



Comhairle Contae  
Átha Cliath Theas  
South Dublin County Council

# South Dublin County Council Shopfront Design Guidelines





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TALLAGHT TRADITIONAL

# BARBER SHOP

HAIRCUTS & SHAVES

AWARD WINNING

SERVING SINCE 1986

TALLAGHT TRADITIONAL

# BARBER SHOP

SERVING TALLAGHT SINCE 1986

HAIRCUTS & SHAVES

OPENING TO

# Foreword

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The mission of South Dublin County Council is to make our county the best possible place in which to live, work and do business.

The shopfront grant scheme is intended to improve the appearance of independently owned shops fronting public streets, making our streets and villages more aesthetically pleasing to both residents and visitors. Throughout the county we have wonderful examples of traditional, well designed shopfronts and displays, which make the street scape a more attractive and inviting place to shop and do business in.

Whether you are designing a new shopfront or making changes to an existing one, there are some basic principles of good design that can be applied. This booklet provides guidance and advice to developers and retailers on repair, maintenance or installation of shopfronts within South County Dublin, while raising a more significant awareness of our built heritage.



Danny Mcloughlin,  
Chief Executive,  
South Dublin County Council

# 1. Introduction

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Shopfronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and perception of retail streets in towns and villages. South Dublin County Council is committed to promoting good quality shopfronts, and to encourage a discipline in this area based on clear principles of good shopfront design. The purpose of this booklet is to provide assistance to designers, retailers and planners alike in understanding and implementing these principles.

This Guide encourages the ongoing maintenance and protection of existing worthwhile traditional shopfronts, and a better design approach for new and replacement shopfronts.

We hope to encourage a culture of high quality shopfront and retail design throughout the county by reinforcing the significance of the individual elements of the shopfronts and the value of well-considered materials, signage, lighting and security arrangements. Every proposal to upgrade or replace a shopfront presents an opportunity to improve the appearance both of the buildings to which the shopfront relates and the streetscape in which it sits. Most shopfront works require planning permission, and an architect with expertise in this area should be engaged for any proposal. Council policy requires shop owners to consider the wider context in developing proposals in relation to their shopfronts. Initially, however, the shop

owner will be faced with a major decision – whether to retain the existing shopfront or to construct a new one. South Dublin has a number of traditional shopfronts, some of which are part of protected structures. It is Council policy to encourage the retention and reuse of all good-quality traditional shopfronts, whether protected or not. Regular inspection and maintenance is essential to avoid serious defects and decay.

Where alterations are being proposed to traditional shopfronts, care must be taken to ensure that they are in keeping with, and do not detract from, the integrity of the original design of the shopfront. You should seek specialist conservation advice when dealing with alterations, repairs and improvements to traditional shopfronts, particularly those which form part of a protected structure.

When new painted timber shopfronts in the traditional style are suggested by village or town context, an authentic, traditional design and detailing, and a high standard of craftsmanship are required. Appropriate elements may be copied or adapted from adjoining buildings or others of similar age nearby, but must be carefully integrated into a meaningful overall design avoiding imitation.



Shopfront - Palmerstown

## 2. Overall Guiding Principles

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### 2.1 The Shopfront in context

The shopfront is not an independent entity. It is an integral part of the building to which it relates, and, as part of that building, to the adjoining building and shopfronts in the streetscape. Therefore, the starting point for the design of the shopfront must be its architectural context – its relationship to the building overhead and to adjoining buildings. Care must be taken not to detract from the overall character of shopfronts which are part of a protected structure or located within an Architectural Conservation Area. Shopfronts located along a Main Street of a town or Village are an integral part of the overall character and therefore any works that would detract or result in the removal of original architectural features within an Architectural Conservation Area or a protected structure will not be permitted. Where new buildings or alternatives to existing shopfronts are proposed, they should complement the existing character of the street in relation to proportions, materials, colours and details. (Corporate retail image – with standardised

shopfront design, corporate colours and materials – is rarely appropriate in a historic streetscape. Compatibility with individual buildings and with the street scene will be considered more important than external uniformity between the branches of one company). Corporate retail and institutions must co-operate with the Local Authority in modifying their standard ‘corporate’ lettering or signage or adapt their standard shopfront designs to ensure the character of the host building and streetscape are maintained and enhanced.

*(Please refer to the Policies and objectives on shopfront and retail sections in our County Development Plan, 2016-2022).*

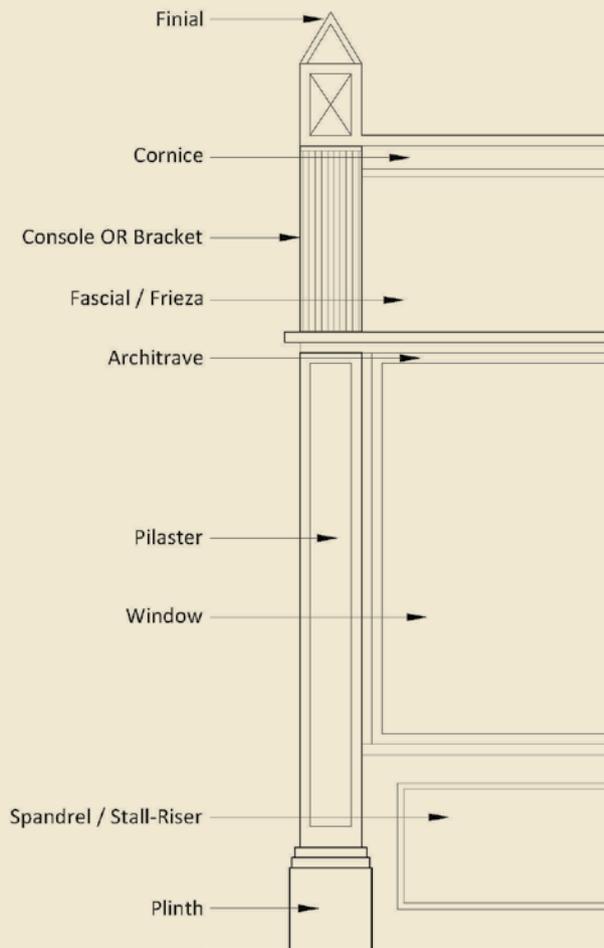
## 2.2 Relationship to the building overhead

The design of a new shopfront should relate to the architecture of the building of which it forms a part. It should relate to the upper floors in proportion, scale and alignment. Features of the building such as string-courses, arches, and so on, are elements, which may be reflected in the details of the scheme. The proportions of the individual elements of the shopfront may also be suggested by the composition and proportions of upper-floor details and window openings. Failure to relate to the form, proportion and materials above can result in a formal composition that is misaligned, top heavy and poorly proportioned with bad visual results for the premises.

## 2.3 Relationship to adjoining buildings

The new shopfront design must respect the scale and proportions of the streetscape by maintaining the existing grain of development along the street and respecting the appropriate plot width. The character of historic town centre building derives from a narrow plot width and a strong vertical emphasis to the buildings. It is important to reflect this vertical emphasis in the shopfronts. Elevational modelling and vertical division or features should break up long horizontal façades. Appropriate alignment and proportions of elements may be suggested by similar elements in adjacent shops.

# 3. Essential Shopfront Elements



## 3.1 Shopfront Elements

### Cornice

The cornice is a narrow projecting detail over the fascia. Its functions are to keep rain off the fascia sign and to provide a strong definition to the top of the shopfront. It is, therefore, critical from a visual point of view.

### Fascia / Nameboard

This is the area at the top of the shopfront which traditionally comprises the shop name and number. The proportion of the fascia relative to the shopfront is extremely important. Normally, fascia depth should not exceed one quarter of the distance between the fascia's lower edge and the pavement.

### Pilasters

Vertical elements at either end of the shopfront which sit slightly forward of the shopfront and serve to separate adjoining shopfronts.

### Stallriser

Solid horizontal section beneath the bottom of the window and the ground, approximately 30 - 60cm in height. Where timber stallrisers or pilasters are used, a small recessed stone plinth should be provided, to prevent windows being affected by splashing and road dirt.

### Plinth

The support base for the shopfront. A stone plinth helps protect the shopfront from rain splashes, dirt and so on.



Shopfront - Rathfarnham

141-6-3320

### 3. Essential Shopfront Elements

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#### 3.1 Shopfront Elements (continued)

Each of these elements forms the building blocks of a successful and attractive shopfront which contributes to the public realm and attracts/entices the shopper in. The omission of any of the above elements will only be considered where a strong design rationale is presented and exceptional quality in terms of materials and detailing is presented.

When examining existing shopfronts, retailers will need to decide whether the existing shopfront should be maintained, particularly where the shopfront is located within an Architectural Conservation Area and / or is part of a protected structure. Traditional/ original shopfronts should be retained and repaired as necessary adhering to best conservation practice. Advice should be sought from the Councils Architectural Conservation Officer in this regard.

The removal of existing traditional shopfronts will only be considered in exceptional cases. A balance must be achieved between the commercial requirements of an owner / retailer and the protection of the shopfronts within the Architectural Conservation Area.

When considering contemporary shopfronts, the shop owner should consider the shop in the context of the street, the building overhead and the adjoining buildings / shopfronts. The framework of the contemporary shopfront should include the essential shopfront elements of fascia, pilasters and stallriser / base. Alternative materials such as stainless steel, stone and polished aluminium will be considered.

The success of the framework to the shop in a contemporary design will depend on the detailing of the shopfront and quality of materials. The omission of a stallriser is sometimes proposed within contemporary shopfront designs – this will only be considered where the detail and quality of materials used, both internally and externally, is to a high standard.



Shopfront - Templeogue

## 3.2 Shopfront Materials

The traditional shopfront generally comprises wood and plaster. Contemporary shopfront materials of, for example, stone, stainless steel and aluminium may be considered appropriate subject to their context and detailed design. Impact of contemporary designs on the South Dublin County ACA will be carefully considered.

### Key Design Recommendations

- Use of plastic, acrylic, or other shiny material on a shopfront, particularly relating to the fascia, will not be permitted.
- The colour and texture of materials chosen, whether traditional or contemporary should consider the building overhead, adjoining buildings and streetscape.
- Replacement of traditional window materials with PVC is not considered appropriate.
- Downpipes and rainwater goods can affect the overall character of a shopfront. Where these are to be replaced within the South Dublin County ACA, they should be replaced with traditional cast iron types.



**Shopfront - Rathcoole**



Shopfront - Rathcoole

## 4. Signage Elements

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### 4.1 Signage General

The depth / overall height of the fascia panel is important to the successful design of a shopfront. Overly deep fascias seriously detract from a shopfront and affect the character of a streetscape. Fascia depth should generally not exceed one quarter of the distance between the fascia's lower edge and the pavement.

### Key Design Recommendations

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- The fascia panel should generally only contain the name of the shop and number. Plastic fascias or projecting box signs attached to a traditional fascia will generally not be permitted.
- The shop name should be hand painted onto the fascia or comprise individually mounted lettering. Letter design should be simple and legible and in proportion to the fascia. Lettering should generally be in a sans serif font style and no more than 40cm high. The material for the lettering should take its guidance from the shopfront design.
- Retailers are encouraged to include their shop number on the fascia panel.
- A single fascia should not be used to link two adjoining visually distinct buildings.
- Signage for businesses located within the upper floor units should be modest. Discrete nameplates at entrances are considered acceptable and / or modest lettering on the inside of windows at the upper floor level.
- Large upper floor signage related to a ground floor unit will not be permitted.
- Where a traditional shopfront to a business is not appropriate, discrete individually marked letters onto the façade of the building will be considered.

# HIBERNIAN LAW SOLICITORS



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Shopfront - Palmerstown

## 4. Signage Elements

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### 4.2 Projecting or Hanging Signs

Projecting or hanging signs should be simple and limited to the name of the shop or a graphic indication of the type of shop. In Architectural Conservation Areas and/or protected structures, projecting box signs are unsuitable, non-internally illuminated hanging signs are preferred for their traditional appearance and simplicity, as can be seen in the image below.

### 4.3 Lettering

Lettering should be part of the shopfront design and should respect the character of the building and the street.

#### Key Design Recommendations

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- The size of lettering should be determined by the need to be legible to shoppers, but not too large to swamp the fascia or the shopfront.
- The style of lettering can help convey the image of the shop but should not conflict with the other elements of the buildings.
- Each shop must have its street number clearly displayed.

### 4.4 Corporate Sign Styles

A good starting point of shopfront design is that architectural context should take priority over corporate branding. Company logos, signs and standard shopfront designs are often not suitable for traditional shopfronts, particularly those within listed buildings or in conservation areas. Corporate shops and institutions need to co-operate with the Local Authority in modifying their standard 'corporate' lettering or signage or adapt their standard shopfront designs to ensure the character of the host building and streetscape are maintained and enhanced.

#### Key Design Recommendations

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- The authority recognises the need to convey corporate image and the desire to create a strong presence on the streetscape. Often the colours and graphics of corporate branding do not translate easily in the streetscape, particularly in conservation areas.
- The toning down of branding is recommended in order to respect both the individual architectural composition of the host building and the character of the surrounding A good starting point of shopfront design is that architectural context should take priority over corporate branding.

### 4.5 Gaelic

Bilingual signs are encouraged, using a distinctive Gaelic-style script on hand-painted wooden signs. In order to protect and promote linguistic heritage.



Shopfront - Clondalkin

## 5. Windows and Entrances

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Window shape, proportions and glazing bars should take reference from the building overhead. A vertical emphasis should be maintained in window design. Shopfronts with a strong horizontal emphasis can disrupt the harmony of a street.

Where an expansion of a shop is considered, it is important that clear vertical distinction between individual buildings is maintained.

New shops or a combination of adjoining shopfronts should never obscure architectural details of the original building such as sills, stringcourses, or windows.

The use of film / advertisements / screens or digital screens that obscure the glazed area of a shopfront window will be discouraged. Where stickers are used these should be kept to a minimum in favour of creating an attractive display of goods and avoidance of a sense of dead frontage on a streetscape.

Access to the upper floors within a building is generally through a separate entrance door adjoining the shopfront. In order to support the diversity of uses in the long within a building, the removal of these independent accesses will normally not be permitted.

# Rathfarnham Beauty Clinic

GUINOT  
INSTITUT - PARIS  
appointed salon

GUINOT  
INSTITUT - PARIS  
appointed salon

Shopfront - Rathfarnham

## 6. Illumination

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Illumination should be discrete, and restricted, where allowed, to backlighting of the individual letters or by concealed neon tubing. Spotlights will only be considered where they are discreet, the arm length short and hoods treated to match the background colour.



**Shopfront - Palmerstown**



**Shopfront - Rathfarnham**



Shopfront - Lucan

## 7. Canopies

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Canopies provide weather protection to shoppers and shop windows. They can be lively additions to the streetscape provided that they are as an integral part of the shopfront.

### Key Design Recommendations

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- The erection of plastic, fabric 'Dutch' type canopies will be discouraged.
- Where canopies are required the use of rectangular sun blinds / awnings of the retractable type may be permitted.
- Canopies should be kept free from signage. Any additional signage if required should be applied directly to the glass or installed behind glazing.
- Care should be taken with canopies to ensure that their size, shape and position are compatible with the character of the building.
- Architectural details should not be obscured with the installation of the canopy.
- The colour and material should be constant with, or complementary to, the materials of the shopfront and building.
- It is essential that the blind box is incorporated into the shopfront design and not simply applied. Retracting blinds should always retract fully into the fascia and should provide safe and adequate ground clearance (minimum 2.4m above ground level).
- Canopies should not interfere with the visibility of traffic signals and signs.
- Canopy supports should not interfere, with or detract from, the appearance of a shopfront.



Shopfront - Palmerstown

## 8. Planting / Greenery

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Measures to 'green' or enhance attractiveness of shopfronts or outdoor terraces / seating areas through planting should enhance the look of the shopfront without causing obstruction to footpaths or entrances.





**Shopfront Planting**

## 9. Accessibility

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Ease of access should be provided for all. A clearly visible and accessible entrance is likely to create a positive impression for all customers and make them feel welcome. Where existing shopfronts do not provide satisfactory access, improvements should be explored to resolve such problems. New shopfronts should always where practicable, provide direct and straightforward universal access to the shop.

People with diverse access needs should be able to use buildings and places comfortably and safely, as far as possible without special assistance. Level entry (Step-free) entrances facilitate not just wheelchair users but also people with buggies; people with suitcases or shopping trolleys; people using walking or mobility aids; and people who are blind or have sight loss.

### Key Design Recommendations

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- Ensure entrances are clearly visible and prominent.
- Make sure all entrances in new buildings meet established universal design standards. Design alternative entrances to existing buildings to meet universal requirements.
- Provide adequate space inside and outside entrance doors.
- Establish clear landing space outside entrance of 2,440mm x 2,440mm. Arrange outward-opening doors so that they are recessed or guarded.
- Ensure threshold to entrances are level or no greater than 10mm with chamfered, pencil-rounded or ramped profile.
- Provide canopy or door recess for weather protection.
- Leave a clear space of 600mm adjacent to handle-side of door.



The Round Tower Café, Clondalkin

# 10. Statutory Requirements

## 10.1 Planning Regulations

Planning permission is required for most works to shopfronts. This includes significant works such as the construction of new or replacement shopfronts, but may also include lesser scale works such as alterations to existing shopfronts, the erection of security grills and shutters and the installation of canopies.

The erection of signs and most advertisements also require planning permission as does some changes of use, even changes between commercial uses.

Consultation with the Planning Department is advisable when works to shopfronts and associated advertising, signage, security and lighting are under consideration. This will help determine if permission is required and will if necessary facilitate further advice particularly in the context of the County Development Plan.

A formal determination on any dispute or confusion about the requirement for planning permission can be obtained by requesting an Exemption Certificate (Section 5) or in the case of protected structures a Declaration (Section 57).

## 10.2 Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas

The County Plan includes the Record of Protected Structures and describes the location and extent of the Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA). These designations seek to protect and enhance built heritage. Shopfront, signage and associated works on protected structures or buildings in ACA's are required to go through a more rigorous assessment than non-designated structures, the prevailing design policy is one of conservation and enhancement. Works, which materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of special interest, require permission. In some cases, this can even include the re-painting of the external walls. Similarly, for the exterior of buildings within an ACA, planning permission is required for works, which materially affect the character of the area. The Councils Architectural Conservation Officer be contacted where confirmation is required.



**Rathcoole Inn**

OIFIS AN POIST



POST OFFICE

STANLEY



Shopfront - Rathfarnham

# 11. Shopfront Checklist

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Where formal clarification is required as to whether certain works require permission, a Section 5 Exemption Certificate under the Planning and Development Acts can be sought or, in the case of a Protected Structure, a Section 57 Declaration.

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Check if the building is located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and / or is a Protected Structure. If this is the case, conservation and enhancement of shopfronts instead of replacement is generally recommended. Retain traditional elements of the shopfront where possible, such as fascia, pilaster, stall riser, windows, doors, wall renders and other significant features of historic buildings, whether protected or not.



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Consider fascia proportion and fascia signage - hand painted signage or individually mounted lettering is preferable.



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Projecting signs, banners and sandwich boards clutter a streetscape and should be avoided.



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Canopies should be incorporated within the design of the shopfront with the blind box recessed.



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Shop entrances should be accessible to all, including disabled people and those with prams/pushchairs. Proposals should be in compliance with the relevant Building Regulations.



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Ensure that corporate logos, lighting, designs and colours are not used at the expense of the Streetscape. Colours should respect the palette of the street and should not be garish or discordant with adjacent fascias.



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Consider shopfront proportions and materials relative to the building overhead and the rest of the street.



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Security shutters if required should be located behind the shopfront display and should be see through in all cases. External security shutters should be avoided.



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Prevent the use of film or screening that obscures the glazed area of a shopfront window.



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No amplified music or other sound should be broadcast from any premises. Any such sounds within a premises should be controlled so as to be inaudible from adjoining premises or at two metres from the frontage.



# Copper Kettle

Come in we're  
**OPEN**

Take  
Away  
Coffee  
Phone in  
your order  
087  
7053290

**Shopfront - Rathcoole**

# Previous Shopfront Grant Winners

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