**SHOULD**

They should not cover architectural ornamentation or shopfront windows.

**SHOULD**

Advertisements should not protrude at any angle from the building face unless on a hanging sign.

**SHOULD**

Any third party or product advertising should be limited within the shopfront window in a way that does not cover the entire window.



*Large, overbearing third party advertisements can clutter a shopfront and entire streets*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.9 Awnings & canopies

**SHOULD**

For elevations that require shading, the awning box should be incorporated into the cornice if located above the fascia.

**SHOULD**

If the awning is to be located below the fascia, then the fascia should be of a design that incorporates the awning box.

**SHOULD**

If the box awning cannot be incorporated into the fascia, then provision should be made for adequate flashing to avoid water pooling as well as drip detailing to avoid rainwater streaking on the shopfront.

**SHOULD**

The box design should also prevent pigeon roosting and nesting without the need for unsightly bird spikes.

**SHOULD**

If a protruding awning box is unavoidable (for example if retrofitting an existing shopfront and the addition is justifiable) then the box design should incorporate features to mitigate rainwater ingress such as sufficient overhang of the capping, lead flashing and a drip recess in the capping of the boxing.

**SHOULD**

Awnings should be retractable.



*Top: Retractable Dutch canopies may be used as an alternative to retractable awnings; Bottom left: a good example of an awning box that is not integrated into the shopfront. An example of complementary colours on a shop awning; Bottom right: The valance at the bottom of the awning adds an additional fascia to the shopfront.*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE

#### MUST

Fixed Dutch canopies must not be used as they are not retractable

#### SHOULD

Where replacement awnings are needed on Georgian or Victorian shopfronts, awnings of a traditional design awnings should be reinstated.

#### SHOULD

If non-traditional, mechanical awnings are unavoidable, then these should be housed within traditional wooden boxing and not modern, metal frames.

#### SHOULD

Awnings should be made of traditional fabric such as canvas.

#### SHOULD

Plastics and other shiny fabrics should not be used as they create undesirable reflection and age poorly.

#### SHOULD

Canopy colours should complement the overall colour palette of the shopfront and surrounding context.

#### CAN

Alternatively, the colours can reflect the traditional colours used by specific trades (for example, blue and white for butchers, green and white for grocers, red and white for barbers).



*Fixed Dutch canopies must not be used as they are not retractable.*



*For elevations that require shading, the awning box should be incorporated into the cornice if located above the fascia.*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.10 Shopfront lighting

Lighting of a shopfront and façade plays a key role in the overall look and feel of a building, and contributes significantly to the attractiveness of a street, especially during autumn and winter seasons during longer dark hours. Good quality, well designed and warm lighting promotes a safer and more attractive street, which in turn facilitates a better nighttime economy and footfall during darker times of day.

**MUST**

Lighting must be of a warm colour temperature, maximum 3000 Kelvin, to be inviting and provide an appropriate urban or town centre character.

**CAN**

Shopfronts can help streets feel lively and safe at night by illuminating their signage and window displays.

**SHOULD**

Shops' signage should normally be lit using an external source directed onto it. This can include spot, bar, halo, and hidden LED lighting.

**SHOULD**

The intensity of the lighting source should be moderate to avoid glare and light pollution.

**SHOULD**

Internal illumination of translucent signs should not be used.

**SHOULD**

The sign should only be lit where lettering is present. A plain fascia board should not be lit.

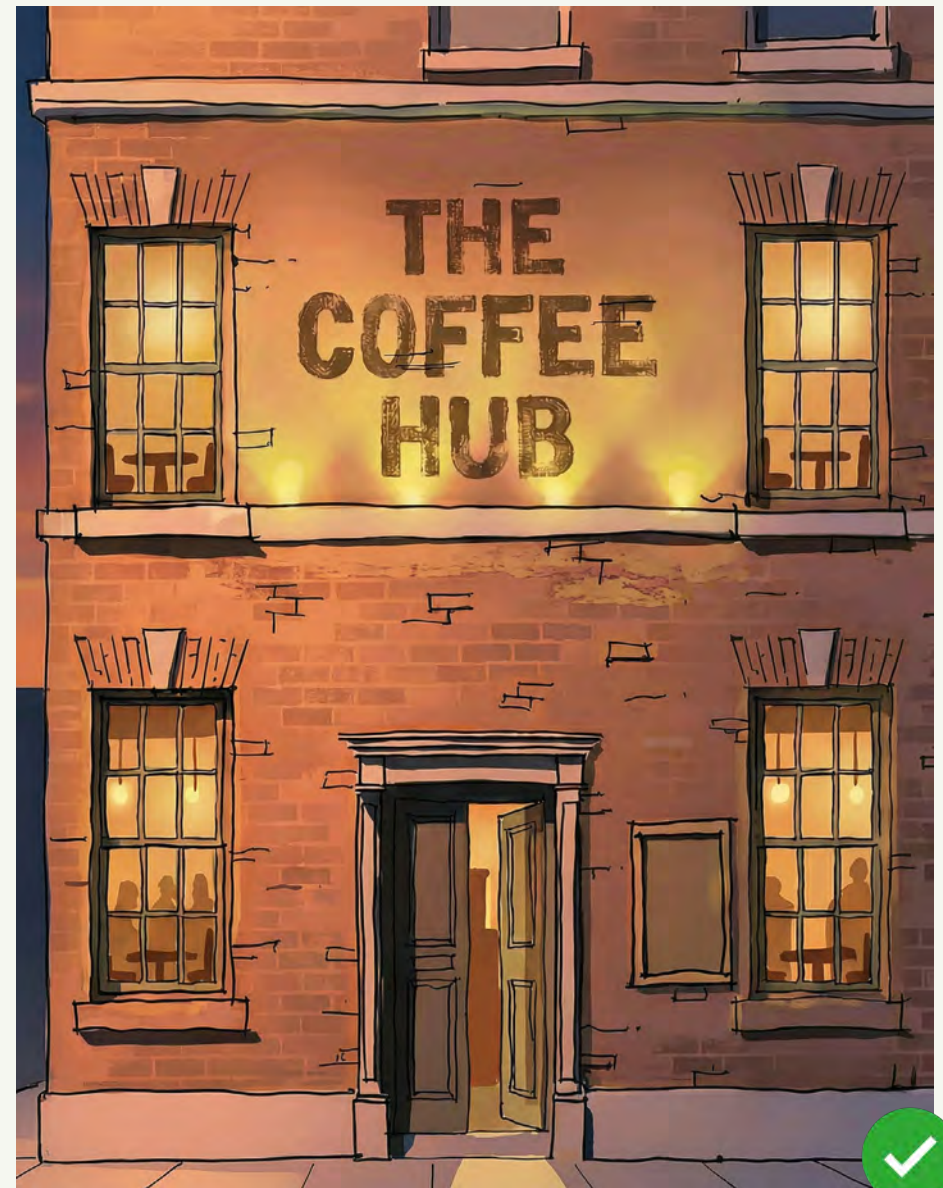


*A good example of lighting with three traditionally-styled lamps (top); These fixed wall lanterns in Lichfield are an attractive way of illuminating shop entrances and a common feature in Lichfield's historic centre (bottom left and right).*

### 3. THE DESIGN CODE



Ways of illuminating non-standard signage, clockwise from top: backlit or illuminated fixed lettering; uplighting a building or sign can produce a very attractive effect.;top-lit fixed fascia board using sympathetic lamp design.



## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.11 Greenery

**CAN**

Shopfronts can add greenery to their shopfronts, such as potted plants, vines and box plants.

**SHOULD**

Greenery helps to create more vibrant streets and should be used 'little and often.' However, the need to water greenery and the potential harmful impact that overflow, splash, and rips, including the chemicals in any plant feed can have on the shopfront and building facing materials should be carefully considered.

**SHOULD**

When designing in greenery, for the sake of preservation, efforts should be made to avoid any fixtures attached to historic, decorative features.



*Hanging baskets and potted plants provide just the right amount of greenery (bottom). An example of excessive greenery (above right).*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.12 Ventilation

**SHOULD**

Like the Victorians concerned about air quality, energy use and communicable diseases, today ventilation should still be considered as an essential part of new shopfronts.

**CAN**

Examples of opening transom lights can be found on Georgian and Victorian shopfronts with some Victorian shops incorporating ventilation grilles between the transom lights and fascia.

**CAN**

Ventilation can also be achieved by incorporating grilles into the panels on the front of stallrisers.

**SHOULD**

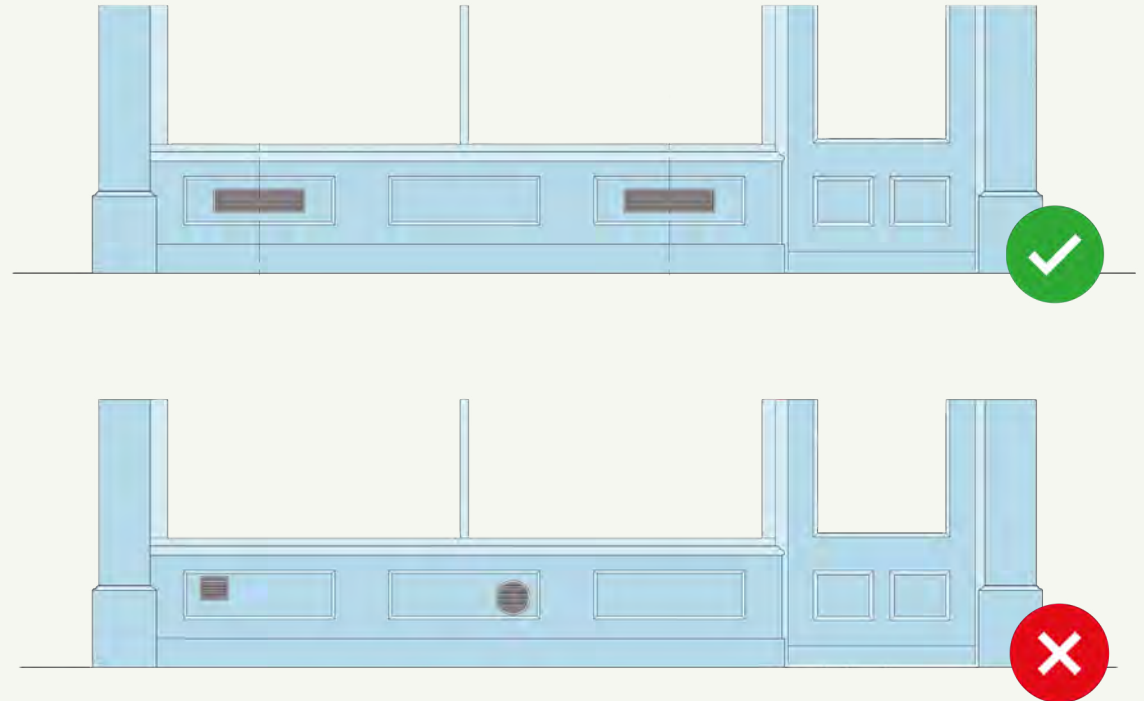
Stallriser grilles should be designed in sympathy with the rest of the shopfront elevation and should be sympathetic to symmetry scale, colour, and materials.

**SHOULD**

Grilles and vents should not appear as arbitrarily, retrofitted items.

**SHOULD**

On existing Victorian shopfronts, every effort should be made to restore or reinstate blocked-up ventilation grilles and opening transom lights which are shut fast, as these make an important part of the building's functioning apparatus.



*A good example of stallriser vent (top). A poor example of vent placement (bottom).*

## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.13 Security measures

**SHOULD**

Security should be provided by laminated glass or internal lattice grilles.

**SHOULD**

External roller shutters should not be used as they contribute to a sense of vacancy on the high street and have a negative effect on the night-time economy by reducing active frontage.

**SHOULD**

Devices such as sirens and lights linked to burglar alarms should be concealed or located sensitively to reduce the appearance of clutter and to avoid damaging the historic fabric.

**SHOULD**

Electronic devices should only be used where the need for them has been demonstrated and alternative ways to reduce threat and risk have been considered.



*External roller shutters should not be used as they contribute to a sense of vacancy on streets.*



*Security should be provided by laminated glass or internal lattice grilles.*



## 3. THE DESIGN CODE

### 3.14 Maintenance & repair

Maintaining a timber shopfront to a good standard requires yearly checks and touching up of the paintwork, especially around the windowsill and joints in the framing (commonly required as a 7-year maintenance item).

**CAN**

For larger repairs, timber can be scarfed-in around the joints by a qualified joiner, whilst minor areas of repair could be undertaken using resins.

**CAN**

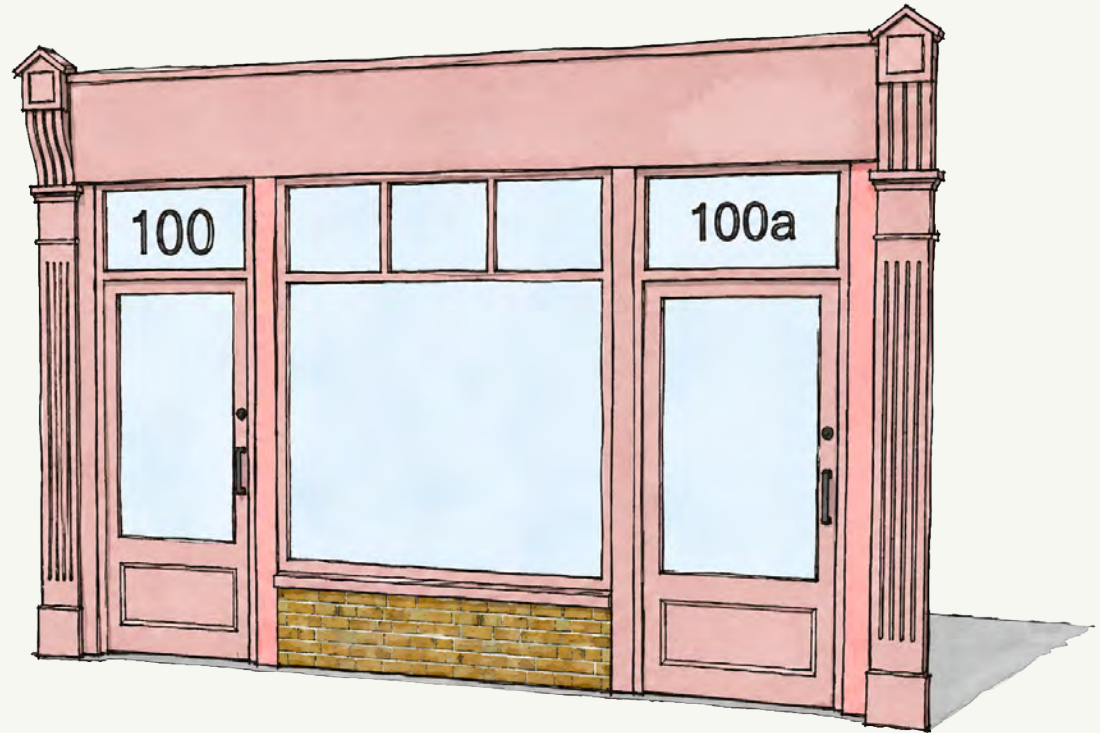
Rendered or timber-panelled stallrisers can be subject to a lot of damage, especially if they are carried down to the ground without any gap or damp-proof course. Regular cleaning can mitigate this and highlight minor repairs at an early stage.

### 3.15 Living above the shop

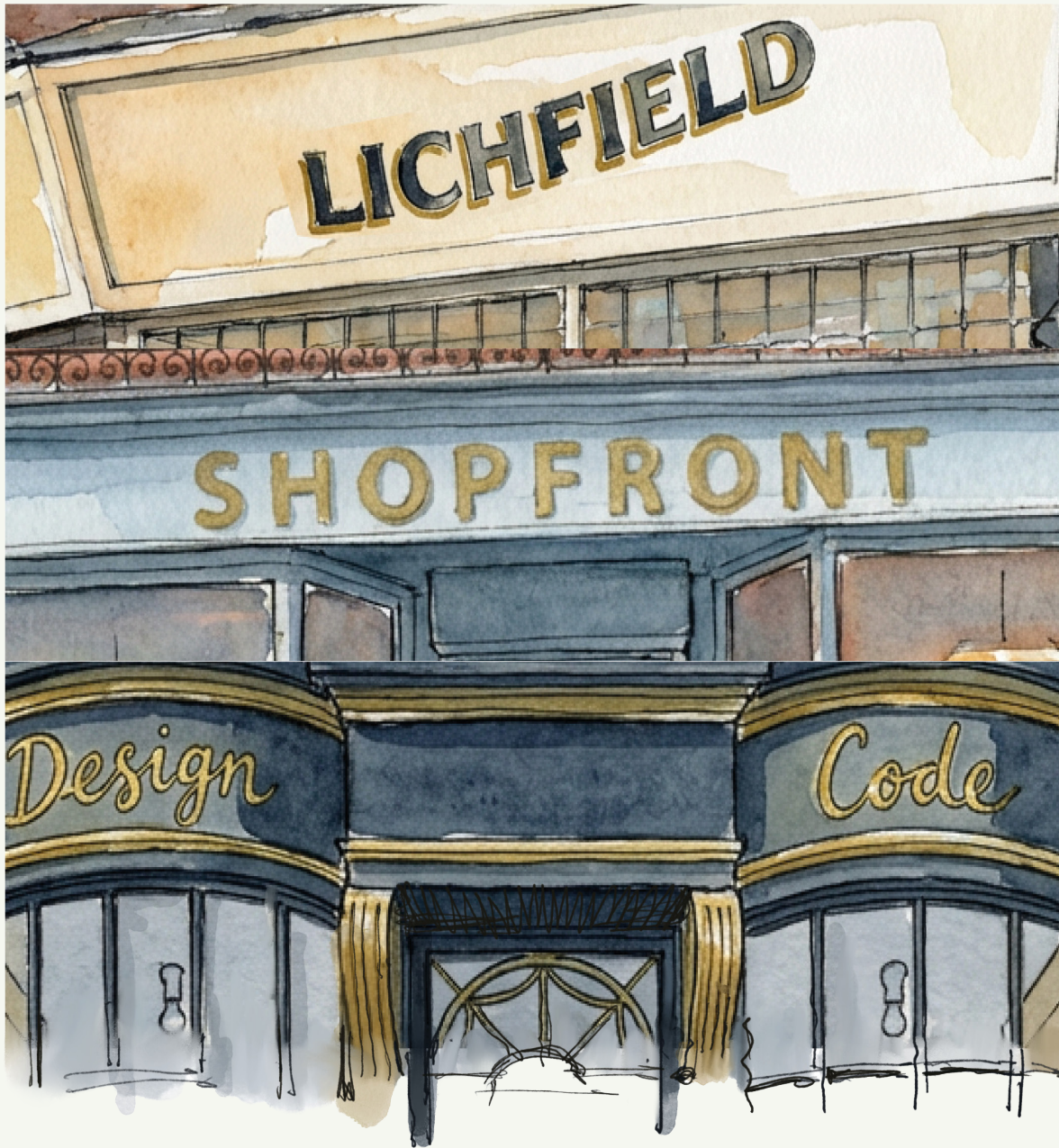
Traditionally, shopkeepers lived in flats above their ground floor shops with access to the upper floors from inside the shop. Many of the shops that did originally have separate street level access to the above storeys have since lost this due to subsequent modifications.

**SHOULD**

Entrances to flats above the shop wherever possible should be from the front not from the back.



*Living above the shop is possible – even on a narrow plot*



# Lichfield Shopfront Design Code

Supplementary Planning  
Document  
Appendix



Lichfield  
District  
Council



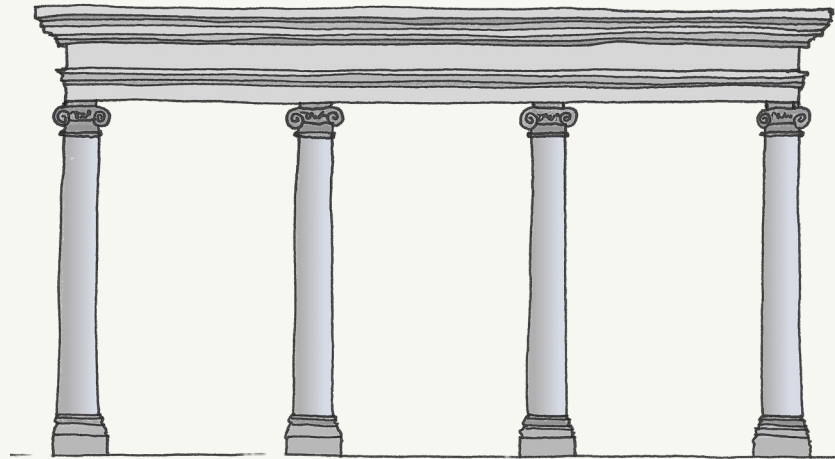
# APPENDIX I

## A brief history of shopfronts

Shop windows first appeared in medieval shops, where customers were served from a stall set into the window and supported by a 'stall-riser', although much buying and selling still took place at markets and fairs. During the eighteenth century, shops became increasingly common and sometimes more elaborate as they began selling what we now describe as 'consumer goods'. As a result, fashion items and the display of merchandise grew in importance.

Many shops were created by converting existing houses. This explains the variety of building types and the differences in their ages. Shopfronts that appear Georgian, Victorian, or more modern are often attached to buildings that are much older, having been refaced over time as shopfront design styles changed. In Lichfield, examples can be found along Dam Street, where surviving medieval buildings had shopfronts added during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The classical Greek colonnade informed the design of early shops which echo pilasters, including pediments and capitals (see section 2). Other Georgian shopfronts can be identified by an enlarged or bow window on the ground floor.



*Eighteenth century shopfronts were informed by classical colonnades*

Lichfield's eighteenth century growth as a prominent coaching hub supported a striking local cultural and intellectual renaissance, the so-called Lichfield Enlightenment. The city's retail offering grew in tandem to meet the demands of a more prosperous city, as testified by the many surviving Georgian shopfronts.

The Victorians continued on Georgian innovations, introducing new decorative details and the widespread use of shop awnings. Meanwhile improved glassmaking technology permitted larger glass panels, opening up the shop to more light and curious bystanders. Many Victorian shops aimed to dazzle with spectacle and advertising. Shops showcased new uses of materials such as better-quality iron and mass-produced ornamentation.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the production of architectural components specifically designed for shopfronts became increasingly specialised. Distinctive features associated with retail buildings began to appear, and many new structures were designed with shopfronts that formed an integrated part of the overall façade. Elements such as pilasters were often extended upward from the ground floor shopfront into the upper storeys, visually linking the different levels of the building.



*Clockwise from left: An excellent late 19th century shopfront on an 18th century building, on Market Square, featuring slender cast iron mullions and ventilation grills, a low stall riser base and a canopy awning with stay rods; Victorian shopfront; Well-preserved Georgian ground-floor bowed windows in Lichfield featuring convex cornicing, long scroll corbels and an ornate fanlight, arranged to echo the classical colonnade.*

In the early twentieth century, particularly between the First and Second World Wars, shopfront design was influenced by architectural ideas emerging from continental Europe such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Although few remain in Lichfield, these new styles reshaped the visual experience of shopping and emphasised the novelty of the goods being sold. In Lichfield this is notably seen at the old Burton's department store on 26 Market Street. Built in 1938, the impressive granite fascia, typical of Art Deco shopfronts from the era, is still present. New types of entertainment such as cinemas, also used bold new styles to evoke excitement and modernity. This approach is sometimes described as the 'Odeon style' and, in Lichfield, can be seen at the old Regal Cinema on Bore Street.

Modern shopfront designs often derive from historic forms, although they tend to interpret them in a simplified manner. In Lichfield, however, contemporary shopfronts frequently follow standardised design templates used by national retail chains. These do not always reflect the historic character or architectural traditions of the area.



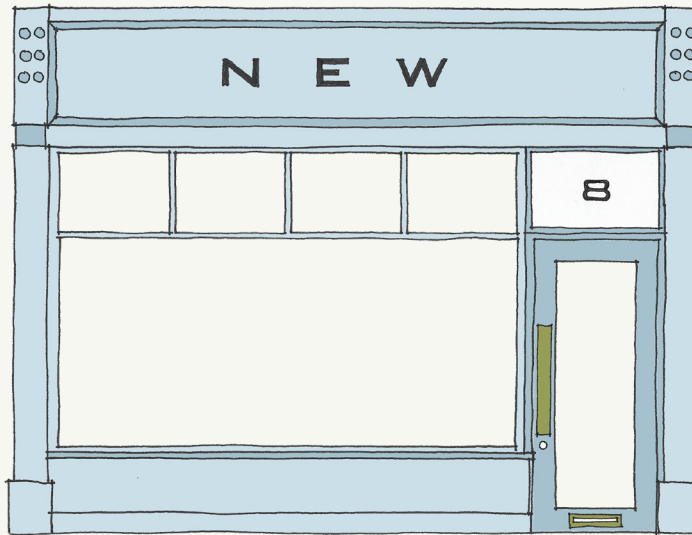
*Top left: Art Deco frontage; Bottom left: The former Walsall and District Co-operative, built in 1913, shows an early 20th century purpose-built shop design with ceramic tiling arranged in classical and gothic motifs.*



From the 1970s onward, the expansion of out-of-town retail parks has had a significant impact on traditional high streets. Shopfronts designed for car-oriented shopping environments, typically cheaper and easier to instal, have increasingly been fitted into historic buildings. These alterations often disrupt the architectural rhythm and pedestrian scale that previously defined many high streets. At the same time, the decline in demand for traditional shopfront craftsmanship led to the weakening of supply chains for these specialised components, although this situation has recently improved.

Certain national businesses that are not primarily retail, such as bookmakers, discount stores, and building societies, have often contributed to a uniform, generic appearance. Their shopfronts typically prioritise large areas of glazing and prominent signage while minimising or removing decorative architectural features. More recently, however, some national bakery, patisserie, and food brands have adopted design templates that show greater awareness of historic town centres and the pedestrian viewpoint.

Where traditional proportions and shopfront elements are retained, and durable, high-quality materials are used, it is possible to achieve a contemporary appearance that is both clean and visually appropriate for a conservation area.



*Top left: a contemporary type shopfront; Bottom: A good example of Lichfield's own 'Odeon Style' showing Egyptian and Art Deco motifs. Right: A recent shopfront installation in Lichfield with sympathetic, historically informed detailing*



# APPENDIX II

## Anatomy of a shopfront

Most shopfronts share several common features regardless of their age. This reflects their historical development from medieval street stalls or shambles, where goods were sold directly onto the street, to enclosed spaces attached to merchants' homes, where selected customers were personally served. Over time, these evolved into more accessible retail environments where customers could enter and browse more independently.

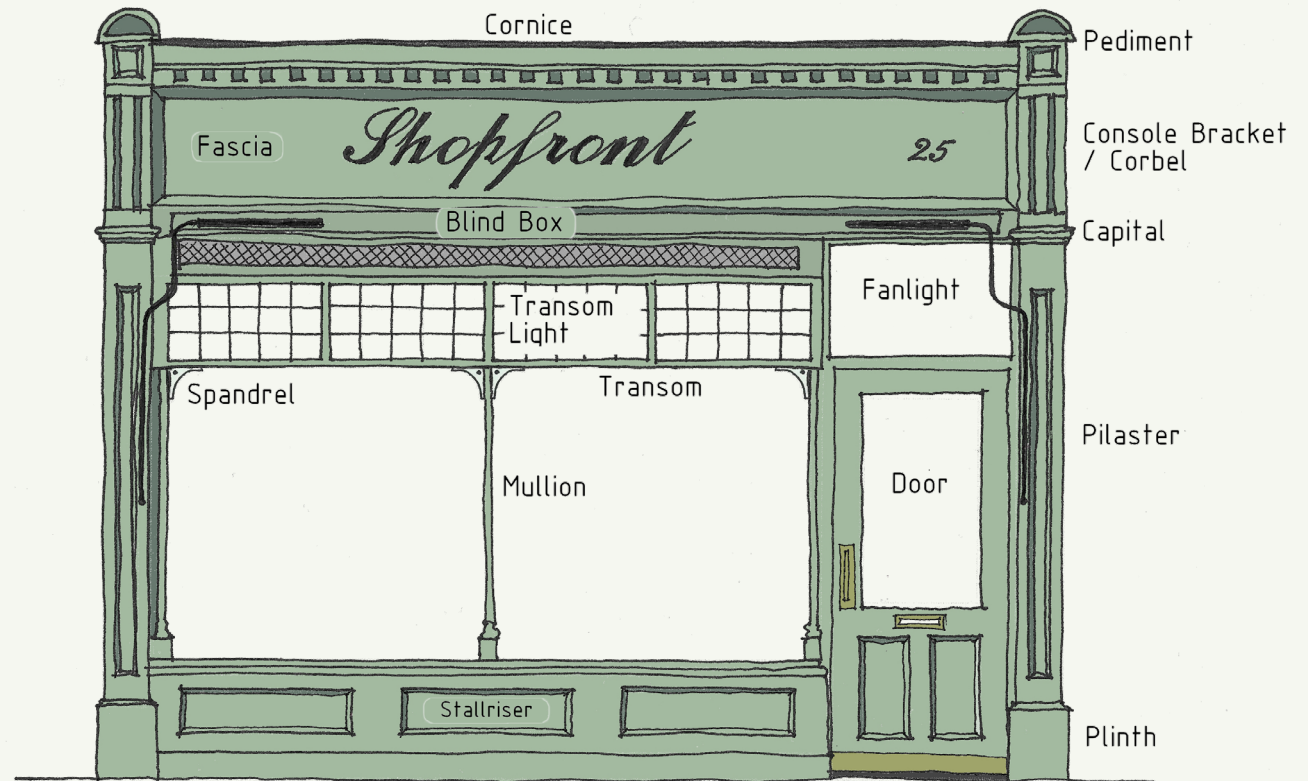
A shopfront is typically defined by four essential elements:

- The frame.
- The shop window.
- The door.
- The signage.

While the design of these architectural components varies between shops, a shopfront is characterised by the presence of these four features.

### 1. The frame

The frame defines the shopfront as a separate property and business. Structurally, it supports the building above while creating the wide opening needed for the shopfront. It should be strong and durable, often projecting slightly beyond the stall and door to provide shelter. As a framing element, it also enhances the shopfront's appearance and helps attract customers. The architectural components that make up the frame are outlined below.



**Cornice.** The cornice is the topmost element of the shopfront design. Functionally, it directs rainwater away from the shop window and fascia. Visually, it adds horizontal detail and texture. Dentilled cornices are commonly found on both Georgian and Victorian shopfronts.

**Pediment.** The pediment is the capping element above the console bracket. It is often shaped like a small pitched roof but can also be domed, and pediments are not always included.

**Awnings.** Historically, shop awnings were used to protect produce from heat, provide decoration and advertising, and visually extend the shop into the street. They could be installed above or below the fascia, usually within a blind box. Most commonly found on south- and west-facing shops, they offered shade from the midday and afternoon sun. Awnings remain practical today, helping reduce solar gain and lowering the need for air conditioning. They were particularly common on greengrocers' and butchers' shops to help preserve perishable goods. In Lichfield, shop awnings are now rare, with many removed or left in disrepair.

**Pilaster.** Pilasters are column-like elements that frame a shopfront. They usually sit on a plinth and are often finished with capitals at the top. Pilasters help define the boundaries between neighbouring properties and may sometimes form part of a structural party wall. In other cases, separate pilasters are used for adjoining shopfronts, particularly on sloping streets.



*Above and bottom left: Well fitted retractable awnings on Bird Street Top: A large cornice in Lichfield, with modillions Bottom left and right: a triangular and domed pediment*

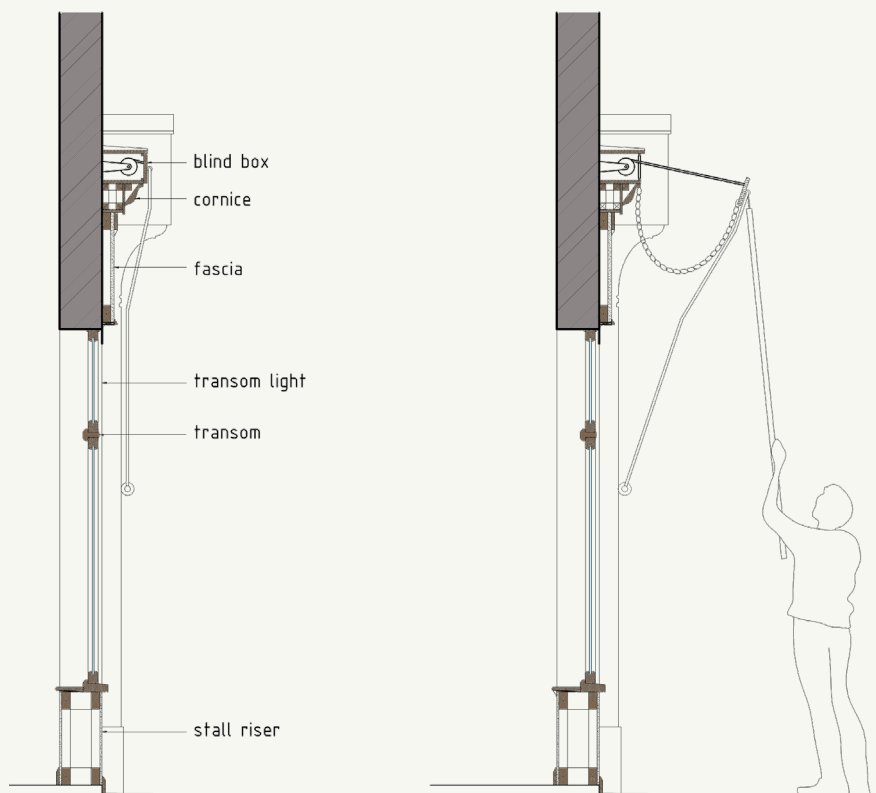
Decorative pilasters can be made from materials such as stone, glazed tile, moulded render, or timber. The plinth at the base is often built from more durable materials, like hard stone, to resist damage from water splashing up from the pavement. It also contributes to the overall composition, typically proportioned in relation to the stall riser below and the capital, bracket, console, or pediment above.

The capital is a decorative capping element at the top of the pilaster just below the console bracket or the fascia depending on the design.

The console bracket can take several forms but is often recognisable as a decorative scroll-shaped element above the pilaster. Traditional console brackets are normally curved rather than angular.

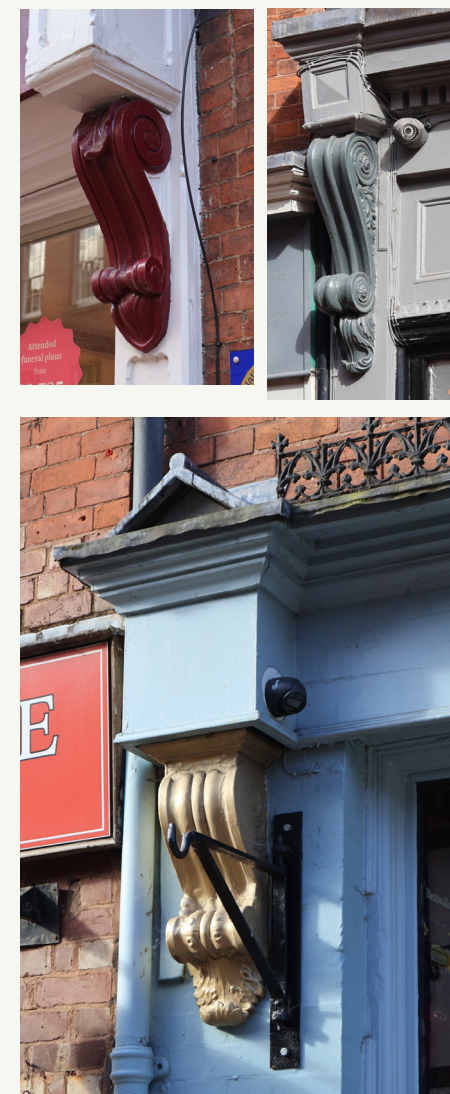
**The shop window.** The modern shop window evolved from the medieval shop or market stall, where goods were sold directly onto the street. Today, it is mainly used to display goods or services, attracting passersby and encouraging them to enter the shop. Shop windows also bring natural light into the interior and allow people to see inside, enabling the practice of 'window shopping.' The stall or shop window may include several architectural components, listed below.

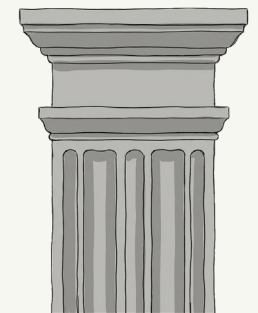
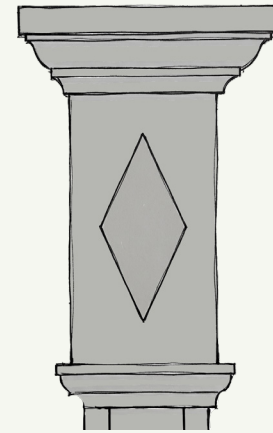
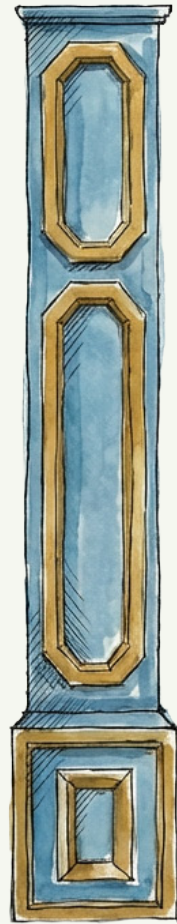
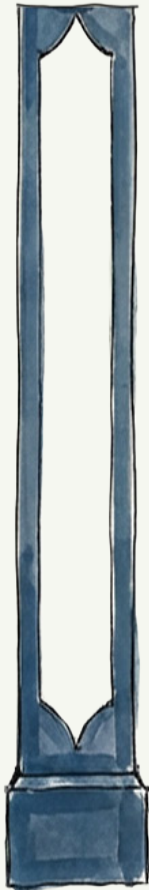
**Spandrel.** A spandrel has several meanings but in the context of shopfronts, spandrels are decorative features located in the upper corners of shop windows. Typically triangular with a curved or elliptical inner



## Typical Section

*Above: a typical section of a shopfront; Right: Examples of ornate console brackets in Lichfield*





*Left: examples of pilasters found in Lichfield; Right: examples of capitals found in Lichfield*

edge, they are usually made of wood and are more common on Victorian shopfronts.

**Transom.** Transoms are the horizontal structural elements on windows. They are often located at door head height on a shopfront.

**Transom lights.** These are the panes at the top of the shop window. They serve practical and decorative purposes. Practically, they reduced the size of the panes of glass needed for glazing the shop window. This is less important now than it was historically. Visually, transom lights add texture, character, and proportion to the overall elevation without affecting overall visibility into the shop.

**Stallriser.** Also traditionally referred to as the stallboard, the stallriser is the base of the shopfront below and up to the lower windowsill. A stallriser needs to be in proportion to the rest of the shopfront elements. This is around 500mm for traditional shops. Stallrisers can be of masonry, brick (plain, glazed or rendered), tile, timber, or even vitrolite construction. They can be finished in various ways. A skirting provides protection to timber stallrisers at pavement level and ensures visual tidiness. Panelling adds embellishment and texture. Ventilation grilles and traditional rising boarded shutters are sometimes incorporated into stallrisers. Timber stallrisers can deteriorate rapidly due to rain splashing up from the pavement unless properly cared for.

**Mullion.** Mullions are vertical structural elements



*Elegant slender mullions in Lichfield with spandrels*

in the shop windows. They can be plain in design or ornate as in some Victorian examples.

## 2. The door

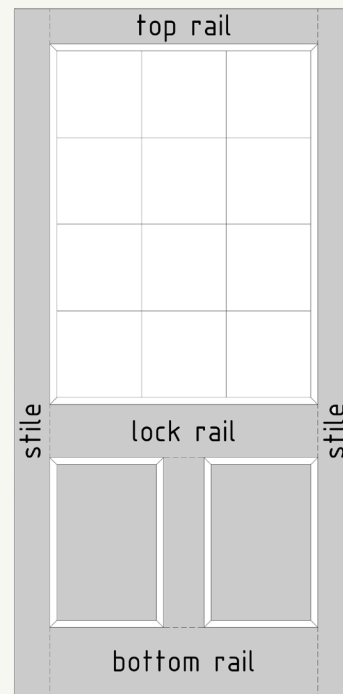
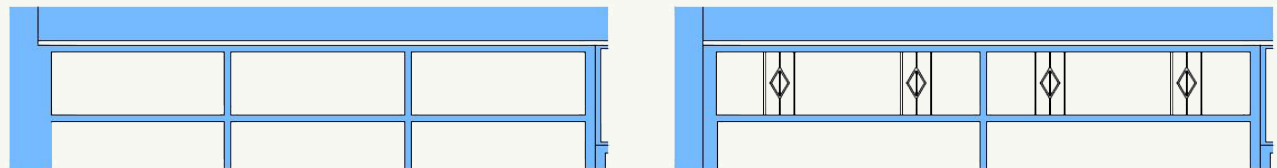
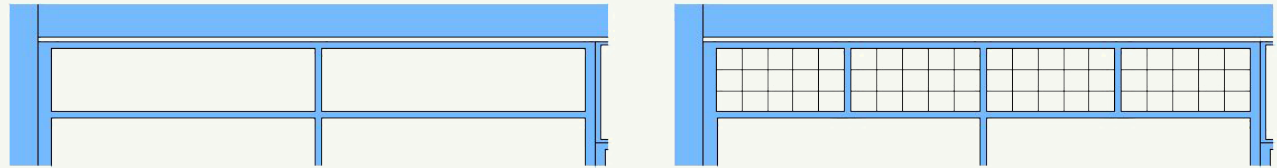
The shop door is very important in drawing customers into the shop. It needs to be both practical and clearly readable as the shop's entrance. Shopfront doors will usually be partially glazed to increase visibility into the shop.

**Rails and stiles.** Regardless of the material used to make the door, the construction will consist of a bottom rail, top rail, stiles on the sides and an optional, horizontal lock rail positioned at about a third of the height of the door.

Lock rails will only be needed if the door is to have panelling incorporated on the lower half. The door might include a fanlight if the height of the shopfront permits. Where possible, door heads should align with transoms used on the shopfront window.

Shopfront doors and their fanlights present a design opportunity where elements such as glazing bars, panelling and decorative door furniture in the form of door handles, door escutcheons (key hole cover), kick plates, push plates and letter slots can be incorporated.

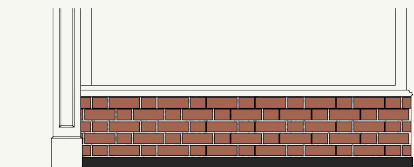
It is essential that any historic door furniture be preserved and repaired wherever possible instead of being replaced.



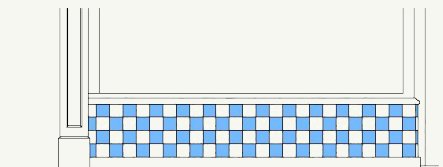
1 - Plain



2 - Panelled



3 - Exposed Brickwork



4 - Ceramic Tiles

*Top: examples of opaque transom lights above the transom; Bottom: examples of stallrisers found in Lichfield*

The two most common materials used to make up shopfronts are timber and aluminium. It is important that the material used to make the door should match the material used to construct the rest of the shopfront. New door widths need to be compliant with Part M of the building regulations for England to ensure accessibility.

### 3. The signage

Signage identifies the business to customers. It can provide brand recognition and some indication of the service/goods on offer. The fascia is the key part any shop sign.

Fascia. The fascia is the horizontal board above the shop window where the shop sign is displayed. The fascia frames the shopfront and communicates the business's commercial purpose and 'personality' to potential customers. Traditionally fascia boards were made of wood. Some tilt towards the carriageway. Others are flat on the shopfront.



*Examples of attractive signage in Lichfield with lettering proportional to the fascia*