

Shopfronts and Advertisements Advice Note

August 2026



Required consent

The alteration and replacement of shopfronts generally requires planning permission. Painting of shopfronts requires planning permission in Conservation Areas. Alterations to a shopfront (including painting, installing canopies and adding projecting signs) that is part of a listed building will also normally need listed building consent. Advertisements can require the submission of an advertisement consent application, such as for the addition of a fascia board, an illuminated sign, or projecting sign.

More detail on required consents can be found in the 'Shopfronts and Advertisements in Conservation Areas' [Planning Guidance](#) or by contacting the Customer Service Centre by email customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk, or by phone 01506 280 000.

Change of use

If you are looking to change the use of a shop unit(s), along with the alteration of a shopfront, there are a range of permitted changes of use that do not require planning permission. These are summarised at the end of the document.

Shopfront design

The complete removal of a shopfront which is important to the character and appearance of an area or building will not normally be supported, unless it is proposed to replace a non-original shopfront with a more traditional shopfront design.

When a shop occupies more than one building, any replacement of the shopfront should take account of the individual buildings – the shopfront should not extend across multiple façades.

Windows

Glazing should always be transparent. Opaque, frosted, reflective, mirrored or tinted glass is not acceptable. Solid or partly infilled frontages are also not acceptable. ATM machines may be acceptable where they can be integrated well into the overall shopfront design.

Colours

A shopfront's colour palette should reflect the context of the area, be subtle, and blend in with the surrounding built environment. Corporate organisations should not assume that their corporate colour scheme will be acceptable and variations may be required.

A suggested colour palette that is considered appropriate in Conservation Areas is provided below.

					
02 C 39	02 C 40	04 C 39	04 D 45	08 B 29	10 C 39
					
12 B 21	12 B 25	12 C 39	14 C 39	14 C 40	18 B 25
					
18 C 35	18 C 39	18 E 53	20 C 40	20 D 45	

From British Standard 4800:2011

Materials

Painted timber is the preferred material for a shopfront and fascia board as it can be easily modelled, adapted and repaired, particularly on traditional and listed buildings, as well as in conservation areas.

Suspended ceilings

The installation of suspended ceilings should not result in an extension of the fascia or have any other detrimental effect on the frontage. If suspended ceilings are necessary, their impact on the shopfront can be limited by either raking up to meet the bottom of the fascia or by joining to a horizontal window bar with the section of window above the bar made opaque.

Shopfront Signage

Fascia signs

The width of the fascia should be restricted within the pilasters and corbels or, where corbels are not present, line up with the window frame below. Cornices should be retained or reinstated as the terminating element of the fascia and be weather-proofed using lead flashing or a similar material. Fascia boards should not exceed 20% of the total shopfront frame height and lettering on the fascia board should follow the below proportions:



Where a building does not have a fascia board, and its addition would not be acceptable, the business or company name should be displayed as individual letters either painted or fixed (using non-ferrous fixings) directly onto the face of the building after obtaining the relevant consent.

Projecting signs

For public houses, the size of a projecting sign and any frame or support should be restricted to maximum dimensions of 600x750x75mm. Projecting signs for other premises are generally discouraged.

Signs should be made from timber and be supported on a simple metal bracket and suspension rod and be located below first floor level. Preference will be given to projecting signs which are hand painted and made from traditional materials. There should be no more than one projecting sign on any frontage. Where appropriate, the use of traditional symbols such as a chemist's mortar and pestle will be supported.

Upper floor signage

Signage for upper floor premises should be contained within the window openings and behind window glass. Signage should be applied or etched directly on to the glass or printed onto internal window blinds. Small traditional plaque signage can also be applied at the ground floor entrance to commercial premises.

Blinds and canopies

Where canopies are required, only retractable blinds of a traditional canvas type, without advertisements, lettering or images should be used. Curved Dutch canopies are not appropriate. The colour of the canopy should be selected to complement the rest of the shop front and typically a neutral colour should be used.

Illumination

Internally illuminated box signs applied to the fascia and projecting in front of the main plane of the shop will not be supported. Internal illumination, large spot lights or 'swan neck' style lights are unacceptable. Where illumination is necessary, it should be in the form of well-designed down lights (such as concealed top light tubes painted to match the shopfront) illuminating the fascia board, or individually illuminated characters.

Other advertisements

Advance/remote signs

Advance or remote signs, including 'A' boards, located on pavements outside properties, can lead to a cluttered appearance and create a hazard for pedestrians, particularly people with disabilities. Such signs also include signs/flyers on lampposts, roundabouts and banners on buildings as well as on the main road approaches to the conservation area.

Flags and banners

Advertisements such as flags, banners or tethered balloons are generally discouraged.

Signs within properties

Internally illuminated, flashing, or moving displays, will not be supported. Large scale posters or semi-permanent adhesive 'vinyls' on the inside of windows require advertisement consent if they cover more than 10% of the display area.

Security measures

- **Shutters:** an open mesh grille behind the glass is preferred, with low voltage night lighting of the interior of the shop encouraged. External, protruding box shutters are not supported.
- **Alarms:** alarm boxes should be incorporated into the design of the shopfront or fixed in inconspicuous positions on the façade.
- **CCTV:** Planning permission, and where applicable listed building consent, is required for the installation of CCTV cameras.

Use classes and permitted changes of use (relevant to shopfronts)

Use Class	Use class summary	Permitted change of use
1A	Shops, financial, professional and other services (including clothes shop, post office, hairdresser, estate agents)	To Class 3 ¹ and to Class 4 ² .
3	Food and drink (including restaurants and cafés)	To Class 1A and to Class 4 ² .2 above
4	Business (including offices and light industry)	To Class 6 ³ .
6	Storage or distribution (including self storage, parcel distribution)	To Class 4.
7	Hotels and hostels	No permitted change.
10	Non-residential institutions (including nurseries and private tutoring)	No permitted change.
11	Assembly and leisure (including soft play, gyms and cinemas)	No permitted change.
Sui generis	As a theatre	No permitted change.
	Sale or display of motor vehicles	To Class 1A ⁴ .
	For a taxi business or for the hire of motor vehicles	No permitted change.
	As a public house	No permitted change.
	Hot food takeaway	To Class 1A, to Class 3 ¹ and to Class 4 ² .
	As a betting office	To Class 1A, to Class 3 ¹ and to Class 4 ² .
	As a pay day loan shop	To Class 1A, to Class 3 ¹ and to Class 4 ² .

¹ Unless it would result in change of use of a building unit situated below any part of a dwelling, or would result in the change of use of a building or building unit which is within 1 metre (without taking account of any communal access) of a dwelling.

² If the building or building unit is 300 sqm or less.

³ Only of a building whose total floor area does not exceed 235 sqm.

⁴ Only of a building whose total floor area does not exceed 235 sqm.