

Improving Falkirk's Shopfronts



Falkirk **THI**

Hanging sign at 6 - 8 Cow Wynd



Projecting sign at 17 Kirk Wynd



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The character of Falkirk lies not only in its people but in the town itself, a town which is rich in heritage. The buildings you see as you walk around are part of the history and of the future of Falkirk. They shape the way we see our town. Shops play a vital role in contributing to the distinctive character of the town centre adding interest and variety at street level. Many have significant historic features and many retain important social and cultural associations.

First impressions are important to customers. Attractive, well maintained shopfronts in good order will enhance the character of Falkirk's main shopping streets and will encourage improved footfall and retail trade. Unfortunately the opposite is also true. Unattractive shops can discourage shoppers, which can have a negative impact on trade and may contribute to an overall loss of town centre character.

This booklet has been produced by Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative to offer guidance and advice on how to improve and maintain traditional shopfronts. It aims to help traders and owners care for and enhance their shopfronts in a positive way that is both good for the town centre and good for retail business.

Why are shopfronts important?

Shopfronts are one of the most easily recognisable parts of Falkirk's town centre.

They play a vital role in contributing to the distinctive character of the town centre, adding interest and variety at street level. Shops define the principal shopping streets and have historical and cultural value.

They are located at ground level and engage with residents and visitors on a daily basis.

First impressions

Well-designed shopfronts enhance the character of the town centre and can increase sales. First impressions are important to customers. Attractive, well maintained shopfronts in good order will enhance the character of Falkirk's main shopping streets and will encourage improved footfall and retail trade. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true.



These shopfronts are designed using traditional principles and proportions. They complement the historic building that they are situated within.

A typical historic shopfront

While the architectural elements that make up a shopfront vary with the age and style of the shop, there are features common to all. These are the 'building blocks' used to design the shopfront and are important in defining the shop.



1. Feature Signage

2. Console Bracket

These are often located at the head of a 'pilaster' and are used to provide a termination to the ends of a fascia. These are typically constructed in timber and can be plain or decorative in style.

3. Pilaster

Provides the vertical separation between shops and is typically found on both sides creating a frame within which the shopfront is set. The design can vary from plain to highly decorative. Traditionally constructed in stone or non structural timber.

4. Door

The entrance to the shop, typically timber framed with glazing to allow customers to see into shop and ensure no one is on the other side.

5. Ventilation Detail

Traditionally in bronze or brass, used to provide natural ventilation to the shop. Can also be located at the head of windows

6. Lobby

The recess in front of the entrance providing a sheltered area to the street. Lobbies may be square, splayed or curved sometimes incorporating gates as a security measure.

7. Stallriser

A wall beneath a window used to prevent damage to the glazing. Usually finished in robust, high quality materials as this area is vulnerable to damage.

8. Windows

Used to display shop merchandise. Generally timber framed and painted although occasionally can be stained. Window sizes and style can vary and sometimes can incorporate stained or leaded glass details.

9. Fanlight

The window above the entrance door which can either be fixed or opening to provide ventilation. It can sometimes display the shop number.

10. Fascia

Where the shop signage is traditionally displayed. It is a horizontal board typically constructed in timber and painted

11. Awning

Fabric canopies with timber fronts that pull out, offering protection from the weather or to prevent sun-glare.

12. Cornice

Usually constructed in stone or timber this is located above the shopfront fascia to throw water off the building to protect the shopfront.

Small-scale shopfront improvements

Many traditional shopfronts only need small repairs to bring them back into good order and give many more years of use. Small-scale improvements typically include: repairs to the shopfront, reinstating a lost traditional detail, new signage design or redecorating the shopfront.

Solo, Vicar Street, Falkirk



Before

1. The fascia (upper signage area) of this shopfront is much deeper than was original to the property.
2. A glazed display board (vertical panel to left-hand side) has been fitted over the original stonework of the property. Originally this stone would have had a carved stone capital but it has been cut off in the past.



After

The fascia has been replaced; it is the same height as the original sign and is more appropriate in height than the previous sign.

Signage is hand-applied lettering.

Repairs to the timber of the shopfront have been carried out and the whole frontage has been painted.

The glazed signboard has been removed and the stone underneath has been revealed.

Cost: £6,500 + VAT (2015 prices)
costs exclude professional and statutory fees

Medium-scale shopfront improvements

This can include making more substantial alterations to the shopfront such as reinstating the original shopfront proportions or arrangement. It can include renewing signage, uncovering historic features and reintroducing traditional details.

Bute Dental Surgery, West Princes Street, Rothesay



Before

1. The original window area has been blocked off.
2. Modern, relatively short doors have been fitted and the original door recess has been filled in.
3. Historic tiles on the stallriser have been painted over.
4. Ventilation grilles have been fitted on the shopfront in an insensitive way.



After

Glass reinstated to the upper areas and back-painted.

Original doorway lobby entrances reinstated with replacement storm doors.

Paint removed from the historic tiles.

Ventilation grilles redesigned and positioned in a more sensitive way.

Full redecoration of shopfront and new hand-painted lettering.

Cost: £24,065 + VAT (2013 prices)
(costs exclude professional and statutory fees)

Sea Dragon, 4 East Princes Street, Rothesay



Before

1. The fascia and lettering are much too large and overbearing for this shopfront.
2. Windows are shorter than they would have been originally. Views into the restaurant are obscured by curtains.



After

The fascia has been replaced with one which suits the original proportions. Lettering is less brash and more sensitive to the traditional shopfront design.

Windows have been extended upwards and curtains removed. This makes the restaurant seem more welcoming.

New door and fanlight.

Repairs to timber shopfront and full redecoration.

The owner reports an increase in trade.

Cost: £12,997 + VAT (2014 prices)
costs exclude professional and statutory fees

Large-scale shopfront improvements

This could relate to full or partial shopfront replacements to remove intrusive modern interventions and reinstate traditional elements or arrangements.

Thomas Johnston Butchers, 6 Cow Wynd, Falkirk



This is a completely modern shopfront with just a few of the original architectural features remaining, including:

- Console brackets on either end of the fascia.
- Cornice above the fascia.



Archive drawings of the earlier shopfronts of this building were used to inform the new design.

A completely new shopfront has been installed, with a recessed entrance.

High quality materials have been used.

Laminated security glass is used in place of shutters.

Signage is hand-painted and the design of the cow hanging sign reflects the use of the shop. (see page 2)

Sun blinds protect the shop and produce from over-heating.

Cost: £46,622 + VAT (2015 prices)
(costs exclude professional and statutory fees)

Replacing a shopfront

When to consider shopfront replacement

Shopfront reinstatement should only be considered where all or most of the original fabric has been removed already and replaced with an insensitive design. A contemporary interpretation that references the original design constructed in traditional materials can be installed in its place.

Use of archive information

When choosing to replace a shopfront it is important to carry out archival research to inform the design of any replacement.



This historic image shows that the fascia was gently inclined towards the street. The entrance to the shop is in a different location to the 'before' shopfront design. Copyright: Glasgow City Council: Archives



Compared with the shopfront shown in the archive image, the fascia area has been boxed out and the entrance is in a different position.



Using the archive image as reference, the fascia has been reinstated to its original design and the doorway has been repositioned. Reinstating this type of architectural detail is sympathetic to the traditional building that the shop is positioned within. (Note that next door's shopfront has been improved at the same time.)

Modern shopfronts

Modern shopfronts can be of good design, poor design or somewhere in between. The best modern shopfronts are generally those that respect the historic proportions of the building that they are fitted within. The design of a modern shopfront is out with the scope of this guide though the images below illustrate an example of a poor modern shopfront design.



A modern shopfront has been inserted into a traditional shopfront opening. The garish colour scheme is overwhelming and the shopfront is cluttered with signage.

Immediately adjacent to the modern shopfront, this 1930s shopfront retains most of the original features. The colour scheme and signage are subtle. Windows are clear of clutter, meaning that you can easily see into the shop. This visual connection between the street and the inside of the shop make it more inviting to enter.

What could you do to improve your shop?

These artist impressions show how some of Falkirk's shopfronts could be improved.



Current

Newmarket Street, Falkirk

Indicative works cost: £4,500 + VAT
(costs exclude professional and statutory fees)
(approx. £2.5k + VAT extra to remove paint from stone)



Sketch proposal

Repair the original timber shopfront.
Reintroduce a new fascia based on archival study.
Full redecoration of shopfront.
Remove paint from stonework.



Current

High Street, Falkirk

Indicative works cost: £9,000 + VAT
(costs exclude professional and statutory fees)



Sketch proposal

Improve visibility into shop by removing film on door and window.
Heritage colour scheme.
Remove projecting fascia and reinstate original.



Current

Vicar Street, Falkirk

Indicative works cost: £26,000 + VAT
(costs exclude professional and statutory fees)



Sketch proposal

Remove oversized fascia, reinstate to original location.
Reinstate traditional materials.
Remove film from window to improve visual connection with interior of shop.

Signage

Effective signage and advertising is an important aspect of a successful shop. It can be unique to the shop and help attract customers. The most successful signs respect and complement the original design of the shopfront. Subtle or innovative signs are often the most striking.



Each of these signs is unique and has a hand-crafted feel. They are not oversized or 'in your face' but are effective and attractive. The size and position of the signage is important, as well as the materials and make up of the sign. Any new shopfront signage should be discussed with Development Management before it is installed.

Security

The security of shop premises is of vital importance. Traditional examples of shop security (such as gates and grilles) should be retained then enhanced with modern techniques where appropriate.

Approaches to consider:

- A traditional approach with either lift-off grilles or timber gates to entrance lobbies.
- Internal open mesh rather than external roller shutters.
- Upgrade the glazing to security glass (laminated and toughened).
- Upgrade door locks and padlocks.
- Contact a Police Scotland Architectural Liaison Officer for a security review of the premises and for advice on any upgrades that may be necessary.

Try to avoid:

Externally mounted, solid roller shutters are not permitted within Falkirk's Conservation Area, if they are new to the property. These are considered less safe by Police Scotland and can make the shop look unused when closed. They are challenging to install on a traditional shop and harm the appearance.



Toughened, laminated security glazing.



Removable security grille at 9-11 Vicar Street.



The solid roller shutters create a 'dead' shopfront when they are closed.



Toughened, laminated security glass has been used instead of shutters.

Colour

Colour is a personal choice but should always be appropriate to the character of the Conservation Area and the parent building. Colours should be traditional and proposals for re-painting existing shopfronts in Falkirk should be discussed with the Planning Authority. They will advise what consents may be required and can advise on appropriate colour schemes.

Falkirk Council provide a colour guide in their booklet 'Shopfronts, Supplementary Guidance SGO4, November 2015' in appendix 1. Refer to this before repainting.

Colour considerations:

- Rich dark colours or pastel Heritage range colours can be very dramatic and often highlight window displays.
- A limited colour palette is an effective method of highlighting specific elements of the shopfront. Less is sometimes more.
- The colour scheme of the fascia and lettering should complement the shopfront colour.
- Carrying out a paint scrape analysis of the shopfront can help to determine the original colour scheme of the shop.

Try to avoid:

- Garish or shocking colours will be detrimental to the image of the shopfront.
- Choosing a colour specifically to stand out can be detrimental to both the individual business and the wider area.
- Painting onto bare stonework can damage the stone. This is not usually permitted in Falkirk's Conservation Area and Development Management should be contacted if this is proposed.

Suggested colour combinations include the following:

Reds

BS 04D45
Dark Cherry

BS 02C40
Deep Plum

BS 18B29
Raven

BS 10B29
Vandyke Brown

Browns

BS 08B29
Bitter Chocolate

BS 12B29
Midnight Green

BS 20C40
Duchess Blue

BS 10C39
Dark Olive

Greens

BS 14C40
Moss Green

BS 12C39
Ivy Green

BS 14C39
Holly Green

BS 18B17
Blue Mink

Blues

BS 18C39
Fathom Blue

BS 24C39
Regal Violet

BS 16C33
Duck Egg Blue

BS 18B25
Dark Admiralty Grey

Other

BS 02C40
Deep Plum

BS 14C40
Moss Green

BS 08B29
Bitter Chocolate

BS 20C40
Duchess Blue

BS 08B29
Bitter Chocolate

BS 08B15
Magnolia

BS 18C39
Fathom Blue

BS 18C31
Ice Blue

From British Standards colour chart: BS4800



The colour shades used on this shopfront are very effective and sympathetic to the Conservation Area.

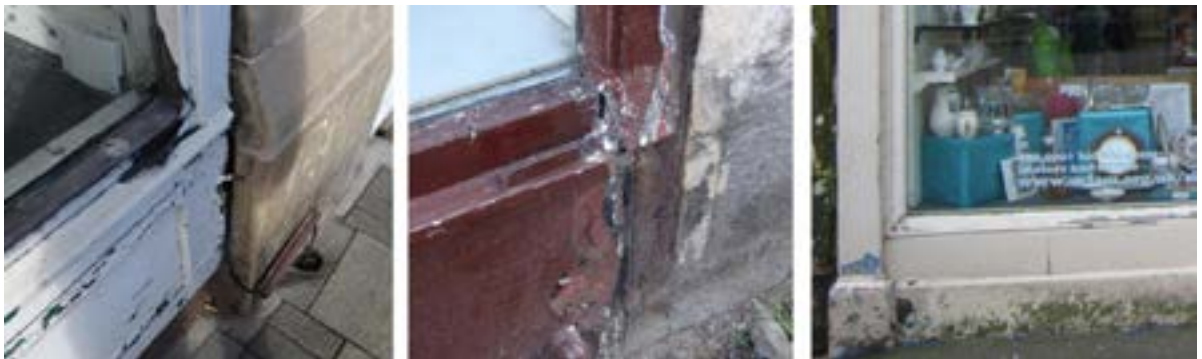
Maintaining your shopfront: key elements

Cornice



Cornices that have not been well-maintained allow water ingress to the shop front.

Paint finish



Failure to maintain the paint finish results in timber rot and more costly repairs in the future.

Timber



These timber elements have become rotten through lack of maintenance.

Metal work



Metal elements that are not regularly painted will corrode and detract from the appearance of the area.

Tiling



Damage to original tiling can often be easily repaired.

Vegetation



Vegetation growth allows water to penetrate into the shopfront, causing damage.

General maintenance



Lack of maintenance detracts from the overall attractiveness of the shopping area.

How to get building work carried out

When undertaking work to a shop it is important to choose a suitable contractor. Choosing a reputable contractor can greatly improve the professionalism, reliability and quality of workmanship. Always consider the choice very carefully and carry out a thorough check of the company before you accept any quote.

How to choose a contractor:

- Select a minimum of three contractors to look at the job and provide a price.
- Obtain recommendations from an agent, family, friends, other shop owners or a reputable trade association.
- Ask for references for similar, recently completed jobs and follow these up. View previous examples of their work where possible.
- Ensure that any quote or estimate is in writing and that the works are described accurately.
- Agree in writing how long the works will take. If there are multiple trades ask for a programme that schedules when each part should be complete to help you keep track.
- Agree payment terms in writing before the work begins. Avoid cash and VAT free deals as these may leave you exposed if there are issues later with the work.

What to watch out for:

- Don't automatically select the lowest price. Ensure it is comparable in all aspects with the other quotes and it covers all your requirements.
- Don't pay upfront for work. It may be difficult to recover any money if the contractor doesn't carry out the work after payment has been made.
- Don't pay in full until the works are complete and you are completely satisfied with what has been done. Agree in advance with the contractor any sum you will hold back to cover yourself if the contractor doesn't return to fix any defects.
- Don't hold money back without first agreeing it with the contractor as this can lead to dispute.

Note: Falkirk Council Development Management should be contacted before any works start.

Statutory consents

There are four types of statutory consents which may be required by law, before you carry out any works to your shop. If you do not obtain these beforehand, you may be breaking the law.

- **Planning permission:** Required for any work to a listed building that affects its character (including the shopfront). This may include replacing the whole shopfront, changing the stall riser, installing an alternative door or installing a roller shutter. It can also include repainting the shopfront in a different colour.
- **Listed building consent (LBC):** Required for any work to a listed building (this includes the shopfront) that affects its character. If you are unsure about whether your building is listed, please check with the Planning Authority or with Historic Environment Scotland.
- **Advertisement consent:** Required for any changes to your signage, windows, fascias or hanging signs. This can include anything which projects from the shopfront or which touches the shop windows e.g. vinyl letters or posters. It is recommended that Development Management are contacted prior to any changes to your shopfront.
- **Building warrant:** New shopfronts and some major alterations require a building warrant.

Before undertaking any works to your shopfront, discussions should be held at the earliest stage with the Council's relevant departments. It is important to note that each application is different and it is possible on some projects that all four permissions/consents are required.

Further guidance on when to seek LBC, advertisement consent and planning permission is given in Falkirk Council Development Services booklet 'Shopfronts, Supplementary Guidance SG04' section 3. This can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/2r1zw2w>

New tenants

Advice should be sought from Falkirk Council Development Services before carrying out 'like for like' repairs to your shopfront. This is because the works previously carried out to the shopfront may not originally have had consent, or policy may have been updated, meaning that previous works may now no longer be permitted.

This can especially relate to signage where the assumption would be that when replacing it is possible to replace the signage with one of the same size and layout. This is not always the case.

Early discussions with the Council are recommended to obtain guidance on the proposed work to ensure it is in line with policy.

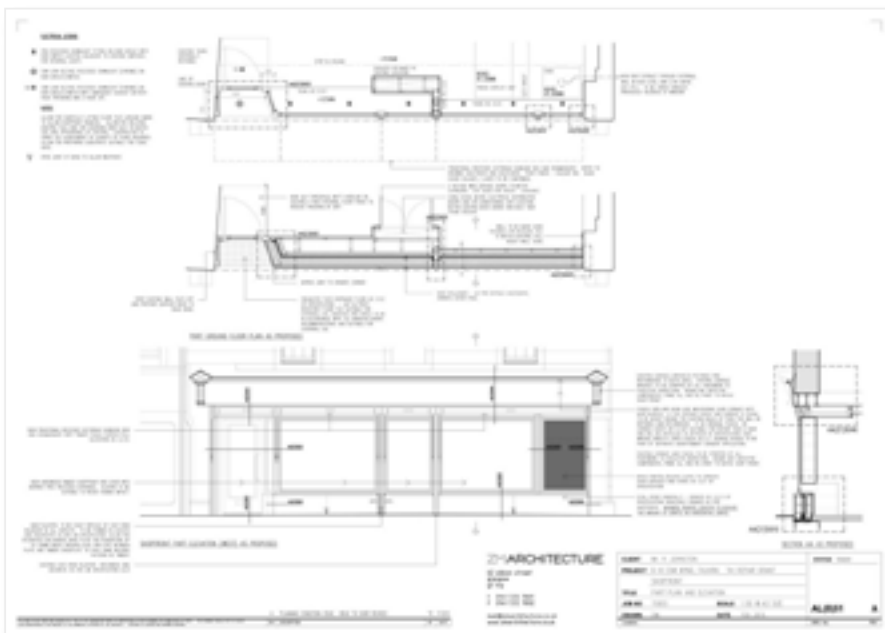
When to appoint a professional

A professional such as an architect can assist with the following;

- Determining what statutory consents are required and making the applications.
- Advising on the repair of a shopfront or design work for alterations.
- Selecting and appointing a contractor.
- Overseeing the management and construction of the works.



The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) can assist with choosing an architect. Where shops are in a Conservation Area it is worth considering appointing an architect accredited in conservation who will have the relevant skills in working with historic buildings.



The drawings above were produced by the architect who managed the THI-funded alterations at 6-8 Cow Wynd.

Useful contacts and further reading

Useful contacts

Falkirk Council Planning

Development Management
Abbotsford House
Davids Loan
Falkirk, FK2 7YZ

01324 504 748
dc@falkirk.gov.uk
www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/planning-building

Falkirk Council Building Standards

Building Standards
Abbotsford House
Davids Loan
Falkirk, FK2 7YZ

01324 504 985
buildingcontrol@falkirk.gov.uk
www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/planning-building

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh, EH9 1SH

0131 668 8600
website@hes.scot
www.historicenvironment.scot

Police Scotland Architectural Liaison Service

Tel: 101
Architectural.Liaison@scotland.pnn.police.uk

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)

15 Rutland Square
Edinburgh, EH1 2BE

0131 229 7545
info@rias.org.uk
www.RIAS.org.uk

Useful websites

Health and Safety Executive; www.hse.gov.uk

Historic Environment Scotland - mapping service; pastmap.org.uk

Falkirk Council - Conservation Area maps; <http://bit.ly/2qXXuAw>

Further reading

Falkirk Council Development Services (November 2015). Shopfronts, Supplementary Guidance SG04.

Historic Environment Scotland (2010). Traditional Shopfronts: A short guide for shop owners.

Historic Environment Scotland (2010). Scotland's Shops.

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