

Appendix E - Shopfronts & Signage

(i) Streetscape Appraisal

If a shopfront is well designed and distinctive but has fallen into a state of disrepair, then repair work should be carried out rather than replacing the entire shopfront. This is the most sustainable option and helps maintain the character of a street. A replacement shopfront should not be permitted if it will result in damaging the character of the streetscape and local identity. The Planning Authority will not permit the removal or replacement of traditional or historic shopfronts within Blackrock except in exceptional circumstances.

Planning applications for development that incorporates new shopfronts should include an appraisal of the existing streetscape and existing building and outline the proposed design approach. The appraisal should address character, pattern, proportion, architectural style and materials. The design approach should evolve from the appraisal. Proposals for new shopfronts should relate to neighbouring shopfronts in terms of fascia lines, stallriser heights, bay widths and materials.

There are examples in Blackrock where the shopfront does not respect the proportions of the existing building or the neighbouring shopfronts. This detracts from the character of the streetscape. Examples of poor shopfront design within Blackrock should not be used to justify new inappropriate poor quality shopfronts and signage.

(ii) Shopfront Design

Shopfronts are generally either traditional or modern. Examples of both types of shopfronts exist in Blackrock. In some cases, modern designs may sit within a traditional architectural framework. A typical traditional shopfront comprises of a display window often divided with decorative glazing bars known as mullions which are surrounded by a stall-riser below, pilasters on each side and a fascia above. The door is often recessed. Decorative corbels or consoles were used at each end of the fascia.



Photo 98: Traditional Shopfront Example



Photo 99: Traditional Shopfront Example

Traditional shopfronts have stallrisers made of render, wooden panelling or stone. Some pubs and banks have granite or marble stallrisers and some pubs and butchers have decorative tiles. The predominant type of stallriser in Blackrock is wooden although there are also examples of tiled stallrisers as can be seen in the EBS building and stallrisers made of marble.



Photo 100: Traditional Shopfront Example

Some modern shopfronts exclude stallrisers in favour of having large expanses of plate glass down to ground level. This works well in certain contexts most often in new modern buildings. Such minimalist design may not work in traditional settings where it may weaken the character of the streetscape. In such instances, a stallriser should be incorporated into the design of a new shopfront.

Some modern shopfronts fail to enhance the streetscape due to the use of overly large fascias and inappropriate garish materials, colours and lighting. In some cases the basic rules of scale and proportion are ignored resulting in shopfronts that fail to harmonise with the existing streetscape and historic shopfronts; unfortunately there are some examples of poor fascia design in Blackrock.



Photo 101: Modern Shopfront-Good Example



Photo 102: Modern Shopfront-Good Example

Where generic branding and corporate logos are required, shopfront design and signage should be adapted to the local context and high quality materials and graphic design should be used. Generic store template design should not be permitted where it is visually obtrusive, out of character with the area and fails to enhance the streetscape (See Section 16.5.6 'Shopfronts, Signage and Advertising' County Development Plan 2010-2016).

(iii) Fascia Design

Fascias are usually the most dominant feature of the shopfront. The signage on the fascia can either enrich the streetscape or result in visual clutter. The scale of the fascia should be in proportion with the building and harmonise with neighbouring shopfronts. The fascia should not extend below the head of the pilaster or above the perceived floor level of the first floor windows. It should usually be separated from adjacent fascias by pilasters or some form of vertical division. Where a new fascia is attached to a traditional shopfront, it should be in proportion with the shopfront and not obscure existing features. Box fascias should generally be avoided as they often project out of the existing fascia panel and are too large and bulky and unsympathetic to the architecture of the streetscape. If a deep fascia has been installed in the past, an opportunity should always be taken to improve the situation. Precedent for poor quality shopfronts should not be used to justify installing additional inappropriate shopfronts.

(iv) Amalgamation of Units

Where it is proposed to amalgamate two shop units and provide one shopfront, it is important that the new design does not introduce a horizontal emphasis and thereby disrupt the strong vertical emphasis of traditional streetscapes. It may be necessary to break up the fascia so that it looks like two separate shop units.

(v) Signage

The signage used on a fascia should be of a high quality that enriches the character of the street. Lettering should be considered as part of the overall design of the shopfront and be of a size that is legible but does not overwhelm the fascia. Individually mounted lettering or painted lettering is the preferred form of signage on a fascia. The use of high quality materials shall be required. The majority of the shopfronts in Blackrock comprise of either painted lettering or individually mounted lettering. There are many good examples of both types of signage.



Photo 103: Shopfront Signage - Good Example



Photo 104: Shopfront Signage - Good Example



Photo 105: Shopfront Signage - Good Example

Advertising above the fascia should be avoided. In some instances it may be appropriate to permit limited signage at first floor level such as advertising on glazing. The use of glazing for signage may be acceptable where it is done tastefully and in moderation. The use of excessive signage on glazing results in visual clutter and will not be permitted. Attention-seeking large projecting, hanging signs, flags or banner signs that detract from the streetscape will not be permitted. Sandwich boards are not encouraged as they clutter the pathway and often detract from the public realm.

(vi) Canopies

Canopies should only be permitted where they are required for functional purposes such as shelter or protecting goods from sunlight. Canopies should not be permitted where their main purpose

to increase advertising space. Where canopies are considered acceptable they should be located below the fascia.



Photo 106: Canopy Example

(vii) Lighting

Lighting on shopfronts can have a very strong impact on the character and appeal of the street. Lighting helps bring dark streets to life at evening and nighttime and make them more welcoming and safe. Illumination of fascias may be either internal or external. Full internal illumination of box fascia or signs is not considered acceptable as it is visually obtrusive.

Lighting should be modest and subtle and appropriately designed to enhance the design of the shopfront. The preferred lighting option is external illumination. Lighting above the fascia should be designed to provide an even spread of low intensity light, sufficient to distinguish the sign at night. Fittings should be discreet, appropriate to the style of the shopfront, mounted at appropriate locations and project as little as possible. Up-lighting is likely to be more successful in avoiding glare. Letters which are individually back-lit is considered an acceptable form of illumination. In the interests of minimising visual clutter and obtrusive glare, illuminated projecting signs and flashing/neon signs in the interior of shop windows should be avoided.

(viii) Security Shutters

Solid security shutters often blight street frontages. From evening time onwards these shutters block light from within the shops resulting in dark inactive streets that create an unwelcoming atmosphere. In addition to detracting from the streetscape these shutters can be counter productive because if people are not attracted to the streets to window shop, then security becomes more of a problem.

Details on security measures should be considered as part of the overall design of a new shopfront. Security glass is an effective solution as it provides high levels of security and doesn't impact on the character of the streetscape. Appropriate lighting is another measure to be used in addressing security issues.