

Spalding Shopfront Design Guide





Context

Illustrations

The document contains photos and sketches selected to illustrate specific design guidance. Elements included in photos but not specifically mentioned in the text should not be used as endorsement for their implementation.

What is permitted development

The need for planning permission varies depending on whether the building is a house, flats or apartments, or used for business.

- Owners and occupiers of apartments and places of business generally need planning permission for most works that alter the exterior appearance of the building.
- Owners and occupiers of houses generally benefit from “permitted development rights,” allowing some changes to the exterior of the house without the need for planning permission.
- However, owners and occupiers of houses in conservation areas have fewer “permitted development rights,” meaning there is greater control over even minor changes within these areas.

[The Planning Portal](#) offers interactive 3D examples of houses, flats, and shops, showing when planning permission is needed and when it isn't for various types of changes.

What is a conservation area

For nearly 60 years, conservation areas have helped preserve the character of cities, towns, suburbs, villages, and hamlets.

Designated for their architectural or historic interest, these areas receive extra protections to prevent harmful alterations while allowing managed change. Stricter controls limit demolition and exterior modifications to safeguard distinctive features.

Councils use Conservation Area Appraisals to define key characteristics and Management Plans to address threats, ensuring long-term preservation while balancing modern needs.

What is an article 4 direction

An Article 4 Direction is a special planning control tailored to each area by the council to protect specific elements of local buildings. There are currently no Article 4 Directions (2025) in Spalding. An Article 4 Direction would introduce additional planning controls to protect the character or appearance of buildings and streets.

What is a listed building

A listed building has special architectural or historic interest and is protected by stricter regulations than conservation areas. Any alterations which affect the building's character require Listed Building Consent.

Listing covers both the internal and external character and features of the building, including any extensions and additions unless specifically excluded from the listing. Buildings and structures on land associated with the listed building before 1948 (called curtilage) are also listed.

Consents

Planning permission depends on the type of property and proposed changes.

- Listed Building Consent is required for works affecting a listed building's character.
- Advertisement Consent may be needed for signs, even if they are being updated or included in other applications.
- Applications must include clear, scaled plans.
- All necessary consents must be obtained before work begins.

For listed buildings, unauthorised work can lead to fines or criminal prosecution.

Shopfronts

Why your traditional shopfronts are great

- **Hold historical significance** – Shopfronts often have value in their own right due to their style, age, materials, on-street visibility, diversity in shape and profile and the craftsmanship and construction style of its supporting structure. Their qualities are determined by the designer, craftsmen or tradesmen who designed them to invite and appeal to shoppers.
- **Contribute to character** – They enhance the distinctive identity of a place, adding charm and vitality to streets and boosting local businesses and tourism.
- **Craftsmanship** - They often reflect a high quality of craftsmanship through the intentional use of attractive architectural detailing, decorative elements and materials to entice customers.
- **Longevity** - The materials used for traditional greatcoat building materials has the potential to be long lasting.

The issue

Historic shopfronts are lost from a range of factors, some of which include -

- The use of low-cost and mass-produced materials and components to produce standardised shopfronts are quick and cheap to install but have a set lifespan and are difficult to maintain. .
- The maximisation of signage and adverts, at the expense of a traditional building's architectural quality or appearance
- Accessibility and/or security being considered in isolation from the historic or architectural value of the shopfront.

- Early consultation with your local authority is recommended, especially for substantial changes. Many works may require planning permission, advertisement consent, or Listed Building Consent. Your local authority can advise on the necessary consents and whether proposals are likely to be acceptable.
- Engage a specialist, such as an architect or heritage consultant with experience in traditional buildings, to design or specify the shopfront.
- Any proposals should demonstrate how various options have been considered and assess their practicality and viability.





Good Design Principles

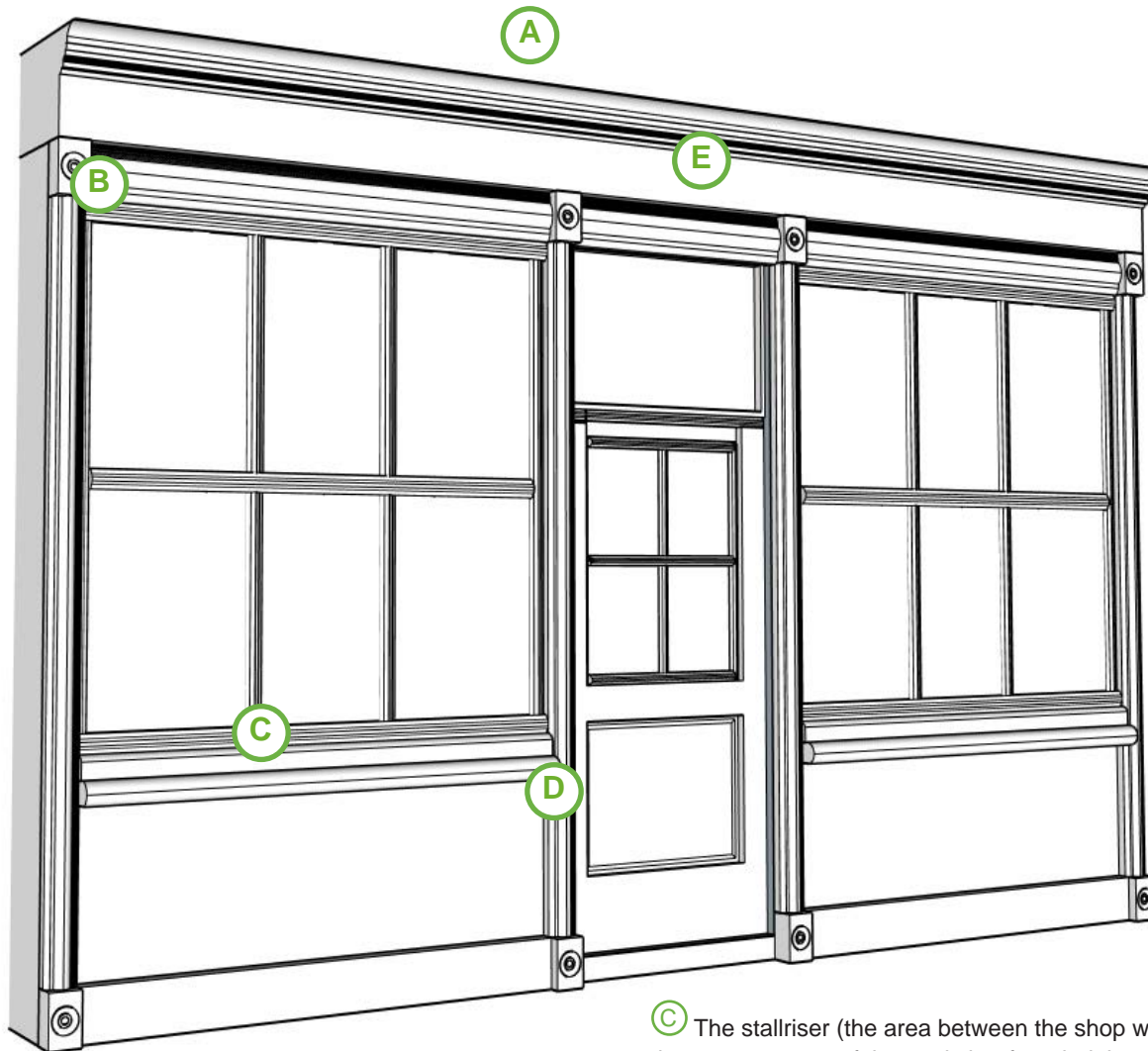
Action

Consider the architectural or historic value of the existing shopfront and whether it can be retained and adapted rather than replaced. This might be much of the shopfront or surviving details like a surviving timber cornice or pilasters faced with a high-quality material.

Investigate the existing shopfront: it may be that later additions such as signs, roller shutters or suspended ceilings conceal important features or details or open up new options for the new work like restoring the previous height and proportion of the shop windows.

Upper facades - When planning maintenance, repairs, or replacements for a shopfront, consider the appearance of the overall facade. The shopfront is a key part of the overall design or appearance of the elevation.

Good Design Principles



A Lincolnshire has many examples of multi-paned shop windows that occupy around 60% of the principal shopfront height. In contrast, later Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts often feature larger single-glazed panes - both flat and curved- that can take up to 80% of the shopfront's height.

B Traditional shopfronts across Lincolnshire are often distinguished by their decorative detailing, including mouldings such as square stops, consoles, and ornamental brackets.

C The stallriser (the area between the shop windowsill and pavement) should be no more than 20% to 30% of the total shopfront height.

D Traditional shopfronts often feature a step up into the premises (see the **Shopfront Glossary** for different shopfront type). Where this presents an access issue, small bridging ramps can be used to address the level change. Alternatively, recessed doorways in new designs may help accommodate the difference in height between the pavement and the shop floor.

E The area above the shop window frame which includes the fascia sign should be no more than 20% of the total height of the shopfront.

Materials

Action

Altered or deteriorated shopfronts should be repaired or replaced using traditional materials and techniques. The opportunity should be taken to replace inappropriate materials with more suitable, historically appropriate alternatives.

Use good quality materials for maintaining, repairing, or replacing a shopfront to ensure high standards of work. Consider the overall building condition to maintain the façade's integrity of repair and condition. Avoid lower-grade timber such as plywood, chipboard, MDF, or other timber composites, as they weather poorly, age badly, and are prone to delamination.

Consider the existing shopfront and its surroundings. Painted timber is the most common shopfront material, but in some locations, especially town centres, there is a rich variety of shopfront materials. For example, different types of stone, brickwork, metal framing, terracotta, render work and tilework might be found. In these locations consideration should be given to the design of the overall building and the character of the street to determine if these other materials could be used.



Action

The context of the street and overall character of the area should be considered when selecting paint, blind, or signage colours. Avoid bold or garish tones, especially within or near conservation areas. Brighter paint finishes using compatible lime renders or washes, or compatible paints, can be used where research has shown they are historically present.

Colours and materials should generally conform to traditional colour variations in the locality and should match or complement the fascia, these include Orange / red, cream/ white , grey/black ranges Rich and darker shades of blue and green. Often, the simplest colours work best.

Consider using a second colour on the shopfront to highlight features or add interest. In a similar way consider the colours of windows and features of the upper storeys of the building. A coordinated or complementary colour scheme across the whole building can look far more striking than treating the shopfront in isolation.



Blinds and canopies

Action

Retain and, where possible, repair original canopies, blind boxes, and traditional blinds. Up to the 1950s most shops in towns and villages had sun blinds to prevent products fading or becoming spoilt.

The awning or canopy should be designed into the shopfront rather than added as an afterthought, as this can undermine the design. Ideally the awning should sit at or just below the cornice at the top of the shopfront, or between the window and fascia sign.

New Canopies and blinds should be retractable and extend the full width of the fascia. Must be at least 2.43m above ground level and 1m back from the road kerb to meet health and safety requirements.

Many blind and awning manufacturers make traditional timber and canvas awnings and can often incorporate the colour scheme and logo of the shop. Powder coated aluminium or uPVC awnings always appear jarring and temporary on commercial buildings because they are designed for suburban houses. External shutters make streets look lifeless when shops are closed. Security blind boxes are bulky, project into the street, and often attract graffiti.

A Use colour to unify the building and shopfront – A consistent colour scheme can help visually tie the shopfront to the wider building. It can highlight architectural features such as windowsills, voussoirs, or other detailing, creating a cohesive appearance. Where appropriate, separate shopfronts on individual buildings can be visually linked using a shared colour palette and consistent signage design.

Signage

Action

Signage and branding - While corporate branding helps identify a business, it should align with the character of the building or area. Some corporate colours, styles, and logos may appear obtrusive in conservation areas or on listed buildings.

Lettering style – Lettering should be minimal and not dominate the shopfront. It should coordinate with the design of the shopfront, especially the fascia sign.

Extensive use of vinyl is discouraged, though vinyl lettering on glass at an appropriate size and scale can be a positive addition. Consider how posters, banners, and vinyl signs impact the overall appearance of the shopfront.

Signs should be positioned carefully to avoid obscuring architectural features. They should complement the overall façade.

Projecting box signs are unsightly and inappropriate in conservation areas or on listed buildings.

A Boards - Signs on pavements, such as A boards, are not permitted as they obstruct the highway and present a hazard to people with disabilities or impairments.



- (A)** Hanging signs are a good way of advertising on narrow streets and help give character to a street. Where streets are narrow the clever overhanging of hanging signs can provide an attractive sightline.
- (B)** Minimise signage clutter - One or two well-designed signs are preferable to multiple signs that clutter and obscure the shopfront. Typically, a fascia sign and a hanging sign are sufficient.
- (C)** Traditional handwritten sign writing is encouraged as it preserves local craftsmanship and trade skills. Upper floor lettering - For buildings with an upper floor, apply lettering to the inside of upper floor windows.

Vinyl signage

Lincolnshire' historic town centres are valued for their attractive, traditional shopfronts and open, welcoming feel. Large stickers or window coverings alter the appearance of traditional shopfront and the streetscape. They:

- introduce large areas of bold colour which appear out of keeping with the character and appearance of the shopfront and streetscape.
- block views and reduce visual depth of shop windows and features.
- remove the sense of openness and transparency characteristic of shopfronts by creating a 'blanked out' effect.
- The 'blanked out' effect breaks the connection or link between shops and businesses within the street and in the public realm. It reduces vibrancy and activity in our town centres.

Large vinyl or direct application stickers on shopfront windows (external or internal) are not appropriate within Lincolnshire's conservation areas. They can harm the special character and appearance of our historic town centres.

The installation of vinyl stickers to windows – even temporarily - can require consent from the Local Planning Authority. Contact the Planning Department for help with queries regarding when and which consents may be required.

Action
<p>Check whether your proposals needs consent. In many cases, vinyl stickers count as advertisements and may need consent. Circumstances where consent may be required include, but are not limited to stickers which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceed 1.55m² and are within 1m of a door, window, or opening visible from outside. • are placed more than 4.6m above ground level or above the bottom cill of any first-floor window (whichever is lower). • are independently illuminated. • are applied to a Listed Building, where Listed Building Consent may also be required.
<p>Large vinyl window stickers are to be avoided. Where branding or privacy is needed, consider more sensitive options such as modest window signage, hanging signs, or traditional painted fascia boards.</p>
<p>In some cases carefully designed vinyl stickers may be acceptable if they are short-term in use (for a marketing campaign or project) or part of a temporary shop-refit or commercial change. They should be carefully designed small-scale decorative details which complement, rather than dominate, the shopfront.</p>





Instead, make use of

- fascia boards or hanging signs for branding.
- your internal shop layout to reduce the need to use vinyl signage as a screen.
- temporary internal display boards - which are easier to remove and retain some visibility through windows.

If still considering vinyl signage

If designs are small-scale, decorative and in harmony with the shopfront consider

- Size - keep them modest in size (not covering whole windows).
- Colour and font - make sure they suit the character of the street and building.
- Quality - make sure they are good-quality graphics, without bold blocks of neon colour or using full photograph images.



Security and lighting

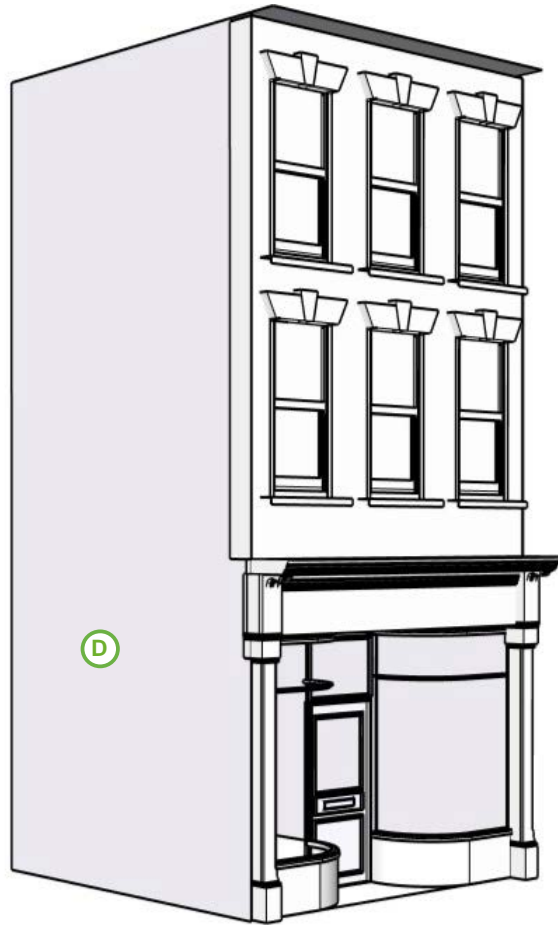
Action
External Roller Shutters - While security is important, solid external roller shutters detract from the streetscape and can appear unwelcoming due to the 'dead' frontage they create when closed. They will not be permitted on listed buildings or in conservation areas.
Internal shutters or lattices behind glazing are favoured and generally do not need planning permission. Shutters or lattices that provide visibility through them are recommended, so that any intruders in the shop can be seen from outside.
Recessed doorways can be protected with decorative metal gates, while external removable grilles are also an alternative.
Toughened laminated glass, when used with internal shutters or lattices, can meet building insurance requirements without compromising the appearance of the shopfront.
Where curved or historic shopfront glass remains, retain them and seek alternative security measures to preserve the architectural integrity of the building.
The lighting of shopfronts or window displays can help to make streets feel more vibrant and safer at night as well as advertising the shop.
Lighting and CCTV installations should be integrated in a manner that is functional and unobtrusive, avoiding visual clutter on the shopfront.
Discreet, modern LED fittings—such as linear strips concealed beneath cornices, door surrounds, or window frames—are strongly preferred over decorative or prominent fixtures (e.g. swan-neck lamps). Feature lighting should generally be avoided, particularly where it contributes to visual clutter or is likely to fall into disrepair through lack of maintenance.

- Neon brightly coloured and large signs are distracting on a street scene and are not permitted in conservation areas.
- External lighting can be effectively achieved using concealed lights built into cornices or trough lights that match the colour of the shop fascia. Small, individual spotlight units, positioned discreetly and concealed as much as possible, are preferred over spotlights or swan-neck lights.
- Accessible Entrances - Recessed doorways can help accommodate level access by allowing space for a gently sloped, non-slip ramped surface instead of a step, supporting wheelchair users and improving accessibility.



Access

The Equalities Act requires businesses to make 'reasonable adjustments' to serve their customers equally. This should not be translated as meaning everywhere must be level or permanently ramped. Instead each business must consider how its day-to-day operation, including how it provides goods and services and trains its staff, will within reason accommodate the needs of people with disabilities and impairments positively and with dignity.



A Architrave

A shallow moulding below the fascia that helps frame the signage and define the fascia's lower edge.

B Bracket (or console or corbel)

A projecting element from a wall, typically made of stone, wood, or metal, used to support a weight such as a lintel, balcony, or eaves. Brackets may be plain or decorative, such as scroll brackets or consoles, which feature a curved or scroll-like form.

C Cornice

The topmost, projecting part of a shopfront, often moulded. It provides weather protection and frames the fascia below. The architrave is usually simpler and less prominent than the cornice above.

D Depth and shadow

The visual interest created by varying the projection of different shopfront elements, such as recessing doors and windows and slightly projecting pilasters, windowsills, and cornices. This approach avoids a flat appearance, enhances aesthetic appeal, and provides practical benefits such as protecting doors and windows from damage and sheltering signage and lighting from the rain.

E Doorway

The main entrance, typically positioned centrally or to one side of the shopfront. In historic shopfronts entrances are set directly onto the street or recessed. Recessed entrances allow for steps or ramps and can add depth and visual interest. Doors are usually part-glazed to match the proportions and character of the shop windows, maintaining transparency and visual cohesion, and complement the style, materials, and detailing of the overall shopfront and building.

F Fascia

The wide broad, horizontal board over the shopfront which carries the business name. It can be ornamental.

G Pilasters

Vertical elements that frame the edges of the shopfront or windows. Often divided into base, shaft, and capital, they provide structure and visual framing between shopfronts. Pilasters that are along the left and right hand edges of the shopfront should either extend the full height of the shopfront or should appear to support the fascia or cornice, if one is present. Pilasters are often decorated with fluted or reeded ornamentation.

H Stallriser

The solid, vertical section beneath a shop window that provides a base for the glazing and protection at street level. They are typically constructed from materials like stone, tile, or timber, stallrisers contribute to the shopfront's proportions and durability. They generally do not exceed 20% of the overall shopfront height, unless justified by a higher internal floor level.

I Transom

On taller shopfronts - typically from the late 18th century onwards, when advances in glass production allowed for larger panes - a horizontal division was often introduced in the form of a transom. This consists of a row of smaller panes positioned just below the fascia, above the main display window or shop door. Transoms help to reduce the visual scale of large glazing areas and may provide ventilation. They are characteristic of traditional and period shopfront designs.

J Display or Shop Window

The Display or Shop Window are the dominant feature of the shop front. They account for most of its height and in most cases the majority of its width. The design of these windows, including the type of glass, glazing bars, and overall arrangement, contributes significantly to the character of a historic shopfront. Early Lincolnshire shopfronts often feature a framework of glazing bars, creating a grid-like pattern. Later shopfronts used larger panes of glass. The largest panes of glass have a vertical emphasis by being noticeably taller than they are wide and mullions divide up the glass and achieve vertical proportions. The window frames and mullions are slender and discrete as possible to maximise views of window displays and the inside of the shop.