



EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

# **Local Development Plan 2**

# Cumnock Shop Front Design Guidance

Non-statutory Planning Guidance

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## Introduction – Purpose of this Design Guide

The purpose of this short guide is to provide Shop Front Design Guidance to shop owners and developers in Cumnock who are considering improvements to their shop fronts.

Shop fronts are an important part of our townscape and can be very easily devalued by poor alterations, repairs and maintenance. Often new shop fronts are constructed and installed with little regard to the original character and architectural style of the townscape.

Problems can also be caused by high street retailers who impose their corporate house style on a shop front, often introducing large bold signage and colours creating frontages that are out of character with the historic nature and architectural styles of the town. It is therefore very important to consider the principles of good design when carrying out improvements and alterations to shop fronts.

In the Cumnock Conservation Area, shop fronts are generally modern, primarily timber or aluminium framed shop fronts with little original material surviving. However, on the south side of The Square some 19th century frontages and original details still exist.

It is intended that this illustrated short guide will set out some basic principles that should be followed when considering improvements to shop fronts. It will also cover advertising, security issues and canopies all to ensure that new shop fronts within Cumnock are

both sufficiently individualistic to promote the retail activities but also compatible with the character of the townscape.

This guidance is generic so although referring specifically to Cumnock the main principles can apply to the entire Council area. It is particularly appropriate in conservation areas where the main purpose of the designation of the conservation area is to ensure the long term preservation and enhancement of the special character that defines the townscape. The requirement of this design guidance should be taken into consideration when applying for planning consent for alterations to or replacement of an entire shopfront. Therefore shop owners and developers are strongly recommended to consult the Planning Department early in the design process and employ an architect and reputable shop fitter to obtain a satisfactory shop front design.



## History and Development

Cumnock dates back to the 16th century when it was established as a Royal burgh by James IV. The town was well situated to function as a market centre and by the 17th century it had become a well established community. Its development continued through the 18th century when trades including weaving, shoe making, tanning and dyeing were established. These were later supplemented by coal mining, mineral extraction, ceramic manufacture and, later still, the manufacture of snuff boxes. During this time, Cumnock continued to grow as a centre for local marketing and with the appearance of shops, banks and improved communications in the 19th century, it developed from a small market town into an industrial centre up until the decline of the coal mining industry in the 20th century.

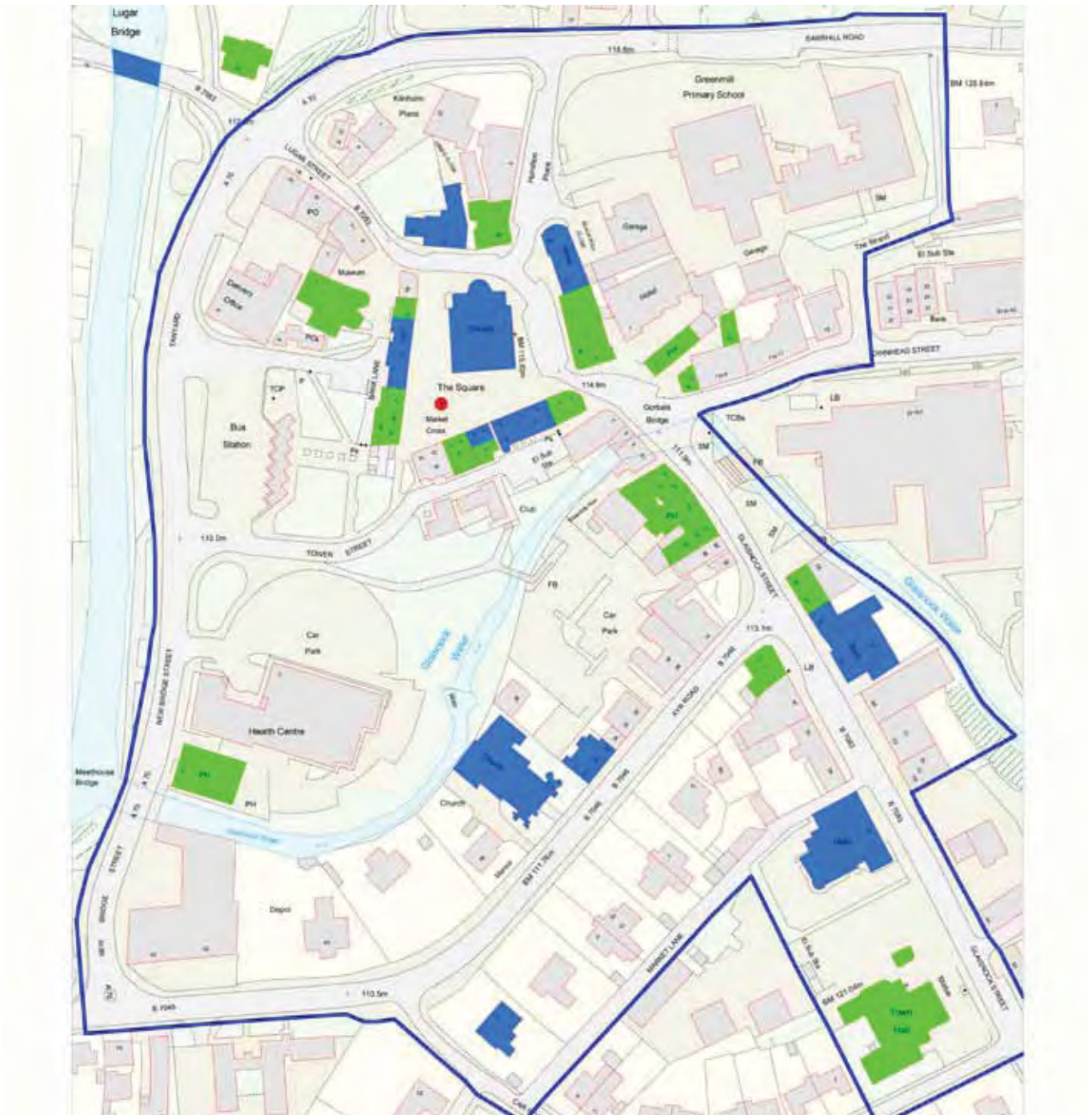
Cumnock Town Centre still contains a diverse variety of properties representing this development with a mix of ages and styles. Shop fronts are an integral part of many of these buildings and are therefore an important part of Cumnock's historical architecture.






## Cumnock Conservation Area

The Cumnock Conservation Area was first designated in 1974 and later extended in May 1995 and includes the historic core of the town. Cumnock contains 43 listed buildings, 33 of which are within the Conservation Area with the majority of these located around The Square.



Map of Listed Buildings within Cumnock Conservation Area

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Conservation Area  |  B Listed Buildings |
|  A Listed Buildings |  C Listed Buildings |

## The Importance of Good Guidance for Shop Fronts

Shop fronts should make a positive contribution to the local environment by respecting the predominant character of the area. They will achieve this through careful consideration of the proportions, character, design details, materials and style of the building into which they are placed. Good Shop Front Design should aim to:-

- protect and enhance the character and appearance of individual listed buildings, conservation areas and prime retail frontages within traditional shopping areas. Shop Fronts of definite quality should be retained and well conserved.
- encourage a better quality of design and enhance the character and appearance of retail frontages in newer shopping areas and out of town retail centres.





## General Principles of Good Design

Uncomplicated design and high quality detailing are trademarks of a good shop front. While the style of adjacent shop fronts can be important, neighbouring shops should however, generally follow similar design principles. When making any design change the following issues should be considered:

**Consider** – the shop front as part of the whole building. The design should be sympathetic to the existing building and materials;

**Respect** – the character of neighbouring properties. Proposals should not attempt to unite individual buildings especially those of different architectural styles with single fascia treatment or double frontages;

**Diversity** – should be brought to a streetscape with well designed contemporary shop fronts that compliment both traditional shop fronts and buildings and provide the town centre with distinctive landmarks;

**Retain and Maintain** – traditional detailing, modelling and decoration on older shop frontages. These add variety and interest to the streetscape and help to create a sense of place. Where possible, it is preferred, that original details are retained and repaired rather than replaced.





## The Importance of Traditional Shop Front Design

It is important to appoint an appropriately qualified professional to assist in the design process when carrying out shop front improvements, or even what may seem minor alterations, to an historic building. It is also a good idea to research any original historic information about the shop front in order to ascertain the extent of surviving historic material. Original materials and features may be discovered when removing modern fascias for example. Photographic archive records can be a useful source of information when designing a replacement traditional shop front.

### Good Conservation Area Practice Guide

1. General - Where there is firm evidence of the original arrangement of shop fronts on listed or older historic buildings, the restoration and reinstatement of period features or of entire shop fronts will be encouraged and supported within the conservation area and maybe eligible CARS grant assistance.
2. General - Where there is no firm evidence of the original arrangement of shop fronts on listed or older historic buildings, more modern designs that respect the proportion of these buildings and use good quality materials will also be encouraged within the conservation area and may be eligible for a CARS grant.
3. Colours - The use of a limited range of colours that blend with the surrounding materials in use and generally with the townscape is preferred. Strong, bright colours can be used but should be carefully considered and only applied in limited areas.
4. Signage - Hand painted signage on fascias or raised letters projected from the fascia edge are recommended. The scale of the letters should be in proportion to the fascia depth. Font styles should be restricted to a certain number of clear styles, rather than allow any font type to be introduced.
5. Blinds and Canopies - Traditional projecting inclined canopies located above the fascia should be installed rather than plastic Dutch blinds which have a curved canopy form.
6. Security Shutters - It is a requirement to use open lattice, or brick bond type of internal security shutters rather than solid external roller shutters. Where shops have existing external roller shutters owners will be encouraged to convert or replace these fittings with a more open shutter finish.
7. Hanging Signs - Hanging signs should be re-introduced to shop front edges. These should be high quality traditional signs rather than fixed electronically, illuminated signage.
8. Lighting - There is a presumption not to illuminate shop fascia areas. However, on a case by case basis lighting proposals will be reviewed. Internally lit individual letters or unobtrusive light fittings from the fascia cornice position of a high quality design will be considered.
9. Access to Upper Floor - There is a presumption to create suitable or maintain main door access routes through shop fronts to access upper floor areas.

## The Traditional Components of a Shop Front

Traditional, and even modern shop fronts contain various components which bring a distinctive style and character to each individual shop front. These design features are all derived from architectural classicism. Modern shop fronts utilise some of these features without the strict adherence to classical rules of proportion. It is therefore still important to understand the main architectural features of a traditional shop front. These are described below:

A typically classically inspired shop front consists of a framework of vertical elements, columns or pilasters supporting a horizontal element called the entablature. This framework then creates an enclosed area which is occupied by the windows and doors. The main elements of a traditional shop front are as follows:

### Entablature - A

Entablature consists of the cornice, fascia and architrave. It normally follows the plan form of the windows and doorways underneath, it is often set forward of the building line.

### Cornice - B

This is the crowning member of the entablature, it throws off the rain and provides some protection from sun to the fascia and architrave which sits below it.

### Fascia - C

The frieze is the middle member of the architectural entablature, it is this component that is often simplified to create the fascia in modern shop front use.

### Architrave - D

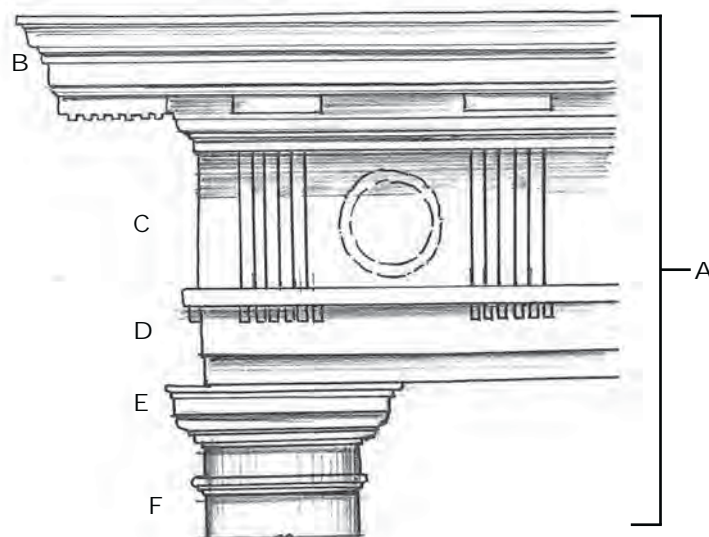
This is the lowest member of the entablature and this architectural feature gives the impression of a load bearing horizontal beam over the span above the columns. In shop front design it is often reduced to a very small strip above columns or pilasters.

### Capital - E

The capital in its simplest form is the head of the column or pilaster and acts as the supporting point for the entablature that sits above it.

### Column - F

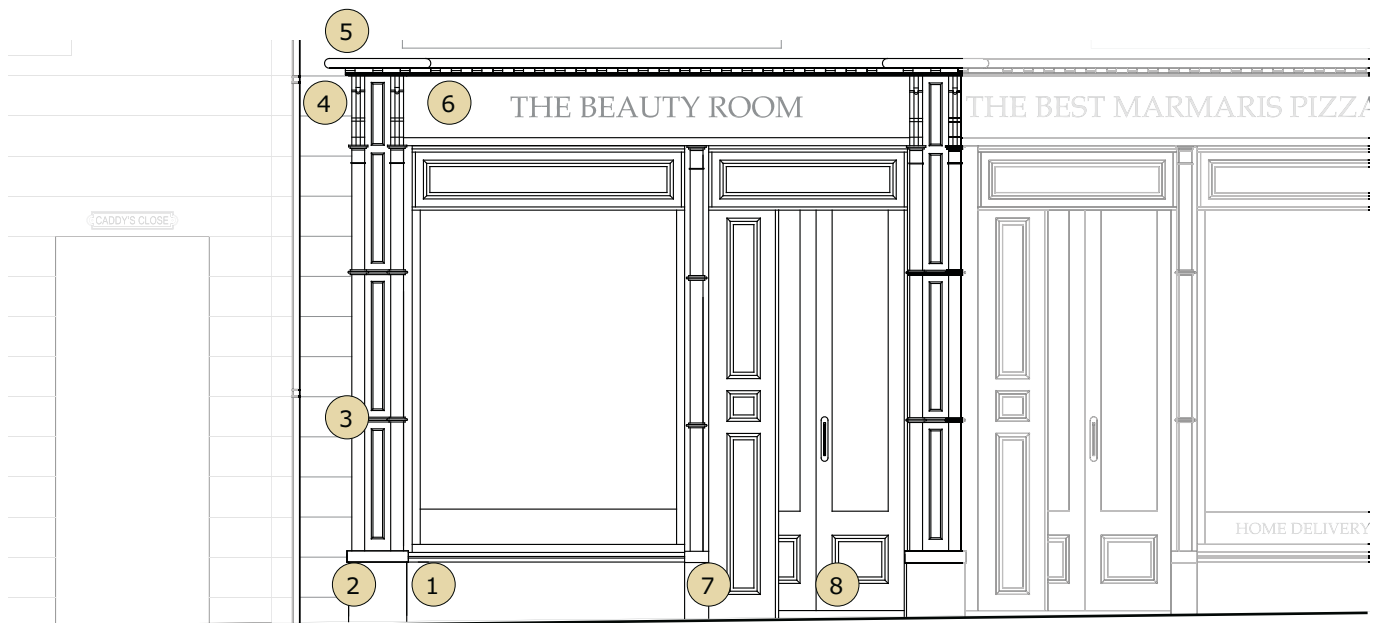
Column is the classical support element and is a vertical statement in the shop front. Often it can be tapered to copy Tuscan or Doric columns but more often it is a regular vertical member separating the shop window.



Detail of Classical Entablature



The illustration below shows other typical traditional shop front components.



(1) Stallriser, (2) plinth, (3) pilaster, (4) console bracket, (5) cornice, (6) fascia, (7) timber panelled storm doors, (8) inner glazed door

#### Stallriser

Stallrisers provide a solid base in shop front design and improve security by reducing the likelihood of damage to the shop window glazing. These were traditionally stone, timber, tile or iron.

#### Pilaster

A pilaster is a flattened version of a column and is used extensively in shop front design, it is used in a similar way to that of a column often containing a capital and a base plinth.

#### Console brackets

Console Brackets may be positioned under the architrave to give a visual support and interest or below the cornice to form a definite end stop to the entablature or fascia.

#### Fascia

The dimensions and designs of fascias are of critical importance to the appearance of shop fronts and would typically include the name of the trade / shop.

Original details such as those listed above, should be retained, conserved and reinstated if appropriate.

## The Design of new shop fronts

The following guidance should be considered when designing any contemporary shop front.

### Materials

Shop fronts usually consist of a timber frontage, built in a good quality redwood such as Douglas Fir, treated so that it is suitable for external use. New shop fronts should try to use materials that closely match the original materials. It is important to use durable materials that will not easily deteriorate. Modern materials such as boards, plywood or block board do not have the same appearance as natural timber and they are not as durable. Great care is required in detailing a modern shop frontage when using these types of modern board materials as any exposed edges will require to be lipped and sealed.

### Finishes

Most timber shop fronts require to be painted and it is appropriate to use gloss or semi gloss paint rather than a matt finish. Lacquer or clear gloss varnish over the paint will increase its life span. It is possible to closely match historic paints if the shop front is of a historic nature but otherwise modern breathable paints should be used.

### Colours

Generally, traditional shop fronts have also used a limited range of colours simply because of the slow development of paint colours using natural pigments. Colours therefore of white, off white, yellow ochre, terracotta and green are typical through the 18th and 19th century. It's only within the 20th and 21st centuries that we have seen much more use of darker colours and also greater use of white in more modern shop fronts. The selection of colour should be closely related to the architectural styles and character of the conservation area and agreed with the Planning Department. Paint analysis can be carried out to establish original colour schemes.

### Fascia Boards

The scale & design of the fascia should be in proportion with the shop front and respect the depth of fascias on adjacent buildings. Excessively deep fascias should be avoided. Fascia boards should also be designed to suit individual buildings and not be extended across more than one building.





### Signage

Signage takes many forms as shop signs and lettering are a prominent aspect of shop front design. They communicate not only the literal meaning but by their design the image and exclusiveness of the shop. Carefully consider the font size and the signage style in proportion to the fascia size and overall proportions and form of the building on which the signage will be applied. A revival of historic fonts for use on original shop fronts will be encouraged but more modern fonts and style of signage should also be encouraged on modern shop fronts. Hand painted or raised letters are preferable.

The amount of general signage should be limited and be sensitive in size, design and colour so as not to clutter shop fronts. The installation of any illuminated signs will be discouraged.

### Hanging Signs

Hanging signs date back to some of the earlier shop fronts and a revival of these types of signs would be encouraged if appropriate in specific streetscape environments. Well designed, compact hanging boards and signs, should be carefully controlled in terms of the streetscape. Fixed illuminated projecting signs should be avoided.

### Canopies

The fitting of canopies requires planning permission and when buildings are listed these will also require listed building consent. Generally canopies would not be permitted on a listed building or on well designed elevations and groups of shops of a uniform design. If canopies are to be fitted traditional flat or inclined canopies which are installed above the fascia instead of a cornice are preferred. These are preferred to the curving canvas or plastic Dutch blinds which are often permanently fixed directly on to shop frontage. Any lettering applied to canopies should also be restricted to a maximum of height of 150mm.



### Doors

The technological advances in glass production enabled doors to be glazed in larger panels. Ultimately full glass doors and frontages were possible and many modern shops use full glass doors. Fanlights above doors are often a feature of traditional shop fronts.

Traditionally panelled doors and any original ironmongery should be retained and refurbished where feasible. This should include doors to the accommodation on the upper floors above the shop units.



### Shop Windows

The shop window is the essence of the shop front. As well as allowing natural light into the interior, it provides the show case of the display of goods and wears within the shop. Very early shops had small panes of glass and it wasn't until the development in glass technology that large areas of pane glazing were possible.

Early shop fronts were glazed in spun or crown glass which had a limited size and often had a distinctive sweeping surface which did not give a clear view through. From the middle of the 19th century cylinder glass was obtainable in much larger sizes but it wasn't until the mid 19th century that plate glass was generally in use and revolutionised the design of shop windows. Modern windows now use plate or laminated glass.

Windows should be subdivided in an arrangement that is in keeping with the building. Large expanses of glass should be avoided where possible and locating the shop front door centrally can help achieve this.





### Window Shutters

Window shutters cover the glass and give security and protection to the shop interior. In early shop fronts these were often lifting shutters and would be timber in form or they might have been exterior side folding timber shutters. It is only in the 20th century we see the appearance of exterior metal roller shutters to give maximum security.

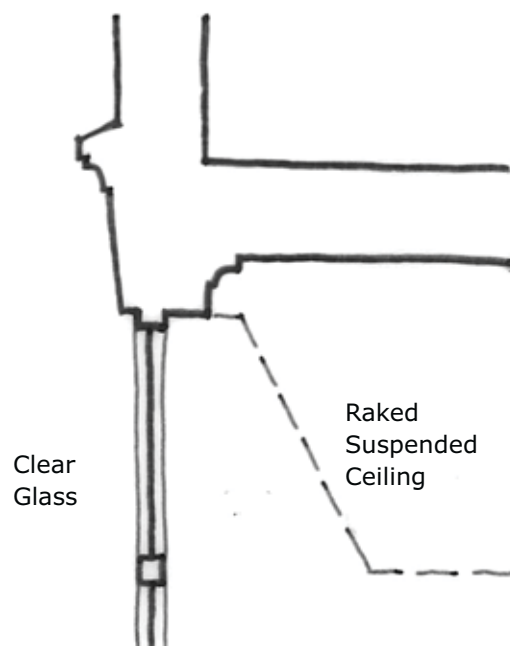
Solid security shutters are often used on shop fronts but these have a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of the area. Where security shutters are needed, it is now a requirement to install open lattice or brick bond grille shutters instead and it is preferable for these to be fitted internally, behind the glass.

It will also not be acceptable to fix externally mounted roller shutter boxes and where shutter boxes are required, any new shop front should be detailed to conceal these. Electrically operated shutters may be preferable.



### Lowered Ceilings

There is often a detrimental effect when upper sections of windows are blanked off to conceal lowered ceilings or to conceal the roller shutter box. This creates an unsightly junction with the window transom and it is preferred that suspended ceilings within shops should be removed altogether where the original proportions and ceiling plaster work survives in the shop. Where this is not possible it is likely that a raked ceiling design internally can be created to ensure the original shop front form is retained.



### Lighting

Generally there is little requirement to illuminate the actual shop fascia if located in a well lit street therefore there is a presumption against the fully lit fascia as part of a shop front improvement. If lighting of a shop front is proposed it should be of a high design quality either consisting of internal lit individual letters, or discreetly placed light fittings below the cornice and above the fascia detail. All wiring should be concealed rather than placed along the fascia head.



## Do's



Proposals should respect the size, scale design, finishes and colour of the building



Use traditional fonts



Work within the existing fascia and cornice location



Incorporate stallrisers and fascia boards that respect the height of those on adjacent buildings



Install open brick bond grille type roller shutters, preferably internally.



Retain and conserve original details



## Don'ts



Install externally mounted roller shutter boxes



Use illuminated backlit signage



Install solid faced security shutters



Install very large signs and font sizes or excessive signage



Install bright or basic primary coloured signs



Use plastic signage



Link two different buildings with a common fascia



Use Oversized letters

## Indicative Proposals



Existing



Proposed

The images above show a suggestion of how one of the historic shop fronts in Cumnock could be improved. The aim of this proposal is to remove recent alterations to the shop fronts retaining and repairing the original details that exist and reinstating traditional style windows, doors and signage to suit the scale and design of the shop front.

## Consents and Approvals

It is very important that shop and property owners obtain the necessary consent to carry out the work to shopfronts. Owners must understand the implications of any listing or other restrictions that may apply to permitted development rights in the Cumnock Conservation Area. These can affect the type of changes that can be carried out to shop frontages. Before carrying out any work on any shop front within the conservation area always contact East Ayrshire Council, Planning Department or the CARS Officer (see contact details on page 21).

Planning consent may be required and if the shop is listed, alterations and new signage may require Listed Building Consent. Owners should therefore allocate sufficient time to obtain all consents before starting any improvement work to shop fronts.

Article 4 directions that apply to Cumnock Conservation Area may mean that alterations or works that may be regarded as permitted development in other areas will require planning permission in Cumnock Conservation Area. Always contact the Planning Department at East Ayrshire Council to confirm if planning permission is required for any proposed works within the Conservation Area, prior to starting the works.



## Grant Assistance

East Ayrshire Council has secured a grant from Historic Scotland of over £880,000 for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) in the Cumnock Conservation Area. The purpose of this grant scheme is to ensure the continued survival of the important historic fabric and to enhance and preserve the appearance of Cumnock Conservation Area.

As part of this scheme, the council can offer 80% grants for works to improve shop fronts in the conservation area. These grants will be available for a period of 3 to 5 years (from Sept 2009).

Planning advice and further information on CARS grants can be obtained from:

East Ayrshire Council  
Planning & Economic Development Service  
6 Croft Street  
Kilmarnock  
KA1 1JB  
01563 576790  
or by contacting:

John Durie, Cumnock CARS Project Officer      Tel: 01290 429350

or by visiting East Ayrshire Council's Website at  
[www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

## Further Reading

Conservation Area Maintenance Guide for Cumnock Conservation Area,  
East Ayrshire Council.

'Shop Fronts & Signs', Historic Scotland.





**East Ayrshire Council**  
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