



**MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL**

# **Shopfront and Signage Design Guide**

Manchester City Council

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## 1. Introduction

This document sets out best practice for shopfronts and signage design across the City in order to promote positive change in the context of its urban environment.

The principles and guidance detailed in this document are applicable throughout the City, including its thriving city centre, the vibrant local district centres, local shopping parades and other locations.

Shopfronts throughout the City have a significant impact on the retail and visitor experience and the character of our environment. When well-designed and well-integrated within their context shopfronts can have a positive impact on our environment and the commercial success of individual businesses.

High-quality and well-considered shopfronts and advertisements should therefore be an aspiration for all involved in the commission, design and installation of shopfronts.

### 1.1. Purpose of the Guidance

The document is intended as a user-friendly guide for all parties involved in the design and implementation of works to shopfronts cross the City, including building owners, shopkeepers, shopfitters, designers, architects, planners, local representatives and other stakeholders and decision-makers.

This guide does not set out to prescribe specific shopfront design across the city, but seeks to set out the principles and standards of design, in order to inform the design process and decision making.

Some locations may require traditional shopfronts in keeping with the historic character and appearance of the buildings; others will require a

more contemporary shopfronts which are attractive and innovative in their design. In any case, the proportions, detailing, materials and finishes require careful consideration in order to deliver new shopfronts and advertisements that take opportunities to enhance the townscape, economic vitality and the overall appearance of the City.

The document also sets out what is required in terms of permissions and statutory consents when repairing, altering or installing new shopfronts and signage.

### 1.2. Policy and Legislative Context

This document is intended as a comprehensive guide to well-designed shopfronts and advertisements.

This document builds upon and provides more detailed advice and guidance on policies contained within the Local Plan, in particular Core Strategy Policies CC9, DM1, EN1, EN3, SP1, Places for Everyone Policies JP-S1, JP-S2, JP-P1, JP-P2, and Saved UDP Policies 14, 15, 18 and 19. The most relevant sections of these policies are paraphrased below.

**Policy CC 9** requires the design of new buildings to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance and function, and any new development in the City Centre to preserve or enhance designated heritage assets, including listed buildings and conservation area.

**Policy DM 1** requires all new development to have regard for surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance, effects on amenity (i.e. light, noise and road safety), existing environmental conditions, accessibility and built heritage.

**Policy EN 1** expects new development to take opportunities to enhance the overall image of the City.

**Policy EN 3** encourages new developed to complement and take advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features of its districts and neighbourhoods, including those of the City Centre.

**Policy SP 1** requires new development to enhance or create character, protect and enhance the built and natural environment, minimise emissions and ensure efficient use of natural resources.

**Policy JP-P1** requires development, where appropriate, to conserve and enhance the historic environment, respect the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used, and be visually stimulating and high-quality in design, including the use of durable, robust materials that weather well and are easily maintained.

**Policy JP-P2** requires the positive management of heritage, and particular consideration to be given to the protection of the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinctive identity and sense of place.

Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states that “the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed”, highlighting the need for quality control in the design and decision making related to signage and shopfronts.

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 is particularly important, outlining local authorities' powers to *resist any advertisements "in the interest of amenity and public safety"*. In practice, Manchester City Council's planning team has the authority to refuse an advertisement consent should an advertisement have a negative impact on the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest.

This document should also be read and used in conjunction with other local and national legislation, policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, and the Local Development Framework (LDF) available on the Council's website.

## 2. History of Shopfronts

The first shopfronts were inserted into conventional houses, often simply through the insertion of large windows on the ground floor. These types of early shopfronts were observed from the medieval period onwards.

The earliest complete shopfronts date from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, when the display of consumer goods and fashion items became more important, particularly in urban centres like Manchester. Early shopfronts typically consisted of projecting square bays or bow windows, with a central recessed entrance. Windowpanes were small and detailing was often in the classical style. These earliest shopfronts were typically framed with **pilasters**, set above **stallrisers** and beneath a frieze and/or **fascia**, elements which provided support and definition (see **Section 5** for more information).

By late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfronts became more ornate. The projecting bays and windows were banned due to legislative changes aimed at obstructing the public pavement.

**Did you know?** Fascias were traditionally angled towards the street to be easily read.

Shopfronts were simplified towards the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of plate glass and the lifting of excise duty on glass in 1845 enabled glazed panes to be increased in size. In this period, signage became more pronounced; **fascias**, which provided the main space for signage, increased and signwriting became more common. Awnings and canopies were introduced, to provide shade and offer protection from the elements to the shoppers. At first fixed and from later 19<sup>th</sup> century mainly retractable, awnings and canopies became a common element of the city's high streets until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figures 1 and 2:** Left: Modern shopfronts traditional in design and illustrative of the appearance and design of the earliest shopfronts (Warburton Street, Didsbury). Right: A late 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront to Old Exchange, King Street.

In the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries shopfronts become more elaborate and some were constructed in metal, with slender frames and more intricate detailing. In this period, lobbies (entrances) became more pronounced and deeper, and there was more experimentation in materials and aesthetic treatment, including terrazzo, mosaic and tiled finishes and curved (bowed) glazing.

In the post-war period there was a move towards simplicity and flexibility, with limited detailing and maximum display space. Traditional elements, such as **stallrisers** and **brackets**, have often been omitted. From the 1970s aluminium framed shopfronts have been popularised, with entrances positioned off-centre and flush with shopfronts.



**Figures 3 and 4:** Left: An early 20<sup>th</sup> century example of a splayed entrance lobby with original floor tiles advertising the original business (Royal Exchange). Right: A good example of a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remodelled public house, with glazed tiles and signage representative of its historic use and date (Great Bridgewater Street)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century 'minimal', frameless and slim-line, shopfronts with little to no detailing have become more common.

Also, throughout the decades, individual shopfronts were often reflective of their use. Examples include 'hatches' and tiles / glazed bricks to facilitate the sale and display of fresh produce.

### 3. Planning works to shopfronts

Whilst considering and undertaking works to a shopfront it is always advisable to employ experienced professionals. Whatever the character of a shopfront, the success of the design is usually dependant on the standard of craftsmanship and care.

High standards of construction and installation are particularly important. It is therefore recommended that experienced shopfitters and installers are always used when altering or installing shopfronts.

Partnerships between experienced designers/architect and shopfront fabricators tend to be the most successful and provide the best results.

In the context of the historic environment, particularly when dealing with **listed buildings**, buildings in **conservation areas** and **non-designated heritage assets**, the design, detailing and quality of new shopfronts and alterations to existing shopfronts should preserve or enhance the building and the area where they are located. The works should follow best practice guidance and be sympathetic to their context and location.

**Always check with the City Council, as Local Planning Authority (LPA) whether you need consent prior to undertaking alterations to your shopfront.**

**Unauthorised work without the relevant permission(s) could result in enforcement action and may constitute a criminal offence.**

### 3.1. Planning Consents

Different planning restrictions apply to different buildings, depending on their location and protections put in place. These are outlined below.

#### 3.1.1. Planning Permission

Planning permission is required for new shopfronts and any alterations to existing shopfronts that materially affect the external appearance of a building.

In regard to alterations to an existing shopfront, the following would generally require a full planning permission:

- removing or installing steps or a ramp;
- removing any external architectural features;
- installing an awning, blinds or a canopy (unless displaying an **advertisement** - then **advert consent is required instead**);
- installing security shutters or external security grilles;
- changing facing materials;
- altering the shop windows, including removal or addition of new glazing;
- altering the entrance door, including different design or material, relocation or size.

General repair works and routine maintenance work that do not change the external appearance of a shopfront do not require planning permission, but if a building is a Listed Building, then you may need Listed Building Consent - depending on the scope and impact of these works.

The full list of information required as part of a planning application is available on our [Planning Validation Checklists](#) website.

Should the works affect a listed building, a building in a conservation area or a non-designated heritage asset, a **Heritage Statement** would also be required.

Additional information particularly relevant to the construction of a new shopfronts, i.e. internal elevations, visuals, photomontages and additional cross-sections, may be required.

For more information, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk).

#### 3.1.2. Listed Building Consent

Any **external and internal alterations to a Listed Building** that will affect its special character or appearance **require a Listed Building Consent**.

Any changes to shopfronts and installation of new signage on listed buildings would require a Listed Building Consent prior to the works being undertaken. Other works that would require a Listed Building Consent would include, for example, repainting, if the colour is different from the existing, the installation of a new fascias, hanging signage, blinds/awnings or canopies, external lights, shutters and any new services (i.e. louvres).

**Listed building consent is separate from planning permission and advertisement consent**, and you may be required to submit a number of applications for the same works.

If you are not sure whether the works you are planning to a listed building would require a listed building consent, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk). It is a criminal offence to undertake works to a Listed Building without consent and you may risk prosecution.

### 3.1.3. Advertisement Consent

Advertisement Consent is often required for the installation of external signage, including most illuminated signs.

The display of advertisements, including fascias, hanging signage and banners, is controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements Regulations 2007). Please refer to the Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance on [Outdoor Advertisements and Signs: a guide for advertisers](#) for more information.

The current legislation on signage is complex and the regulations depend on the type, size, location and illumination of an advertisement and the use class of premises being advertised. **We advise that you always consult Manchester City Council's planning team prior to installing any new signage on your property.**

The full list of information required as part of an advertisement consent is available on our [Planning Validation Checklists](#) website.

For more information, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk).

Please also note that **in Conservation Areas additional restrictions apply**, including the installation of any illuminated advertisements.

**New advertisement on Listed Buildings require Listed Building Consent.** See section 3.1.2 above for more information.

### 3.2. Building Control Regulations

In addition to planning permission and advertisement consent, certain works to shopfronts require a Building Regulations approval. These include works which involve structural alterations, significant extensions, alterations to main services (i.e. flue), alterations to access and approach and works that affect means of fire escape.

As the requirements of Building Regulations are complex, we recommend that you contact Manchester City Council's building control team to discuss prior to starting any works to your premises.

You can contact Manchester City Council's building control team by email at [building.control@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@manchester.gov.uk) or by phone at 0161 234 4490.

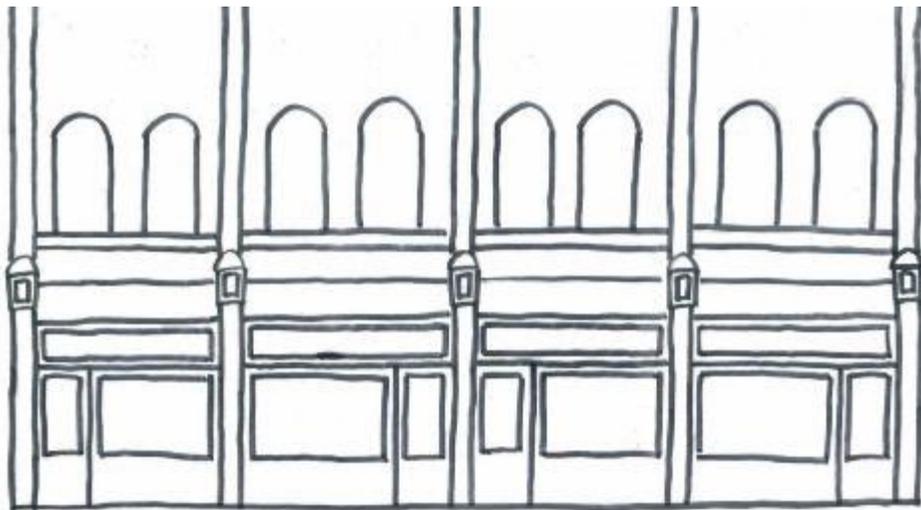
## 4. Design Principles

### 4.1. Context

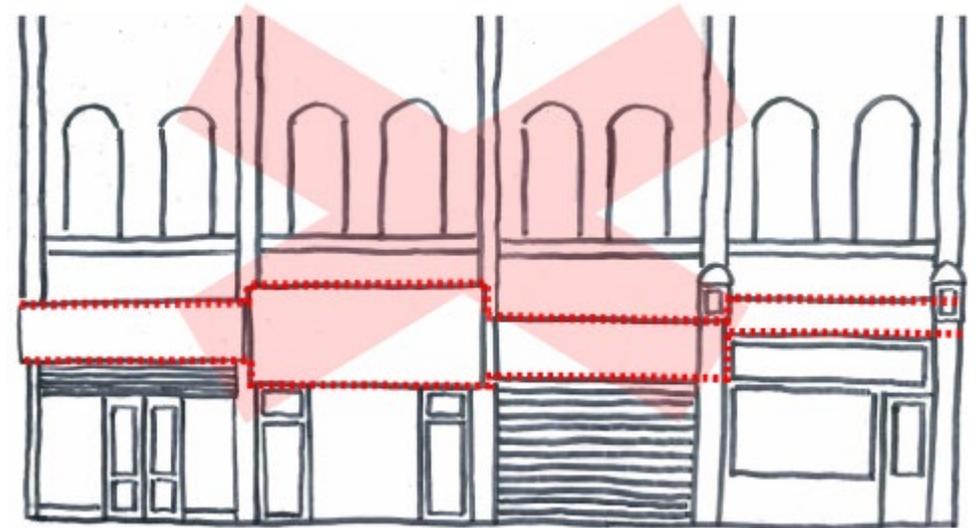
New shopfronts and alterations to existing shopfronts should be considered in the context of the whole building and the streetscene.

Shopfronts should reflect and respond positively to the architectural expression and proportions of the existing building. Any alterations should relate to upper storeys in terms of siting, scale, alignment, including windows, doors and elements of the frame (i.e. pilasters).

In the interest of a cohesive streetscene, shopfronts should relate to one another in terms of siting, scale, design, definition and the use of materials, finishes and colour. Particularly in the context of Listed Buildings, conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, the planning team will expect the overall design and detailing of new shopfronts to be appropriate to the building and the local context in which these are located.



**Figure 5:** Cohesive and aligned shopfronts add positively to a streetscene and a building on which these are located.



**Figure 6:** Misaligned and mismatched shopfronts have a negative visual impact on a building and streetscene where they are located.



**Figure 7:** A row of matching traditional shopfronts, creating a cohesive and attractive streetscene (Port Street).

### Corporate Image

The use of standard corporate branding and advertising can be damaging in some locations. A corporate image, including the use of colour, texture and particular design elements, may need to be adapted to fit better in the existing context.

Organisations would be required to show particular flexibility and special consideration to listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets, conservation areas and premises covered by a Shopfront and Signage Strategy (see below).

In areas where the special interest and sense of place of the local townscape depend on or benefits from the variation and distinctiveness of its commercial frontages and buildings, more varied designs that work together well and follow the principles of good design will be supported.

Where there is evidence of an original or historic shopfront, the reinstatement of a traditional design will be encouraged. Modern design will generally only be supported when there is no evidence of the original shopfronts and where the new design can be successfully integrated into the historical façade through its architectural form, design, proportions, materials, craftsmanship and detailing.

Where poor-quality shopfronts have been installed in the past, works to replace these with high-quality and well-designed traditional or modern examples, depending on what is considered most appropriate, and which improve the appearance and appreciation of a building and the area, would be supported.



### Shopfront and Signage Strategy

For major new developments in the City, a shopfront and signage strategy will be required to help inform a consistent signage and shopfront design as tenants occupy individual commercial units within a building or a group of buildings.

Where an up-to-date signage strategy is in place for a building or a group of buildings, new signage and shopfronts, in design, appearance, location, size, materials, depth and method of illumination, should follow the directives of the document.

**Figures 8 and 9:** Left: Brand fascia signage adapted to fit a Shopfront and Signage Strategy (Church Street). Right: Customised signage designed to fit well within its heritage context.



**Figure 10:** In the 2010s most shopfronts and signage at the Royal Exchange were overhauled and a comprehensive Shopfront and Signage Strategy agreed. This sets out the design, form and location of signage and the design and appearance of new shopfronts, securing a cohesive and attractive frontage.

Proposals which seek to replicate shopfronts which do not respond appropriately to the building and/or are poor quality would not be supported. New traditional shopfronts should be historically accurate and appropriate to the building and the area.

#### 4.2. Definition

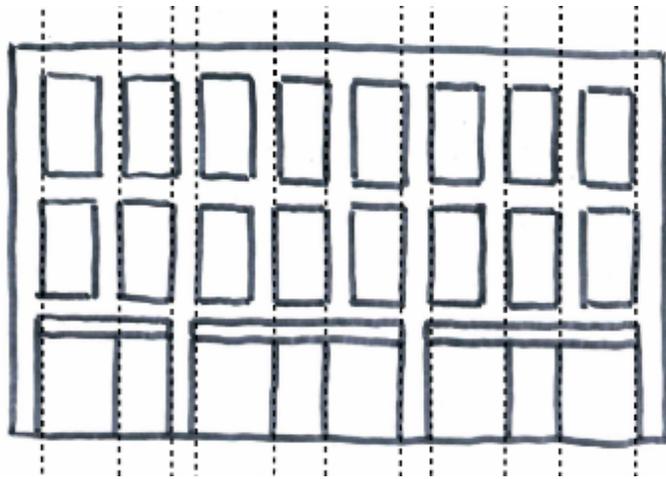
New and altered shopfronts must be visually cohesive and balanced. This should be achieved through considered and consistent use of architectural detailing, materials and finishes, and alignment of features and structural elements. Particular attention should also be given to the proportions of the component features and elements.

A well-designed shopfront should have a well-defined frame with vertical (i.e. pilasters) and horizontal (i.e. fascia, stallriser) edges. These provide visual enclosure and separation from neighbouring premises, which are core to achieving a well-defined and well-designed shopfront.



**Figure 11:** Modern and traditional shopfronts with good definition (Tib Street and Bridge Street).

Where a shopfront spans across more than one building, separate shopfronts should be retained or installed to preserve the visual separation of each building.



**Figure 12:** Indicative shopfronts, showing a vertical separation between each unit and alignment with upper storeys – core to a successful overall composition.

#### 4.3. Access

The Equality Act 2010, imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments to secure access to services, including commercial premises for all, including people with disabilities and mobility impairment.

Part M of The Building Regulations sets out statutory provision for minimum standards relating to access to public and commercial buildings. These standards apply to all new buildings, extensions and building works to and about entrances. All shopfronts and entrances to premises should also conform to current standards BS 8300-2:2018 *“Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice”*.



**Figure 13:** Annotated elevations showing the successful alignment of shopfronts with upper storeys of a historic and modern facades.

Manchester City Council’s planning team would require new shopfront and, as far as possible, the existing shopfronts to offer the same quality of access into the premises to everyone.

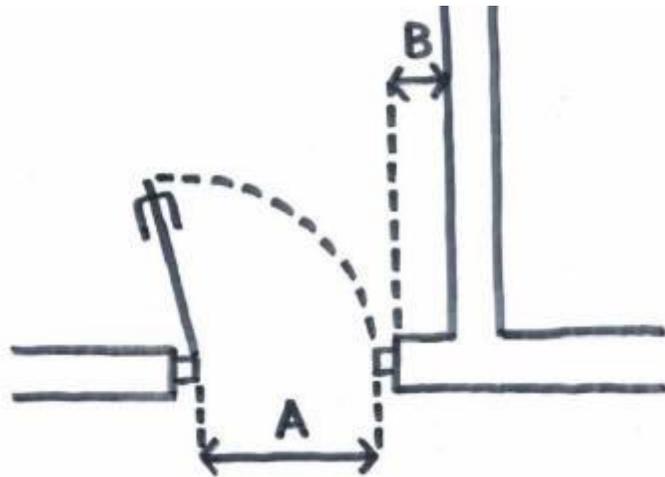
Consideration may be given to any particular constraints such as adverse impact on heritage significance (i.e. architectural and historic interest) of a listed building, conservation area or a non-designated asset.

Where possible to do so, new shopfronts should have level access with the pavement. Where this cannot be accommodated, another means of accessible entry should be provided to the premises (i.e. ramp, platform lift).

Entrance doors to a shopfront should have a clear (unobstructed) opening width of at least 775mm for existing buildings and 1000mm for new buildings respectively. The entrance doors should be clearly identifiable and easily openable.

Fully glazed doors and windows should have contrast markings at around 900mm and 1500mm.

Adequate space should be provided internally to allow for manoeuvring of wheelchairs and pushchairs, with a required minimum of 1500mm. An unobstructed space of at least 300mm on the pull side of the door (clear of any ironmongery or other fittings), between the leading edge of the door and any return wall, should be present, unless the door is opened by a remote control.



**Figure 14:** Access requirements for commercial units, showing 775mm (existing buildings) to 1000mm clearance required to main doors (A) and 300mm unobstructed space on the pull side of the door (B).

If a ramp is required, it should be at a slope of 1:20 (5%) and not exceed 1:12 (8%). It should also accommodate a landing to top to create a level (flat) surface when entering and leaving the shop. Where a ramp with a gradient less than 1:20 cannot be accommodated, it will need to have handrails on both sides.

Improvements to access should be accommodated in an equitable and unobstructed manner and without unreasonably harming the appearance of a property or the streetscape.



**Figures 15 and 16:** Left: A modern step-free access onto historic premises, with discrete regulatory manifestations to glazing (Princess Street). Right: A step-free access within a traditional shopfront (Burton Road).

In regard to buildings of architectural or historic interest, including Listed Buildings, buildings within conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, Part M of The Building Regulations advises that the requirements of equal access to these buildings should be met as far as practically possible, provided that the work does not prejudice their character.

#### 4.4. Sustainability

We expect all shop front proposals to promote sustainable principles within their design, construction and performance, in order to align with [Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan](#) and Policy SP1 of the Local Plan's Core Strategy (see Section 1.1).

Works to shopfronts should reduce the impacts upon climate change, improve energy efficiency and promote the reuse and refurbishment of existing elements and features, where appropriate.

The retention of existing shopfronts that make a positive contribution to the City's streetscene, and are capable of refurbishment or sensitive change, will be supported. Where a new shopfront is required, it should have inbuilt flexibility and longevity, to allow for a degree of adaptation and to preclude a complete replacement in the future.

When planning a new shopfront or alterations to an existing shopfront, consideration should be given to the durability, quality and recyclability of materials, to ensure the embodied carbon is not wasted.

## 5. Shopfront Elements

Most traditional shopfronts share a number of key architectural features and elements, each with its own visual and practical function. These can be interpreted and adapted to achieve a well-balanced, attractive and well-designed shopfront, either traditional or contemporary, that is well-integrated within the building and the wider streetscene.

### 5.1. Pilasters

Pilasters form part of the main frame of the shopfront, provide a vertical separation between neighbouring premises and a visual edge to a shopfront. Pilasters must always be matching in width, finish and design. Pilasters have been traditionally designed with a wider base/plinth at the bottom, and a **capital** with a console to the top.

#### Capital

Positioned on top of the pilaster and below the cornice. Forms the ends of the fascia.

Pilasters can be structural, forming a party wall with a neighbouring property, or applied. They may be plain, fluted, panelled or otherwise decorated. Most historic examples are constructed and finished in timber but other examples include bricks, tiles, steel and cast iron.

### 5.2. Fascia

The fascia is a horizontal board above the shop entrance, where the principal sign is located. It provides a visual edge to a shopfront, subdividing it from the upper portion of the elevation above.

In traditional shopfronts, the fascia is located between the top of the pilasters and set below a **cornice**. It frames the shopfront and separates it from the upper portion of the building's elevation. It may be used to conceal shutter/blind boxes, false ceilings or services.

### Cornice

A moulded element along the top of the fascia, protruding in relation to the shopfront frame. Added both for decorative and functional purpose, as it defines the top of a shopfront and ensures that it is protected from rainfall.

### 5.3. Stallriser

A stallriser is a solid board/panel/wall at the bottom of a shopfront, which forms a visual and structural base and gives protection to the glazing above.

In most cases, a stallriser is constructed of stone, brick or timber, and can be finished in panelled timberwork, render, tiles, glazed bricks or terracotta; and includes a protruding cill to the top where it meets the shop window, which provides a visual edge and protects it from weather damage.

### 5.4. Doors and Windows

In traditional shopfronts, the principal entrance was usually recessed and located between shopfront windows or to one edge of the shopfront.

Where the entrance is recessed, the threshold provides shelter from weather, can mediate between changes in level (i.e. ramp) and add to the aesthetic interest of the shopfront, i.e. through mosaic, terrazzo or glazed finishes.

The door is usually glazed, traditionally with a solid panel to the bottom, often aligned with the stallriser, and with a **fanlight** above the door frame.

### Fanlight

A window above a door, common to frontages of commercial and domestic properties.

The shop windows were traditionally subdivided into smaller panes, where mullions could conceal shelving and other elements on the interior.

Small windows above the main shop windows, known as transoms or transom lights, in most cases replicating the proportions and aligning with fanlights, are also common in traditional and modern shopfronts. In traditional shopfronts, these can feature decorative treatment (i.e. stained leaded glazing) and can accommodate natural ventilation.

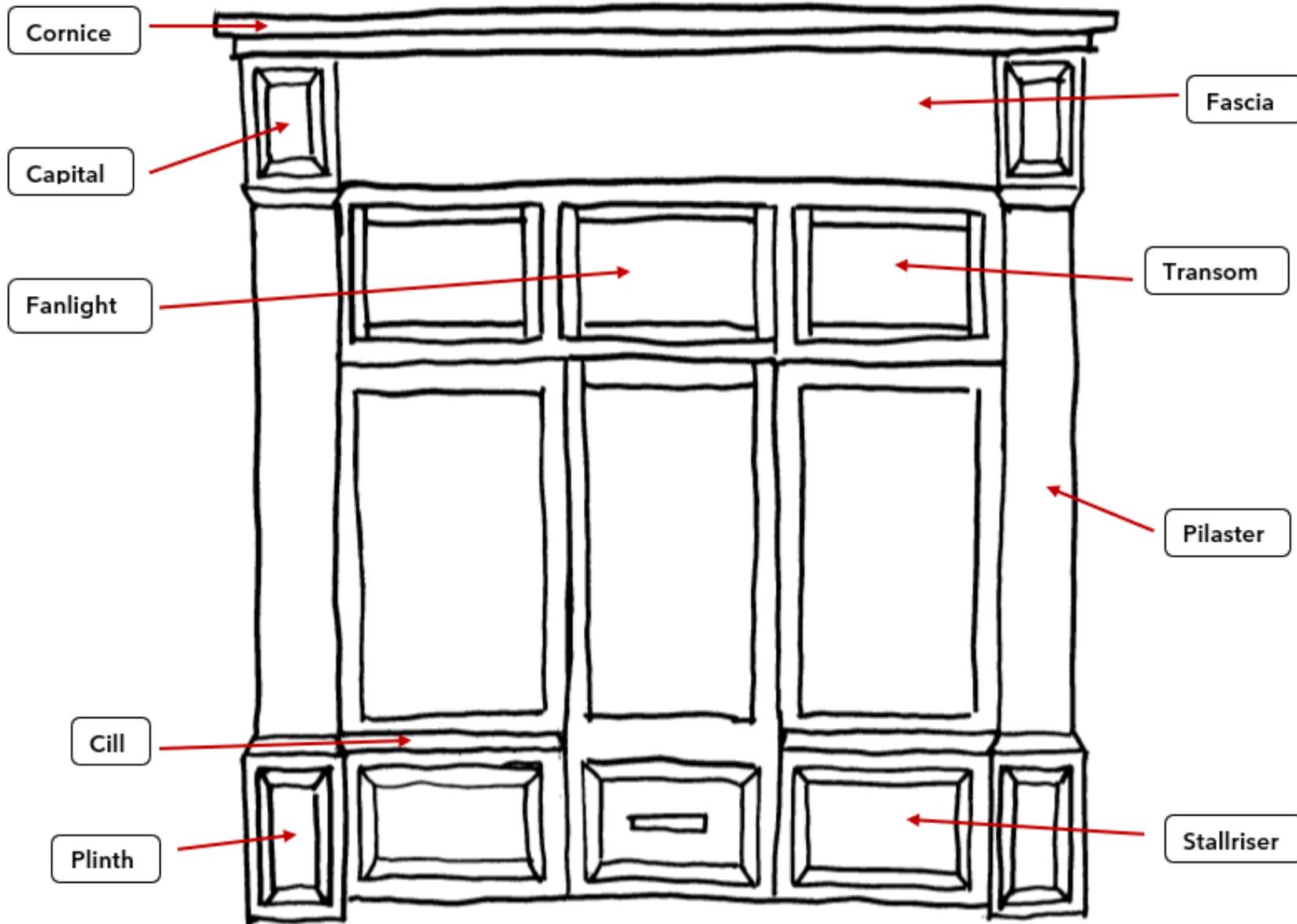


Figure 16: Shopfront Elements.

## 6. Shopfront Design

### 6.1. Existing Shopfronts

Where existing shopfronts are historic, represent a good or rare example of an earlier type or style, or make an otherwise positive contribution to the character of the host building and the local area, the presumption would be for these to be retained and sensitively adapted.

In the context of listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and conservation areas, works that remove, obscure, damage or adversely affect any elements of a shopfront that positively contribute to its appearance, historic interest or appreciation will not be permitted. The expectation will be to retain the original/historic fabric and avoid or minimise harm as much as possible.



**Figure 17:** A well-balanced and good quality timber shopfront within the context of historic environment (High Street).

Replacement (partial or total) of a historic shopfront will generally only be supported where the existing shopfront or its individual features and detailing are demonstrably beyond repair, in which case the expectation would be for any deteriorated features and detailing to be replaced like-for-like (materials, finish, size and design).

#### Ventilation

The design, size, location, and appearance of any new equipment and installations should not have an adverse impact on the streetscene and the design and appearance of a shopfront.

The installation of standard M&E equipment (i.e. air conditioning) and ventilation louvres or grilles to a shopfront where these would materially alter its appearance will generally not be supported as these installations detract from the appearance and quality of most buildings and local amenity. Locating these installations elsewhere (i.e. to rear, through internal vertical risers) would be required instead.

We advise that you contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk) if you are planning to install ventilation louvres/grilles or any other ventilation equipment to your shopfront.

Before an existing modern shopfront is replaced, consideration should be given to its condition, quality and relevance, and why it may need replacing. Reuse and adaptation of a well-designed shopfront may be the most cost-effective, sustainable and preferable solution when considering the impact on a building and the wider streetscene.

### **Awnings, Canopies & Blinds**

Where there are no awnings, canopies or blinds on an existing shopfront, consideration will be given as to whether such installations are appropriate in their context .

Where permissible, a new awning, canopy or blind should be appropriately and discretely located (i.e. aligned with and sat flush with existing features, such as fascia) and finished to match existing features, in order to minimise their bulk, visual clutter and ensure a congruous appearance.

The installation of awnings, canopies or blinds on historic shopfronts, where there is no evidence of original/historic installations, would not generally be supported. Where acceptable on existing original/historic shopfronts, retractable canvas blinds or awnings of a traditional design would be required.

Where shopfronts that would otherwise make a positive contribution to the streetscene have been unsympathetically altered or damaged in the past, there will be a presumption towards sensitive and sympathetic repair, restoration and refurbishment, rather than complete replacement.

Original details and features may survive behind later additions - i.e. fascia boards. In such instances, the presumption would be for these to be retained, repaired and revealed. Where missing, the presumption shall be for the missing detailing and features to be reinstated to a high standard.

### **Access**

Traditional shopfronts are not always accessible. A flexible approach would be required to meet the requirements of accessibility with minimal harm to the quality of the city's historic environment. External or internal ramps may be the most appropriate solution where historic doors, steps or stallriser survive.

Where part of a historic shopfront is to be replaced or altered, the new works should take into account the original design, materials, craftsmanship and finishes to ensure these are robust, long-lasting and authentic. When reinstating any lost features, it is important that these are reproduced in appropriate materials, detail and proportions.

For example, the use of plywood, MDF or chip-board to replace or repair elements of timber shopfront would not be acceptable. Splice repairs in matching timber and using traditional techniques would be required (i.e. integrated (puttied-in) glazing bars), with appropriate resin repairs to minor areas of loss or damage. Where joinery to shopfront is replaced/repaired, particular attention should be paid to the detail and profile of any new works.

### **Security**

New security measures to existing shopfronts should be well-integrated into the building and the streetscene.

Intrusive 'stuck-on' measures (i.e. shutters) would not be permissible where these would harm the appearance of an existing shopfront and the character of a building or an area.

## 6.2. New Shopfronts

New shopfronts can be either traditional or modern. The most appropriate approach should be identified on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the existing context and the type, style, proportions and design of a building.

No matter the approach, certain principles of good shopfront design apply to any new shopfront across the City. Successful contemporary designs are often based on the re-interpretation of traditional form and elements, which were developed over centuries to offer an attractive and functional face to commercial premises.

High-quality, inclusive and innovative new shopfronts which respond positively to the local context and raise the standard of design in the local area will generally be supported. Poorly designed new shopfronts and signage that fail to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of building and local area are unlikely to be supported.

### 6.2.1. Frame

A well-designed shopfront should have vertical and horizontal emphasis. This has traditionally been achieved through a stallriser, pilasters and a fascia.

Pilasters should subdivide a shopfront from neighbouring premises and must form part of both traditional and contemporary shopfronts. These can either express an internal structural subdivision (i.e. party wall, structural beam), or be applied externally.

Pilaster should be proportionate and well-integrated into a shopfront and match each other in size, design, finish and materials. Pilasters should stand proud of the shop windows and be free of any fixtures and fittings such as alarm boxes and CCTV.

Fascias can be successfully incorporated into traditional and modern shopfronts. They can offer an optimal area for signage and conceal internal M&E services or dropped ceilings where these are required.



**Figure 18:** Traditional shopfronts with good definition and joinery detail (King Street and Lapwing Lane).

In designing and installing a new shopfront, a fascia should:

- be proportionate to the building under consideration;
- sit within the frame of a shopfront (i.e. pilasters);
- not extend across more than one building;
- be aligned with other features, elements and detailing;
- be located below the first-floor cills.

A fascia should not unduly project from the face of a shopfront, which can have a negative impact on highway safety and appearance of a shopfront.

Where cornices or consoles are proposed, these should be well-proportioned and appropriately detailed, and finished with lead flashing or high-quality and durable modern alternative to protect these against rainwater damage.

Similarly to a fascia, a stallriser can be successfully incorporated into both traditional and contemporary shopfront design as a visual and structural base to a shopfront. It should align with other features (i.e. fascia) and be proportionate and well-integrated into a shopfront. A stallriser can screen internal services and installations (i.e. pipework, raised floor, display stand) where these are required.



**Figure 19:** A high-quality large plate-glass shopfront, showing clear vertical separation between units (pilaster) and horizontal frame to top and bottom, with clear cohesion in proportions and design throughout (York Street).

In some contexts, frameless or large plate-glass shopfronts set within pilasters, but without a stallriser and fascia, can provide for a lightweight and elegant addition to a building and the local streetscene. On listed buildings, non-designated assets and within conservation areas this approach can be appropriate where traditional shopfronts did not form part of the original design of a building and where there is no historic precedent to emulate.

Frameless or large plate-glass shopfronts should include a clear visual subdivision between the commercial premises on the ground floor and the upper floors, but otherwise relate to the architectural expression and proportions of the façade. The shopfront's top edge should sit below and remain clear of the cills of the first floor, to preserve a clear separation between the shopfront and the upper storeys, and not obscure, conceal or damage any existing architectural features.

### 6.2.2. Materials and Colour

The colour scheme, finish and materials of a new shopfront should achieve a unified and cohesive appearance, enhance the shopfront design and compliment the appearance of a building and the local streetscene. The general approach should be one of a limited palette of materials and colours.



**Figures 20 and 21:** Left: A brown-framed modern shopfront within the original brown polished granite façade (Deansgate). Right: A traditional shopfront painted in a colour complimentary to its context (Beech Road).

Traditional materials (i.e. timber, brick, iron, steel) and established high-quality modern materials (i.e. slim-line aluminium) would be expected for the design and installation of new shopfronts. Other materials would be supported only in cases where the planning team is satisfied that the design quality, finish and appearance are appropriate in their context. The

use of plastics, acrylic, vinyl and similar finishes will be resisted across the City, and not permitted in conservation areas, on listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets.



**Figure 22:** Complimentary colours of traditional timber framed shopfronts (Tib Street).

The exact finishes (i.e. hue, texture and reflectiveness) should be appropriate to its context and complement the existing building and streetscene. For example, where shopfronts to a ground floor of a building are all painted grey, the presumption should be to retain the existing colour scheme in order to preserve their cohesion in the streetscene.

Matching or complementary colours should be used for all major elements (i.e. frame, windows, fascia) of a shopfront. Excessively bright, gloss, fluorescent or clashing colours and finishes will not be supported.

Standard corporate colour schemes and finishes may need to be changed or adapted to suit the character of the host building and an area.

The future maintenance and longevity of materials and finishes should be considered when designing and installing a new shopfront. Any new development in the City should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

### 6.2.3. Windows and Doors

The windows and doors of a shopfront should match in proportions, design, material and finishes. Architectural features, such as applied detailing and integrated glazing bars should be consistent across a shopfront. For example, the position of mullions can help to relate the shopfront with the elevation above and achieve a new intervention well-integrated into its context.

As discussed in Section 4.3, new doors and entrances should be accessible. A level access from the street should be provided wherever possible, with new doors set within a min.1000mm clear width opening. Doors should be partly of fully glazed to allow visibility into the shopfront. Where full height uninterrupted glazing is proposed for windows and/or doors, manifestation at dual height will be required.



**Figure 23:** A well-designed and fully glazed aluminium framed shopfront with level access and a wide central entrance (Deansgate Mews).

In new shopfronts the doors should be central or located to one side, provided there is 300mm clearance between the leading edge of the door and the return wall (see Section 4.3).

Access to upper floors should be considered when designing and installing a new shopfront. Where there is more than one door proposed to a shopfront, a balanced and considered placement would be required. New doors providing access to upper floors, when part of a building's frontage, should be designed as an integral part of the shopfront, not as an unrelated or separate component. New doors should be subservient to the shopfront windows and display in size and visual impact.



**Figures 24 and 25:** Left: A good example of canted shopfront with matching pair of doors providing access to commercial premises and upper floors (Beech Road). Right: Well-proportioned windows and doors sited within decorative frame well-aligned within the upper floors (King Street).

The existing context and the design, appearance and age of a building under consideration should inform whether the shopfront should be flush or whether there should be a degree of depth modulation - i.e. window reveals, recessed doors and external lobbies.

New recessed entrances, doors or lobbies will be supported where these are well-overlooked and designed to the [Secured by Design](#) standards on Commercial Properties.



**Figures 26 and 27:** Left: A traditional shopfront with leaded fanlights, adding interest to the building and the streetscene (Bridge Street). Right: A well-designed two-storey contemporary shopfront showing good use of materials, texture, colour and curvature to create interest (Chorlton Street).

Fanlights and transoms above doors and shop windows can add interest and improve the appearance of a shopfront. These would be preferred to deep fascias or blank panels. Where transoms and fanlights are proposed, there should be consistency in proportions, placement and design throughout.

Where shop windows are subdivided into smaller panes, this should be through structural (integrated) glazing bars. Internally or externally applied glazing bars will not generally be supported anywhere in the City

and not permitted in conservation areas, on listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets.

### Vinyl

The use of vinyl and manifestations to glazing will be resisted across the City. Where required, i.e. to comply with building regulations, vinyl should be the minimum required.

In some circumstances, where signage cannot be accommodated elsewhere, discrete vinyl adverts may be permissible, contingent on limited coverage, internal location and discrete design.

External vinyl that cover the whole or the majority of a shopfront window(s) and/or doors will not be supported.



**Figure 28:** Use of discrete vinyl advertising as an alternative to external fascia signage (Hewitt Street and Tariff Street).

### 6.2.4. Security and Lighting

Security should be considered as an integral part of the design of a new shopfront. All shopfronts should be built or refurbished to the [Secured by Design](#) standard.



**Figure 29:** External roller shutters have a negative impact on most buildings where these are installed, and generally will not be supported.

The appearance of a building and an area should be considered when deciding on what security systems to install. The special or positive characteristics of commercial premises and the wider streetscene must not be adversely affected by poorly designed and ill-conceived security measures, be it in the form of an external shutter or intrusive CCTV equipment.

Solid roller shutters in particular have a negative effect on the character and appearance of most buildings and areas where these are installed. They reduce natural surveillance, create a hostile environment, increase the perception of crime and encourage vandalism in the form of tagging and graffiti.

The installation of external security shutters and grilles always requires planning permission.

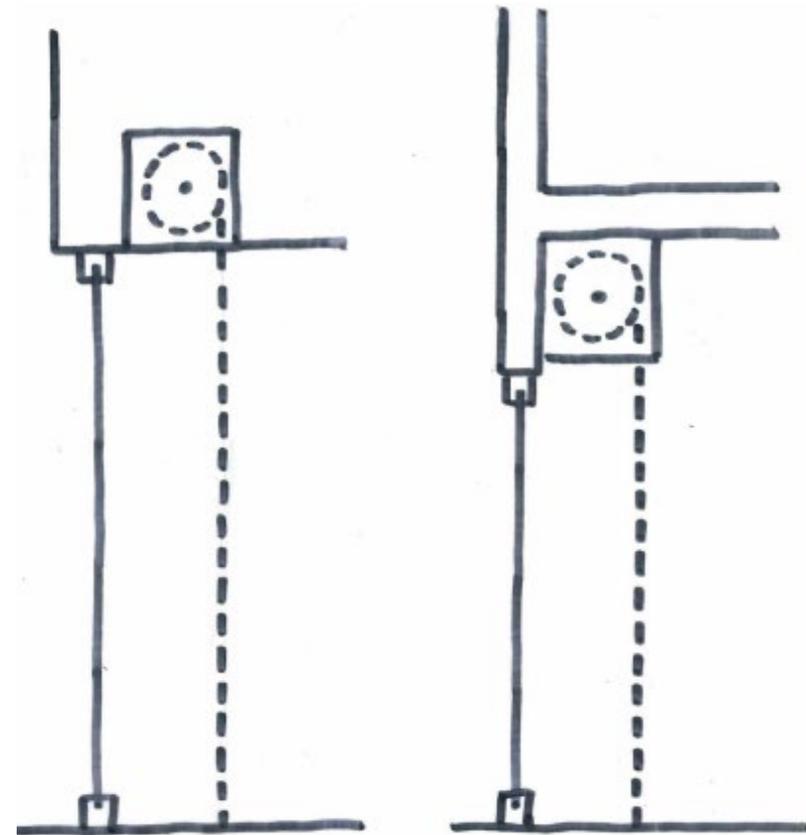


**Figures 30 and 31:** Left: Internal security grilles to traditional shopfront (Port Street). Right: Internal security grilles to modern shopfront (Brewer Street).

The installation of external shutters will not generally be permitted across the City. Consideration should always be given to less intrusive alternatives, including toughened or anti-vandal glass, demountable grilles, internal 'open' shutters, discrete external lighting and CCTV equipment.

In exceptional circumstances where security shutters are deemed to be acceptable (i.e. in areas of particular anti-social behavioural issues, where all other alternatives have been exhausted) these should:

- be of an open lattice/mesh design or similar, which allows at least 50% transparency;
- be contained within the shopfront's frame;
- have the shutter box integrated into the frame (i.e. concealed behind the fascia, flush with shopfront).



**Figure 32:** Where solid shutters are supported, these should be internal and of an open design, to allow visibility into the premises. The shutter box should not cut through/conceal any elements of the shopfront and glazing - as presented on these cross-sections.



**Figure 33:** Shopfront with well-designed new lighting and discrete CCTV (John Dalton Street).

Where CCTV cameras or alarm boxes are required, these should be discretely and rationally positioned on the façade and should not obscure or conceal any architectural details, features or glazing. The finish, size and design also need to be considered and fit well into the existing context, to avoid unacceptable visual impacts.

Where external lighting is proposed, it should be in the form of discrete spotlights or similar. Obtrusive floodlights and industrial size light fittings will not be permissible. Discrete and well-designed lighting which highlights shop entrances will generally be supported.

The use of strobe lighting for window displays should be avoided as it can trigger adverse reactions in people with neurodivergent conditions.

The finish of the equipment and associated installations should be coordinated with the shopfront and frontage and fit well within the wider streetscene. External cabling, fixtures & fittings should be avoided/minimised and discretely routed/positioned where required. Where opportune, wireless systems should be considered.

#### 6.2.5. Awnings, Blinds and Canopies

In appropriate locations and where in keeping with a character or sense of place of an area (i.e. pedestrianized shopping parades) well-designed, well-integrated and well-placed awnings, blinds and canopies can make a positive addition to a building and streetscene.

In isolation or in inappropriate locations, i.e. converted warehouses or on narrow pavements, the installation of an awning, blind or canopy can add clutter, detract from the quality of the public realm and have a negative impact on the City's environment and its buildings.

The installation of new canopies, blinds and awnings generally requires Planning Permission and [a projection over the highway license](#) from the Highway Authority. If a licensed structure is renewed or replaced, a new permit is required.

Where a proposed canopy, blind or awning carries an advertisement (i.e. in the form of applied lettering and/or logo), an Advertisement Consent will be required instead.

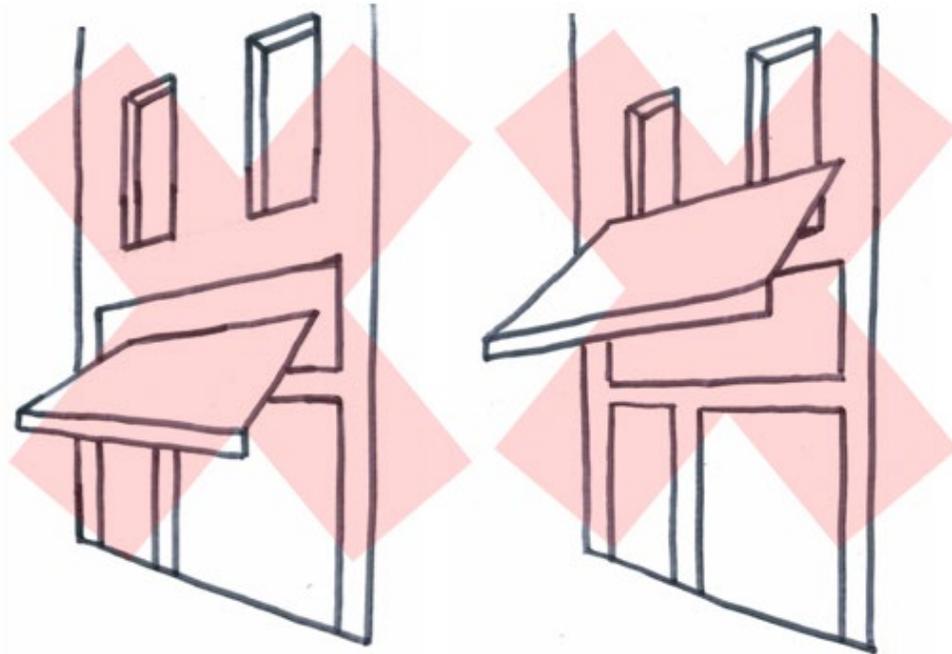
If the blind covers all or part of an area where smoking occurs then it should comply with the relevant smoking legislations.

For more information, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk).

Where considered appropriate based on location, context and the building under consideration, a new blind, awning or canopy should:

- match the width of the shopfront;
- be located below the first-floor cills;
- be aligned with other features, elements and detailing;

- be of a finish and colour that corresponds to a shopfront, building and an area;  
have the outer edge a minimum 450mm from the highway edge and located no less than 2.5m above the pavement.



**Figure 34:** Awnings that cut through features, such as fascias, windows or glazing, will not be acceptable.

In the context of listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and conservation areas the installation of awnings, blinds and canopies would generally be supported only in cases where there is historic evidence of such installations and where these fit within the existing streetscene. Further design consideration in regard to materials, design and location also apply.

For example, traditional 'Victorian' canvas roller awning would be required for most historic (19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century) premises and in the context of most conservation area; fixed canopies, Dutch/balloon blinds, plastic fabrics or overtly reflective finishes would not generally be supported. New awnings and canopies should be retractable into a blind box and fitted flush with or behind the fascia or shopfront edge.



**Figures 35 and 36:** Left: Retracted traditional canvas awning (High Street). Right: Retractable awning in use, with the mechanism sat flush with fascia (Peter Street).

### 6.2.6. Ventilation

The addition of new ventilation grilles and mechanical ventilation equipment to shopfronts would not be supported where there are opportunities to accommodate these services and interventions elsewhere (i.e. to rear elevation, to roof).

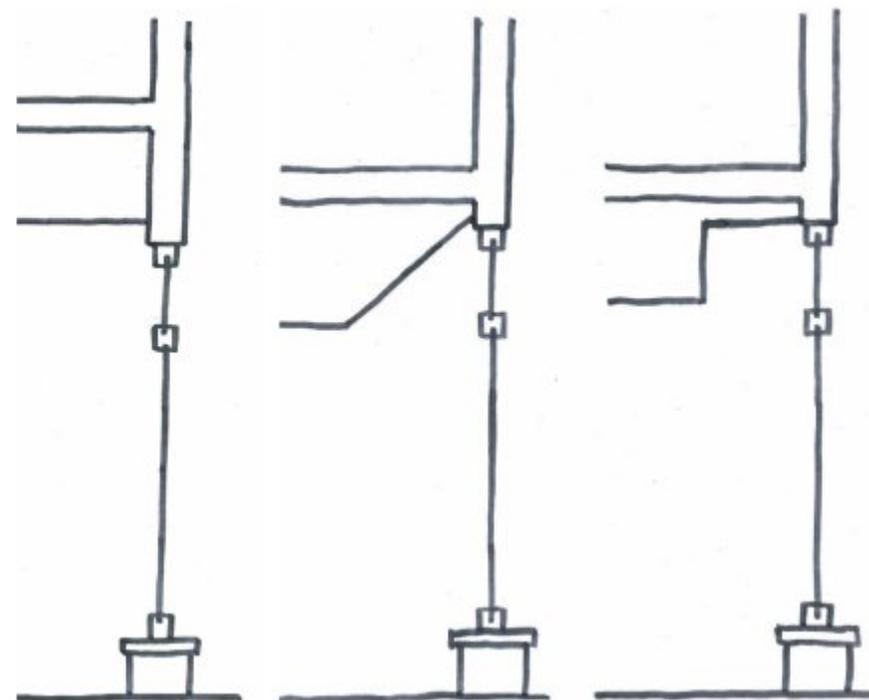
Where interventions to shopfront are required, these should be well-integrated into the elevation and discrete. For example, a new ventilation inlet/outlet could be located behind fascia signage or terminate in an air brick.

Where larger ventilation grilles or louvres are required and cannot be concealed, these should have a degree of architectural and aesthetic interest – i.e. etched metal screens.

In the context of listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and buildings in conservation areas, new M&E services, AC units, ventilation grilles and louvres to shopfronts should be omitted. In these locations, ventilation louvres/grilles would only be supported in exceptional circumstances.

### 6.2.7. Other

Where new internal works may conflict with external appearance and character of a shopfront, i.e. dropped ceilings, these need to be redesigned/positioned as not to block existing glazing and other features of a shopfront (i.e. splayed, set-back).



**Figure 37:** Where dropped ceilings are required, these should not conceal or cut through existing glazing and other features of a shopfront. These indicative cross-sections show different ways of accommodating services and dropped ceilings where these are supported.

Works to increase the depth of a solid fascia in order to disguise the presence of a new suspended ceiling or floor level will generally not be supported.

Other external fixtures, fittings and installations should be rationalised, sensitively positioned and appear as discreet as possible. The aim should be to avoid clutter and minimise installations to what is essential for the premises under consideration.

For example, where external cabling is required, it should follow building edges and should not cut across architectural features and details of an elevation. Colour coordination with the shopfront, elevation and other relevant features may also be required.

Any redundant modern fixture, fittings, installations and signage should be removed or made good prior to new installations.

### 6.3. Signage

New advertisement to existing and new shopfronts must be sensitively designed and well-integrated into an elevation and the wider streetscene in design, proportion and position.

Signage must not dominate the building façade and should relate well to its overall composition, character, scale and architectural features. In most contexts, it should be the minimal required to identify the premises, in size, number and impact.

Where relevant, (i.e. where similar or matching shopfronts stretch across one or several buildings) signage should correlate in alignment, design and proportion.

New signage should:

- be limited to one fascia signage or internal hanging signage per elevation;
- be located below the first-floor cills, unless there is historic evidence of signage above;
- have a max. depth of 30mm;
- not be in the form of internally illuminated lightbox signage;
- not conceal, obscure or damage any elements or detailing of a shopfront that positively contribute to its appearance, historic interest and appreciation.

Where a new or existing shopfront does not have an optimal external location for new signage, new internal signage accommodated behind the shopfront window(s) would be required. On most buildings, internal advertisements of appropriate size, form and design will be supported.

The content of new signage should be limited to the information required for the premises to be identified – i.e. name, logo, trade and contact details. Extraneous advertising and information should be avoided.



Figures 38 and 39: Left: Internal signage behind a sash window (Mount Street). Right: Internal signage behind a modern shopfront (New Islington Marina).

Whilst the Council will normally permit only one projecting sign for each commercial unit, this will be resisted in inappropriate locations or where this would cause undue harm to local amenity, heritage assets and appearance or sense of character of a building/group of buildings.

Mural and painting to buildings which displays or incorporates advertising is regarded as advertisement in planning terms and may require an advert consent. In most locations, painted or mural advertising will not be supported, due to their adverse impact on local amenity.

For more information, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk).

### Fascia Signage

Fascia signage should align with the existing shopfront features and sit within the shopfront frame (i.e. pilasters). It should not obscure or conceal the shopfront windows and any architectural detailing.

New fascia signage in the form of individually cut letters and traditional signwriting would generally be acceptable in all circumstances.

Overtly reflective acrylic boards and aluminium panels, gloss vinyl, PVC cladding or similar would not be considered acceptable for new fascia signage.

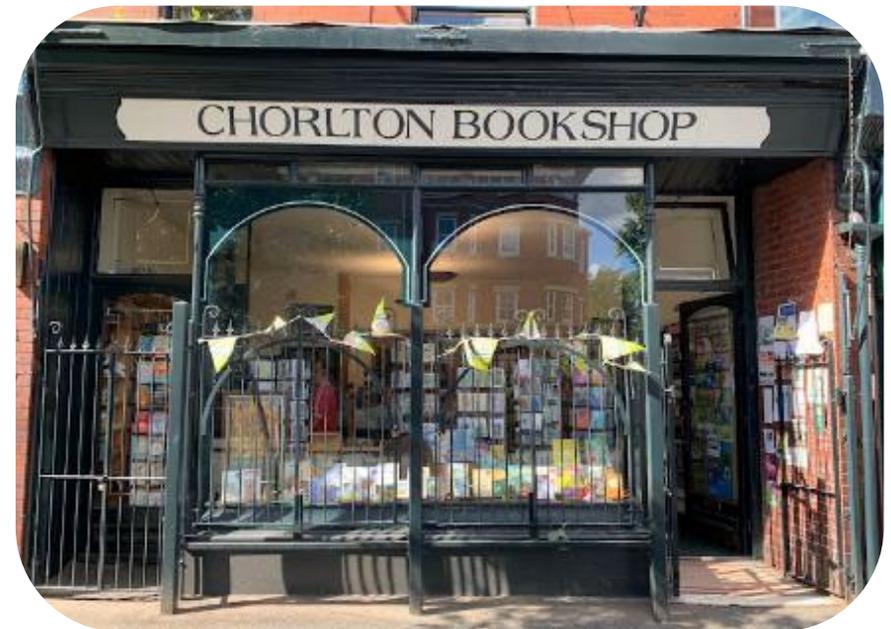


Figure 40: A well-proportioned fascia with a hand-painted signage (Wilbraham Road).



**Figure 41:** A well-proportioned flush fascia matched to the existing building, with signage in the form of non-illuminated individual letters (Thomas Street).



**Figures 42:** Good examples of hanging non-illuminated and illuminated signage in the City (Norfolk Street, Hilton Street and Port Street).

Where considered acceptable on account of location and impact, new projecting signage should:

- have a minimum ground clearance of 2.4m and 0.5m clearance from the edge of the carriageway;
- be limited to 0.75m<sup>2</sup> in area;
- be limited to one per shopfront and/or frontage;
- be positioned at fascia level.

Signage on existing buildings must be accommodated with due consideration to their appearance, design and architectural features, and without undue harm. Often, that necessitates more creative and considered advertising - as illustrated below.



**Figures 43 and 44:** Left: a plaque signage to historic premises (Norfolk Street). Right: A good example of an individual letters fascia signage (King Street).



**Figure 45:** Historic signage retained and integrated into new uses (Manchester Victoria Station and High Street).

The use of standard corporate advertising may not be acceptable in some contexts. In these circumstances, the standard design and corporate image would need to be adapted in order to be supported.

Where inappropriate signage has been installed in the past, new advertisement should not replicate existing but improve the local streetscene and appearance of a building through more appropriate design, form, location, size, finish and form of illumination.

Other than in cases of historic signage, prior to installation of new advertisements, the expectation would be for any redundant signage to be removed.

### A-boards

A-boards displayed outside a shop on the public highway usually require a special licence from the Highway Authority and will not generally be supported due to their visual impact and obstruction of the public highway, causing tripping/collision hazards for pedestrians and other pavement users.

Additional signage, including barber's poles or flags would not be acceptable, unless contributing to the character of a building and the sense of place of a local area.

### Banners

Advertising banners require advertisement consent. This type of advertisement will not be permitted unless erected on a temporary scaffolding in line with an agreed contract of works.

Should illumination to external signage be required, it must correspond well to the design, style and detailing of a shopfront and character of an area. Generally, external illumination will be preferred, in the form of discreet spotlights, LED through/back light or similar. As a general rule, swan neck lamps, flashing/intermittent lights/displays, exposed neon tubes and other intrusive forms of internal and external illumination that add bulk and clutter to a shopfront are not to be supported. In certain areas of particular sensitivities, non-illuminated signage may be required.

The illuminance should not exceed 300cd/m<sup>2</sup> in most location, with a max. 600cd/m<sup>2</sup> where considered appropriate and would not give rise to any unduly harmful amenity impacts.



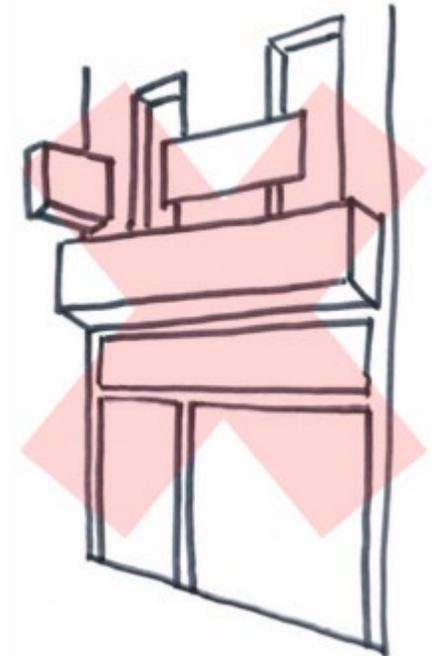
Figure 46: Examples of good signage and lighting to commercial premises (Tib Lane and Spring Gardens).

In the context of **Listed Buildings, conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets**, internal and external signage should be designed so as to preserve or enhance their appearance and significance. Painted timber fascias and traditional hanging signage may be required.

Where possible and appropriate, new signage should reuse existing fixings or be otherwise affixed to mortar, to avoid damage to historic fabric.

A good window display can often be the most effective measure to attract customers into premises. It also contributes to the vibrancy and character of the street both in and out of operating hours.

Window displays can change to match the seasons, national holidays or special events, which can add to its interest and contribute to an area or streetscene.



Figures 47 and 48: Left: a good example of a seasonal window display, adding interest to the streetscene (Beech Road). Right: Illustrated example of inappropriate and excessive signage in the form of box fascia and projecting signage, and advertisement cutting through key architectural features of the façade, resulting in poor and cluttered overall appearance.

Excessive advertisements, which obscure shopfront windows (i.e. digital screens), can have a considerable negative impact on the streetscene and a shopfront, and must be avoided.

## 7. Case Studies

**Sawmill Court** is an example of a new mixed-use development in Ancoats, which achieved a high standard of design and architectural quality.

The commercial premises to the ground floor are accommodated behind fully glazed shopfronts, each of complimentary proportions, materials and design - resulting in a unified yet animated streetscene. A stallriser is constructed in brick, to match the elevational treatment, and the deep reveals add visual interest. Step-free entrances and wide doors ensure access for all.



The commercial premises at the **corner of Brewer Street and Tariff Street** are another excellent example of a high-quality new development in the city.

The shopfronts to ground floor interpret traditional elements in a contemporary new way, and illustrate an excellent use of traditional materials. These are well-proportioned and, through the use of large-plate glazing, add visual interest and activity to the streetscene. These are also well integrated within the whole building, reflecting the vertical subdivision and the proportions of the upper storeys. Fascias are proportionate and offer the optimal location for external signage. Security is in the form of internal grilles traditional in design and appearance, with no negative impact on the local townscape.



## 8. Further Information

For further information on local policies and guidance, please consult [Manchester's Local Plan](#) on the Council's website.

Further guidance on good design practice and managing change in the context of historic environment is available on [Historic England's website](#).

Other links to most relevant national policy and guidance are provided below:

- [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) \(2023\)](#)
- [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers](#)
- [National Design Guide \(2021\)](#)
- [National Model Design Code \(2021\)](#)

Prior to making an application for planning permission, advertisement consent and listed building consent, please consult the Council's [Planning Permission](#) and [Planning Validation Checklist](#) websites.

Further guidance is also available on the [planning portal](#).

## 9. Contacts

If you have any queries regarding the document, its content or have a pre-application inquiry regarding any works to signage and/or shopfront, please contact Manchester City Council's planning team at [planning@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning@manchester.gov.uk).

Any applications for planning permission, advertisement consent and listed building consent must be submitted through the [planning portal](#).

If you have any building control related queries, please contact Manchester City Council's building control team by email at [building.control@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@manchester.gov.uk) or by phone at 0161 234 4490.

You can apply for building regulation approval on the Council's [Building Control](#) website.

If you have any highway related queries, please contact Manchester City Council's highways team at [contact@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:contact@manchester.gov.uk).

You can apply for the relevant licenses and permits on the Council's [Highways and Pavements](#) website.