

Torfaen Adopted Local Development Plan (to 2021) Supplementary Planning Guidance

*Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh*



Traditional Shopfronts Design Guide

Updated February 2024

Further information can be obtained by contacting the:

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Preface

This 'Traditional Shopfronts Design Guide' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was originally published in 1992 as the 'Shopfront Design Guide' to mainly provide the basis for the determination of the improvement grants and related planning permissions within the Blaenavon and Pontypool Commercial Renewal Areas in use at that time. It was listed as an extant SPG in Appendix 2 of the Adopted Torfaen LDP in December 2013, subject to review.

That review was undertaken on 27th February 2024, when Council resolved to:-

“rename the ‘Shopfront Design Guide’ SPG the ‘Traditional Shopfronts Design Guide’ and the wording within be changed for the SPG to apply to areas or sites where traditional shopfronts would reflect the context of the area, including Blaenavon and Pontypool, neighbourhood centres such as Abersychan & Old Cwmbran, and local shops; but not Cwmbran Town Centre...”

Council also noted that *“it will be republished in a digital format and updated in due course”*, into a 'Shopfront Design, Security & Advertisements' SPG; which will also cover the more modern Cwmbran Town Centre, where proposals should respond to the special character of the New Town.

Whilst the original SPG predated the Torfaen Local Plan (2013), this new SPG is considered to be supplementary to LDP Policies S4: Place Making / Good Design, BW1: General Policy - Development Proposals, RLT1: Town Centre Boundaries, RLT7: Secondary Frontages, and RLT8: Local and Neighbourhood Shopping Centres. It is also noted that the SPG is unlikely to have undergone public consultation, but the design advice is standard practice throughout the UK.

Introduction

The character of Town Centres, Local Neighbourhood Centres and local shops are the visual appearance of the shop frontages. The visual quality of the buildings within a frontage affects trade and consequently the replacement unsympathetic frontages with more appropriate designs can have a beneficial impact on the individual building and the centre as a whole.

The abundance of older buildings within the centres means that this guide is based on the traditional style of frontage associated with these buildings. Whilst there is no one design acceptable in all cases; the traditional frontage is applicable in most cases. Non-traditional shopfronts of an interesting design or innovative nature will be considered with the design considerations outlined below.

Alterations or replacement of shopfronts may require planning and building regulation permissions, The erection of illuminated or large signs requires advertisement consent. In addition to this additional legislation covers Conservation Areas, especially in Pontypool and Blaenavon. Consequently, Planning Permission may be required for alterations of works to buildings. The Planning Department will always be pleased to assist with regard to such matters.

Shopfront Design

When considering an alteration to a renewal of a shopfront it is important that improvements to the facade as a whole are considered, otherwise upper floors in poor conditions will detract from the improvements to the shopfront.

The design of the shopfront in turn should reflect: -

- a) the relationship of the shopfront to the remainder of the façade.
- b) the relationship of the shopfront with adjacent properties.
- c) the context of the shopfront in the overall street scene.

1. Shop Surround

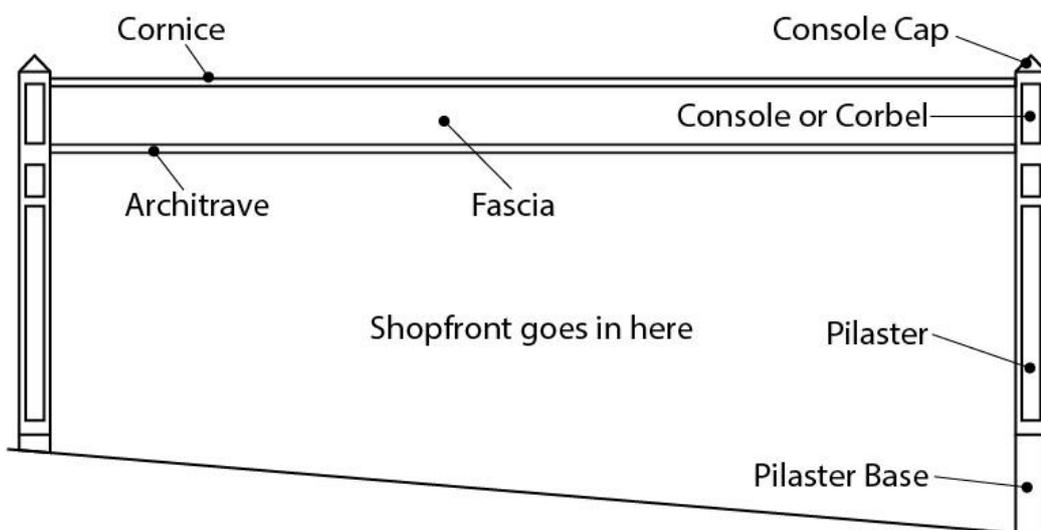


Figure 1: Typical Shop Surround or Framework

As an integral part of the frontage the shopfront should reflect the period, style and character of the building. Whilst there is rich diversity of traditional shopfront styles, their designs all share the same basic elements. Traditional shopfronts are surrounded or framed, by a classical architectural framework. This framework consists of pilasters, consoles, fascia, cornice and architrave. This framework identifies the shop and provides a clear division between the individual premises and separates the shop from the upper floors.

If the traditional framework remains it should, if possible be repaired or renewed to its original appearance to maintain the integrity of the existing building.

The fascia is the crucial design feature. The size should reflect the proportions of the building and should be designed as an integral part of the frontage. The fascia should never overlap the first-floor windows nor obscure building detail such as string courses, friezes or cornices.

2. Shopfront

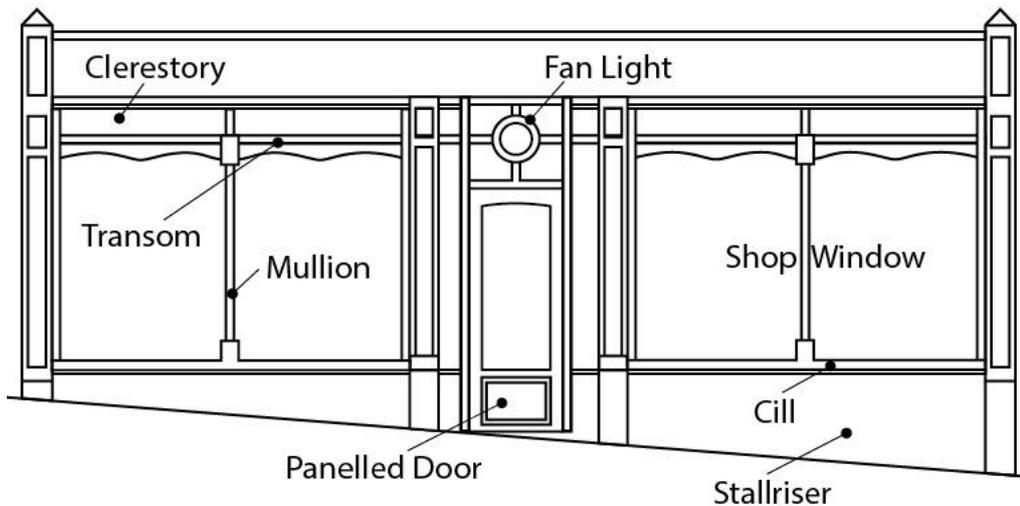


Figure 2: Elements of a Traditional Shopfront

The design of the shopfront which fits into the surround are similarly comprised of basic elements: -

- a) **Stallriser** - A protective area ranging from the ground to the glass window.
- b) **Shop window** - from the stallriser to the fascia. Large areas of glass should reflect the vertical aspect and are out of scale with the most traditional buildings. Vertical glazing bars or mullions should be used to give large expanses of glass a vertical emphasis.
- c) **Clerestory** - formed by transom rail placed across the upper level of the window.
- d) **Doorway** - may be side or centrally located and may be recessed. The original doorway, if existing, should be retained in its original position and style to maintain the integrity of the building. If there is a separate door to the upper floors, this should be retained in its original position and style. The choice of materials is an important consideration in the design of a shopfront. When replacing or renewing shopfront the use of wood is desirable, with the use of softwoods, which can be painted or stained, being preferable. Stained hardwoods are acceptable where it can be proven that a source of the wood is both managed and renewable, aluminium is acceptable when painted or coloured and used in a high quality design. The use of acrylics or plastics, particularly UPVC is unacceptable in any form as is the use of glazed tiles or stone cladding which achieve little in the improvement visual quality.

Whilst shopfronts are comprised of the same elements, it is important to avoid the use of the same design which would lead to a monotonous and uninteresting frontage. When considering improvements there are many different styles to create an interesting frontage is priority for commercial improvements. The use of nontraditional shopfronts can provide interest to a frontage and are acceptable, provided that the shopfronts are sympathetic in scale, emphasis, materials and design.

3. Façade

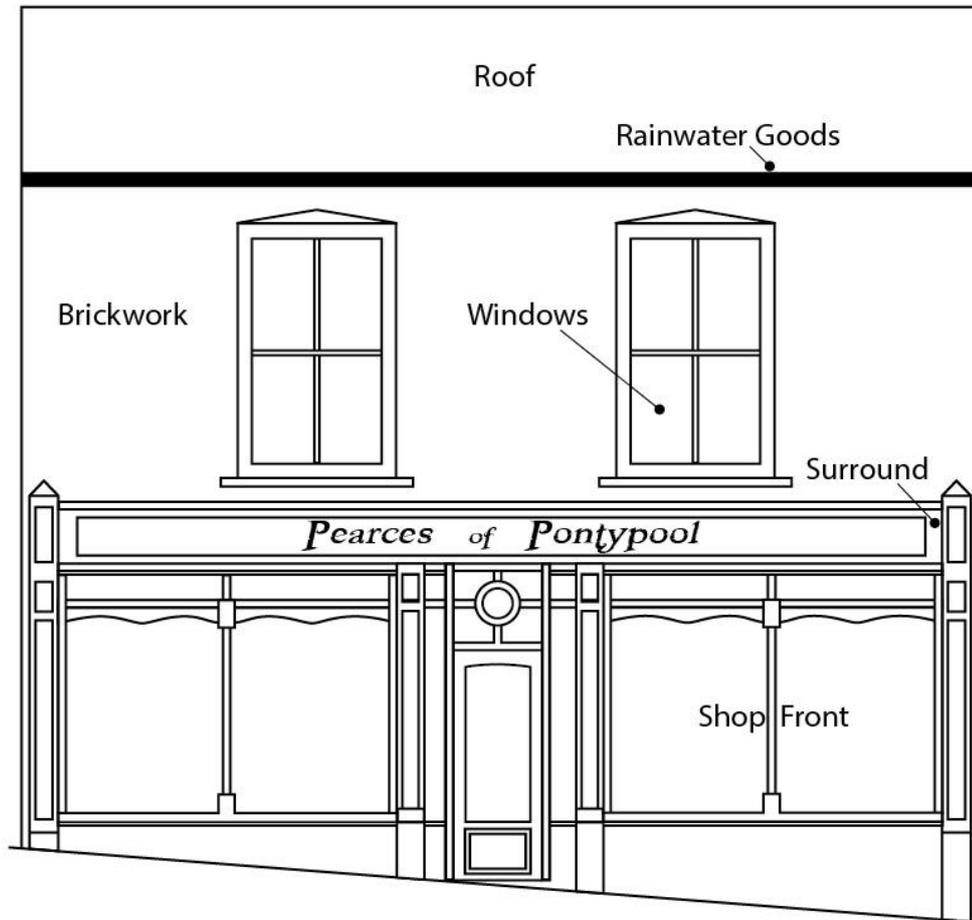


Figure 3: The Façade

The façade is equally as important as the shopfront in terms of improving the visual appearance of a building. A quality shopfront design will be spoilt by a façade in poor condition. Improvement to the façade should aim to enhance the character of the building by retaining its original features reinstating those features which have been lost. The main elements of consideration for improvement to the façade:-

- a) **Windows** - the most important feature. Replacement windows should always reflect the original character of the building and maintain the vertical emphasis.
- b) **Roof** - Original details and materials or suitable alternatives should be used to retain the integrity of the building.
- c) **Brickwork** - where necessary the brickwork or rendering should be reinstated to its original condition.
- d) **Rainwater Goods** - (including fascia barge boards) it is important that replacement goods reflect the character of the building.

The choice of materials for the façade improvements are important factor maintaining integrity of the building and should be considered with regard to the shopfront. Windows should be replaced or maintained in the original style, usually box sash or casement windows and should be constructed with wooden frames. The use of acrylics, particularly UPVC is unacceptable in any form. Roofing material should always match the original material. Quarried stone or Welsh slates and thin concrete textured tiles are acceptable if they reflect the original slate roofing. The use of modern, machined, synthetic slates, thick concrete tiles and coloured pantiles should be avoided as they create a horizontal

emphasis unsympathetic to the building. Ridge tiles should be made of clay and should retain any original detailing and as is practical.

Where necessary brickwork or rendering should be renovated to its original state. Where brickwork requires replacing then a matching brick and mortar should be used. Pointing should also match the existing style. When render is used, a smooth finish is desirable, although a textured finish may be acceptable in certain cases. Spar dashing, pebble dashing and stone cladding are unacceptable as they add little the visual appearance of the building. Render may be painted, and the choice of colour should have regard to the shopfront and the rest of the street scene.

Barge and fascia boards should be repaired or replaced in wood, either stained hardwoods or painted softwoods. Where rainwater goods require replacing, they should be constructed of aluminium, the use of plastic rainwater goods will only be acceptable where they will not be detrimental to the character of the building.

Other detailing on the façade, such as cornice, cills, mouldings etc. should always be retained as far as possible and where appropriate, renovated or reinstated in appropriate materials.

It is important that as much care is taken with the improvement to the façade as are taken with the shopfront design, both must be considered together as overall scheme to ensure that the building maintains its integrity and is enhanced in the comprehensive manner.

4. Signs

The design and location of shop signs are very important. Even small signs, poorly designed or located can have a detrimental effect on visual quality. Signs should only include basic information, the name, number, and the trade of the shop, and should only be legible and uncluttered.

Fascia signs should be sign-painted or made up of individual cut letters. The lettering used on the sign should be part of the architectural detail and should reflect the buildings character. The use of bulky or box signs on the fascia is unacceptable as they do little to enhance the visual improvement of the building.

Projecting signs should be sign painted and made of individual cut letters on a sign board which should either be fixed at a fascia level or hung from a bracket. The use of a projecting box sign is unacceptable as they do little for the visual appearance of the building. An alternative to the projecting sign board is the use of trade symbols such as the barber's pole. The symbol should be easily identified with the trade and should be sympathetic to the building and the shopfront with regard to scale, colour, materials, and position.

Signs for the first floor uses should be located at the entrance to the building used for that floor. The use of signs hung above the fascia or inside upper floor windows is unacceptable as they achieve little in the visual improvement of the building, stencilled, etched or painted lettering to the upper floor windows can be used, if the style and scale of the lettering reflects the character of the building.

The use of stickers or advertisements on the shop window should be avoided as it results in an unsightly clutter to the visual appearance, however, banners and ribbons painted or etched on the glass if used in a sympathetic manner, can be used to display the name and trade of the business and can enhance the appearance of the building. The style of the

banners or ribbon should relate to the character of the building with regard to scale and style.

5. Other Features

There are many features that can be used to enhance the visual improvement of the building and shopfront, in many traditional centres the street scene often contains interesting architectural detailing such as grilles, elaborate fencing, interesting glass work, mosaic quarry tile flooring and cast-iron entrance gate, where these features exist they should be retained in their original condition. The addition to any of these features should be considered in relation to the overall character of the building and should only be included if the overall visual appearance is enhanced.

The use of roller shutters should be avoided as they create dead frontages outside opening hours resulting in negative effect on the street scene. The use of blinds and canopies can add interest and colour to the street scene; however, care should be taken to ensure that they do not dominate the frontage of a building or street.

Special consideration should be given to the fixtures and fittings of a shopfront. The use of complex patterns on the surround, the style of the shopfront and the detailing of the letterboxes, door handles, etc. should all be considered with the care to ensure that attractive shopfronts are not spoilt through the use of inappropriate detail.

Conclusion

Careful consideration at an early design stage will often result in a scheme of high quality, it is widely accepted that traditional style frontages have a positive impact on the local environment and subsequently on the commercial value of individual properties.

Further Advice

The Council can assist with general enquiries regarding the requirements for planning and building regulation permissions; and recommends submitting a planning pre-application enquiry in advance of a formal planning application.

The fee based pre-application service provides more detailed, tailored advice prior to a formal planning submission; which could:

- reduce your overall cost and time to develop a project;
- reduce your risk by identifying and addressing potential issues early on; or
- discover alternative solutions that meet your aims and avoid issues.

It is particularly important to seek guidance if your property is in the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, a Listed Building or Conservation Area. You can access this service by visiting the Council's website via this link: [Planning Forms](#)

Development Management (Planning Officers) can be contacted by email planning@torfaen.gov.uk or telephone 01495 762200; with further information on the Council's website: [Planning Permission](#)

Further information regarding Buildings Regulations can be found on the Council website: [Building Regulations](#)