

Clitheroe Town Centre Shopfront Design Guide

Introduction

This guidance has been produced by Clitheroe Civic Society as a practical guide for shop owners and tenants who are considering improvements or repairs to existing shopfronts or when designing new shopfronts. Clitheroe has a wide range of specialist shops, with many attractive and well-preserved traditional shopfronts. These shopfronts are a huge asset to the town and contribute to the character and special interest of the Clitheroe Conservation Area.

Good design is a local planning requirement for shopfronts in the Clitheroe Conservation Area, and this guidance will help shop owners and tenants comply with those requirements to ensure the conservation area maintains its special historic interest and character. A well-designed shopfront can make premises look more attractive and contributes to creating an interesting town centre that will help draw in new business.



Figure 1 An attractive traditional shopfront constructed from high quality materials with restrained signage and appropriate colours.

Policy and Permissions

Most of Clitheroe Town Centre is a designated *Conservation Area* and therefore has additional protection by Ribble Valley Borough Council because of its *special architectural and historic interest*. All new development within the Clitheroe Conservation Area should conform to policies within the *Ribble Valley Core Strategy* (2008 – 2028), specifically *DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets*, and *Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets*. Additionally, National Planning Guidance specifies that development within conservation areas should look to *enhance the area and preserve those elements of the area that are positive* (see NPPF paragraph 219 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/16-conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>).

A plan of the Clitheroe Conservation Area can be found here:

<https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/file/49/clitheroe-conservation-area-additional-map> . Please note that this map is not fully up to date, but is a useful guide to see whether your property is in the conservation area and whether it has been deemed to be a *building of townscape merit*.

Depending on what work you are intending to undertake, you may need to apply for *planning permission* from Ribble Valley Borough Council. If your property is a listed building, you may also need *Listed Building Consent*. To check if your property is listed, you can look at this map: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search> For information on how to find out what permissions you need, please check here: www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/planning-applications/i-need-planning-permission or contact Ribble Valley planning team at: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk You will likely need to employ the services of a planning consultant, architect, engineer and heritage consultant to assist with applications.

Understanding Significance

Clitheroe has a range of historic shopfronts which are a fundamental element of the townscape in the conservation area, and an essential part of what makes the town unique and attractive to visitors.

Clitheroe has been a centre for trading since its earliest origins, and for centuries retail premises likely took the form of simple, temporary market stalls. From the Georgian period, the first purpose-built shopfronts started to appear on the ground floors of traders' houses. These typically included enlarged bow windows so goods could be displayed, an inviting recessed entrance and clear signage, and often incorporated classical design elements such as pilasters and cornices.



Figure 2 Unusual first-floor arcaded shop windows.

Clitheroe's surviving historical shopfronts largely date to the Victorian and Edwardian periods; often these have been inserted into the ground floors of older buildings. From the mid-19th century, advances in plate glass manufacture meant that ever larger windows could be incorporated. Other typical features from these periods include the use of cast iron for ornate details and to frame windows, decorative tiled thresholds, larger fascias and elaborate brackets to display the shop name and draw the eye. There are many good examples on Castle Street, Moor Lane, King Street, Market Place and Wellgate.



Figure 3 Cast iron decorative details.



Figure 4 A restored traditional shopfront with carved timber details and hanging sign.



Figure 5 Tiled threshold incorporating names of previous owners.

Understanding the history, evolution and what is significant about an existing shopfront is an essential first step when considering changes. Any proposals for repairs and alterations should be based on sound research to ensure changes are not insensitive or harmful to the character of the building, and that historical fabric is not lost.

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Establishing what makes a shopfront special can include:

- finding out about past uses of the shop, previous names and previous owners;
- what materials the shopfront is constructed from;
- which elements of the shopfront have been replaced over time;
- identifying any fabric that may be very old – this may be hidden under modern finishes;
- looking at how the shop design relates to others on the street and to the building as a whole.

Many historical photos of the main streets in Clitheroe can be found online, including at: www.oldclitheroe.co.uk/clitheroe.htm and the Lancashire Archive's Red Rose Collections: <https://redrosecollections.lancashire.gov.uk/show-all?t=1&WINID=1757432513394>

These images can give a special insight into the town throughout history. Clitheroe Library Local Studies department is also a good place to start when researching the history of a building. Books like old trade directories contain a wealth of information about businesses, and old newspapers have adverts for companies and traders.

Be aware that interesting decorative features may be hidden beneath modern signage or layers of paint. Understanding and revealing these features can help create a unique character for your building.

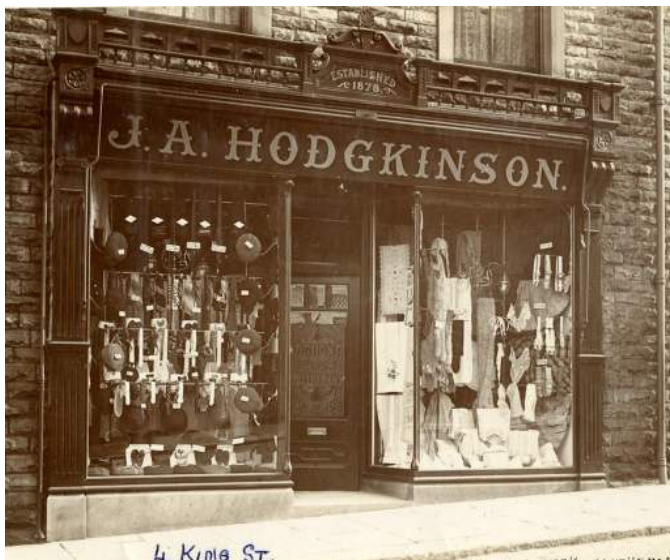


Figure 6 An elaborate Victorian shopfront on King Street, incorporating a decorative projecting cornice (Lancashire Archives Red Rose Collection).



Figure 7 The same shop today showing some replaced materials and loss of the cornice, but the same basic design preserving character.

Guidelines for Good Design

The Council will seek to retain historical or traditional elements of shopfronts that reflect the character of the conservation area, and will look for designs which incorporate traditional materials and maintain scale and appearance. The Council may also seek the reinstatement of correct or appropriate traditional details to enhance buildings that have been insensitively altered in the past.

The adopted *Clitheroe Conservation Area Management Guidance (2006)* contains the following principles that should be followed when considering a new or altered shopfront:

- new shopfronts or repairs should be built from timber and painted;
- the use of uPVC or other modern materials will be resisted;
- traditional shopfronts are usually preferred although in some cases a modern, good quality alternative, might be acceptable;
- if shutters are needed, these should be installed internally to avoid the flat, feature-less appearance of external shutters;
- internally illuminated signage or excessive illumination is unlikely to be supported.

The Clitheroe Conservation Area Management Guidance can be found here:

<https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/file/51/clitheroe-conservation-area-management-guidance>

Additionally, the following general guidance and good practice should be followed to achieve a well-designed shopfront that makes a positive contribution to the conservation area:

- **Retain and repair historical materials** – reusing historical features and materials should be the foremost consideration at the start of a project. This can save money, help maintain the authenticity of your property and helps to tackle climate change by avoiding the carbon emissions associated with demolition and using new materials.
- **Retain decorative features** – features such as pilasters, corbels, historical signage, original hardware and decorative elements should be revealed and retained. If these have been lost, then consider replacing them with replicas. Archive images can be consulted to ensure authenticity.



Figure 8 Decorative features retained on shops in Clitheroe.

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- **Use good quality materials** – if the existing materials are not repairable then good quality replacements should be sought. Timber and glass are generally preferred for traditional shopfronts, with ceramic tiling on recessed doorways. This will allow for better quality and more refined detailing, enhancing the character and value of your property and reducing the need for onerous maintenance.
- **Consider using experienced professionals** – repairing or recreating traditional shopfronts is a specialist skill, as is traditional sign writing. Professionals may also be able to advise on paint colours that are appropriate for the age of the building, and other aspects of the design to achieve a high-quality result.
- **Think about the building in its context** – the shopfront should respect the scale and style of the upper floors of the buildings and other shops on the street. Some streets in Clitheroe have a more uniform style of shop, for example on Moor Lane, whereas other streets have a variety of styles of different ages and scales. Looking at the bigger picture of the street as a whole and what contributes to its special character can help to create a shopfront that sits comfortably in its surroundings and doesn't stand out for the wrong reasons.

Elements of a traditional shopfront



The **pilasters** and **corbels** are essentially the frame for the shop front, and all other elements should be contained within the limits of these features. Corbels can also be known as **console brackets**, and their original function was to support a decorative cornice that projected beyond the fascia to provide shelter. They are traditionally made from painted wood with carved or applied designs.

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The **fascia** is the traditional location of the shop sign and sometimes also the street number. The fascia should sit neatly within the corbels and not be overly large or obscure the windows, or extend over neighbouring properties. Traditional wood fascias with individually applied letters or hand painted signs are less intrusive while still attracting customers. The use of plastic or aluminium fascias, or over-sized and cluttered signage is rarely appropriate in the conservation area or on listed buildings, as are internally illuminated fascias or those with excessive strip lighting.



Figure 8 A modest timber fascia contained by corbels, with tasteful signage applied as single letters.



Figure 9 On the left is a fascia of inappropriate material and size, extending over the corbel. On the right is a modest fascia contained by a decorative corbel.

Divided windows with timber or slender cast-iron frames and stained-glass elements are a key component of a traditional shopfront, and often have been lost and replaced by larger panes of glass. Where divided windows survive these should be retained, and consideration should be given to replacing those that have been lost. Arcaded windows with arched heads separated by colonettes and decorative spandrels date from the mid-19th century, and there are many excellent surviving examples in Clitheroe.



Figure 10 Arcaded shop windows have been retained.



Figure 11 Divided windows have been lost and replaced by plain sheets of glass

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Recessed doorways with a tiled threshold or lobby are a typical feature of historical shopfronts and should be retained. Any proposals to remove a recessed doorway by bringing the door forward are unlikely to be supported by the Council.

The recesses were designed to provide shelter to customers. They can be rectangular, square, splayed or curved, and the sides may be panelled or tiled but are commonly formed by the return of the display windows. The ceiling of the lobby is referred to as the soffit, which is generally panelled, but occasionally mirrored or glazed and backlit.



Figure 12 A curved lobby with mosaic tiling.



Figure 13 A reproduction geometric tiled lobby.

The lobby was the traditional location of a decorative mosaic, often incorporating the name of the shop. There are several examples in Clitheroe of historical and reproduction tiled lobbies; some being a simple checkerboard and others more elaborate geometric designs of encaustic tiles. Survival of original tiling is highly significant and should be repaired and retained. Where tiling has been lost it can be replaced by a good quality modern version.

Security has always been important to shopkeepers, and iron lattice gates became common in the late Victorian period as an early form of security **shutter**. These were lifted into position across the front of the lobby when the shop was closed, and reproduction examples of these can be seen on shops in Clitheroe. Shops in many high streets now have external solid or perforated roller shutters which cover the entire shopfront. These can be harmful to the significance of a traditional shopfront as they require bulky housing boxes that sit under the fascia, and they obscure signage and windows leaving streets looking unsightly and uninviting for much of the time when the shop is closed. Internally fitted shutters and grilles have less impact on the exterior of the shop and can still provide a high level of security, especially if combined with laminated glass.



Figure 14 A grade II listed shop with internal shuttering that does not obscure original features.



Figure 15 A traditional shopfront concealed by a modern roller shutter and insensitive signage.

Further Information

Ribble Valley Planning Department

Email: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01200 414499

Address: Ribble Valley Borough Council, Planning, Council Offices, Church Walk, Clitheroe, BB7 2RA

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/planning-applications/i-need-planning-permission

Clitheroe Conservation Area Map, Appraisal and Management Guidance

<https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/download/16/clitheroe-conservation-area>

National Planning Policy Framework, Chapter 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/16-conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment

Clitheroe Civic Society

<https://clitheroecivicsociety.org.uk/>

Digital copies of the Clitheroe Advertiser and Times

<https://clitheroecivicsociety.org.uk/projects/clitheroe-advertiser-and-times-archive.html>

Lancashire Archives

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives-and-record-office/>

Lancashire Libraries Local Studies Collections (downstairs in Clitheroe Library)

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/libraries/find-a-library/clitheroe-library/>

National Heritage List for England (search for listed buildings)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search>

Lancashire County Council Red Rose Collection Image Archive

<https://redrosecollections.lancashire.gov.uk/index.php?WINID=1758895052724>

Old Clitheroe Photo Archive

<http://www.oldclitheroe.co.uk/clitheroe.htm>

Historical Trade Directories index

<https://leicester.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16445coll4>

Historic England Webinar recording

Talking Shop: an Introduction to Historic Shopfronts

<https://historicengland.org.uk/education/training-skills/training/webinars/recordings/webinar-on-talking-shop-an-introduction-to-historic-shopfronts/>

Historic England Technical Guidance

Looking after historic buildings

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>



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Historic England Advice Note

Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

Alterations and extensions to listed buildings

<https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/alterations-and-extensions-listed-buildings>

Burnley Borough Council

Shopfront & Advertisement Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

<https://burnley.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/supplementary-planning-documents/shopfront-advertisement-design-spd/>

Preston City Council

Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

<https://www.preston.gov.uk/media/438/Shop-front-design-guide/pdf/Preston-Shopfront-Design-Guide-SPD-Adopted-Dec-2017.pdf?m=1556628080857>

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/2974/shopfrontdesignguide.pdf>