

Macclesfield Shopfront Design Guide



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Purpose of the Document



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Macclesfield is a unique town with a strong identity rooted in its silk heritage and a history dating back to medieval times. Its character centres on its industrial past and the strength of its 18th and 19th century townscape; from the central Market Place to the intimate passageways, cobbled meandering streets and steps and impressive continuous groups of listed buildings and historic shop frontages. Although principally clustered around Chestergate, Market Place and Mill Street in the town centre, small pockets of commercial activity also appear along the historic principle routes out of the town into the surrounding countryside including Buxton Road and London Road and within the former historic villages such as Broken Cross and Hurdsfield.

Within the town there are numerous examples of high quality shopfronts which highlight the positive impact that undertaking alterations sympathetically can have in terms of reinforcing historic character, adding visual interest and creating a lively sense of commercial activity. Conversely, the cumulative impact of piecemeal alterations – including poor quality shopfronts, roller shutters and signage at street level – can have a significant impact on how we experience our local townscape and our appreciation of the historic environment.



Preserving and enhancing the distinctive local character of Macclesfield's retail frontage will attract customers and support the growth of economic activity, encourage tourism, raise property values and prevent un-neighbourly alterations and anti-social behaviour. The purpose of this design guide is therefore to provide guidance which will assist in safeguarding the special qualities of Macclesfield's commercial townscape for generations to come.

It will assist property owners, tenants and professional agents by outlining when permission is required and providing detailed design guidance and best practice examples for reference to inform proposals and therefore speed up the application process.



1. When is Permission Required?



Before commissioning a design, before appointing a contractor and before starting work ALWAYS check what permissions are required and if your building is listed.

Planning Permission

Planning Permission is required for 'development' which affects the external appearance of a building (whether it is listed or unlisted) and for a 'change of use'.

Whilst some works and changes of use benefit from 'permitted development rights' they are subject to a number of restrictions including being located within a conservation area and subject to the building's existing use.

Advertisement Consent

Many advertisements benefit from 'deemed consent', this is dependent on the location, type and size of the sign proposed. Further guidance can be found in the DCLG document: '[Outdoor Advertisements and Guides](#)'.

Advertisements on listed buildings require listed building consent.

Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent is required for any alteration to a listed building which affects its special architectural or historic interest such as physical alterations, new signage and major colour changes. This includes alterations to the interior as well as the exterior of a listed building.

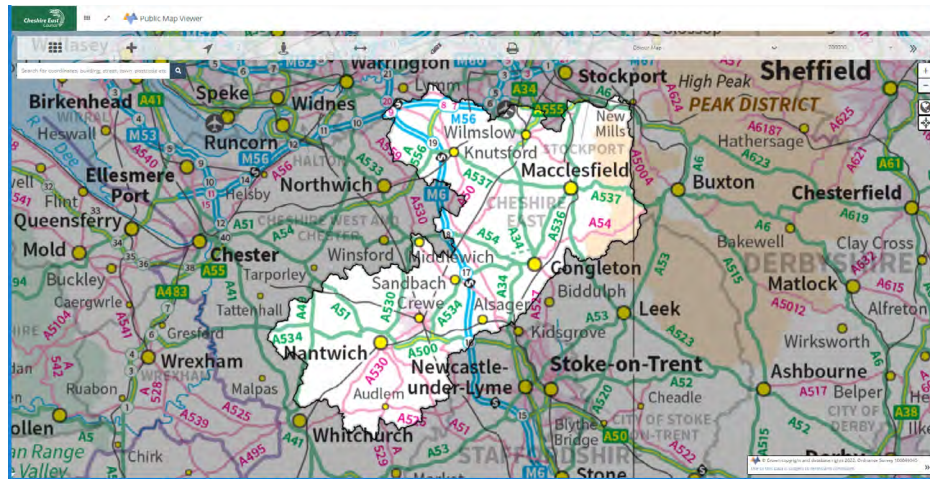
If in doubt – contact the Cheshire East planning team

2. Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets



Macclesfield contains a high concentration of listed buildings and is covered by 12 conservation areas; these are protected by planning law for their special historic and/or architectural interest, and it is important that alterations to the retail frontages do not adversely affect their significance. There are numerous locally listed buildings and further buildings of merit considered to be non-designated heritage assets – these have a degree of significance requiring consideration in planning decisions.

Refer to Cheshire East's [interactive map](#) to see if your building is listed, locally listed or located in a conservation area.



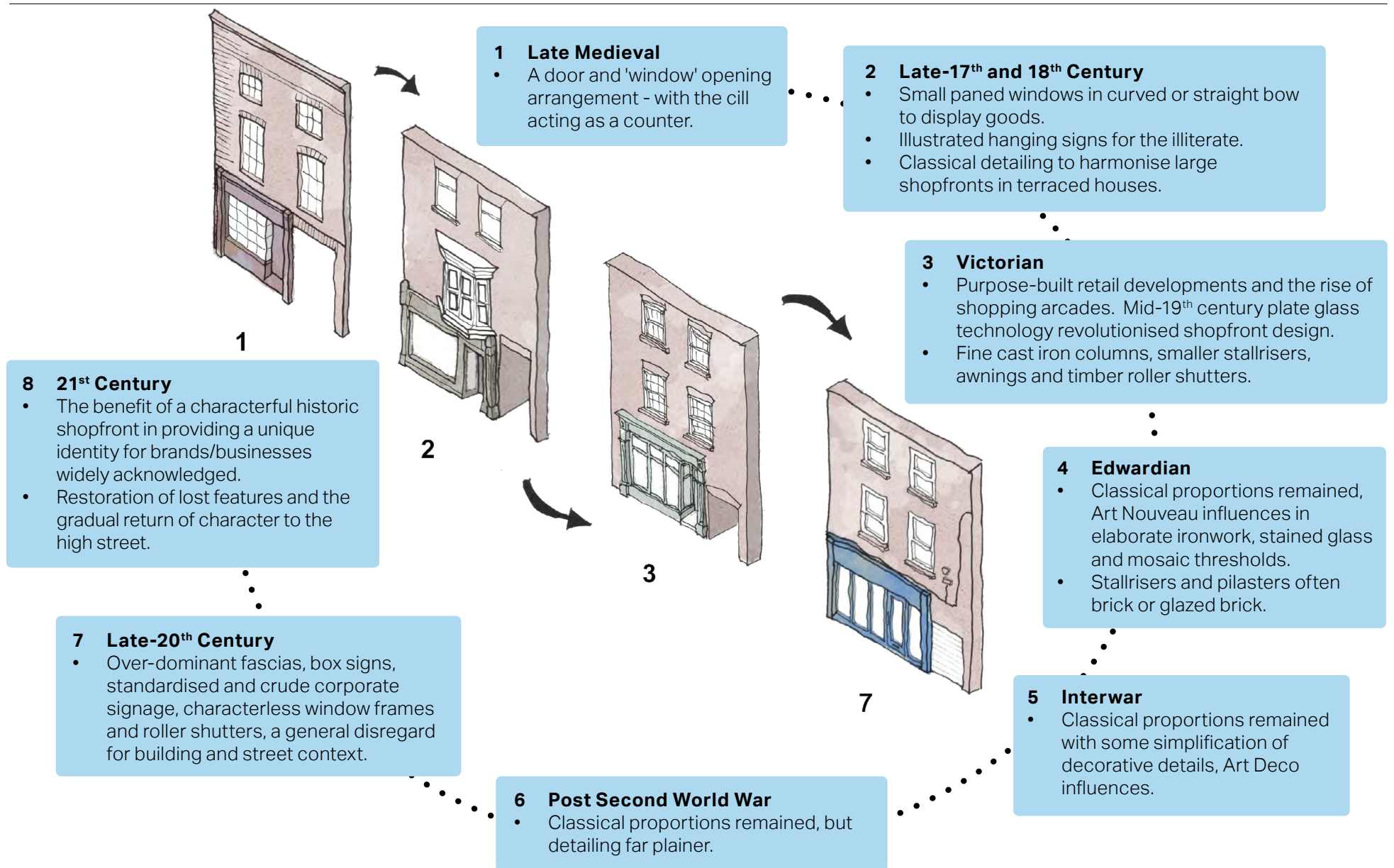
Now and Then

This early-20th century photograph looking east along Chestergate shows many shopfronts fitted with awnings and although window displays appear to be rather busy, there are relatively few hanging signs. The present-day photo shows the results of mid-20th century pedestrianisation of the street and a general deterioration in the quality of shopfronts.



3. Development of Shopfront Design





Now and Then

The c.1900 view west along Chestergate shows the form of traditional shopfronts, with modest-sized fascias, awnings and small projecting signs. The present-day photo shows the results of the late-20th century construction of Churchill Way and the deadening impact of solid roller shutters.



4. Typical Features of a Shopfront



Although designs vary, traditional shopfronts in Macclesfield are built up of a number of functional and decorative features. The fascia, pilasters and stallriser visually frame the shopfront which, alongside the doorcase, support the building above and it is important that they relate sensitively to the overall design and composition of the building. The material used to construct the shopfront, and its colour, can also have a big impact on its character.

Glazing: subdivided by mullions and transoms, for 20th century and contemporary buildings large plate glass windows may be appropriate.

Stallriser: solid base to the shopfront, protecting the area below the display window from damage. Traditionally this was part of a window display table, when shopfronts were open.

Threshold: marks the entrance and often features tiles, mosaic or terrazzo and mediates between changes in level between the street and shop.

Mullion: vertical element of the frame subdividing shopfront; arched and pointed mullions are a local feature.

Transom: horizontal element of the frame subdividing shopfront.

Transom light / fanlight: aligns with the transom and provides illumination; many with arched or pointed details.



Pilasters: half-columns which frame the sides of a shopfront and provide visual support to the fascia and upper floors of a building.

Plinths: base to pilaster.

Capitals: cap to pilaster sometimes with decorative **corbel** or **console brackets**.

Fascia: horizontal band over the window, fixed between the capitals and defining the ground and upper floors. Provides the main area for displaying the name and function of the shop.

Cornice: over fascia to shed water and visually complete the shopfront - sometimes with integrated casings for shutters or awnings.

Awning: to provide shade and shelter, a canvas canopy on a roller which retracts fully into the fascia cornice, with iron support brackets.

Security gates or shutters: to provide security to shopfronts and doorways; lattice grilles and internal fittings tend to be less obtrusive.

Colours and materials: Traditional shopfronts are typically formed in painted woodwork.

Carriage Openings: provide covered access through buildings to rear yards.



5. Macclesfield Shopfronts



There are numerous examples of good shopfronts throughout Macclesfield, both historic – typically late-19th century additions to 18th and 19th century townhouses – and also newly inserted shopfronts which are well-detailed and replicate the traditional style including stallrisers, transom lights, mullions, pilasters, fascia boards and features such as pointed arches to the transom lights. Those illustrated in the accompanying images demonstrate the inviting appearance of such shopfronts and the positive impact they can have both in terms of the architectural quality of the individual building and the resultant appeal of the retail unit.

By contrast poor quality shopfronts, projecting box signs and internally illuminated or oversized box fascias dominate the otherwise handsome buildings above and overly intrude into the streetscene, having a negative impact on how people experience it. Roller shutters can be particularly harmful, creating a dead frontage when closed and adding to a perception of crime and anti-social behaviour – particularly at night time.





Large scale shopfront responding to composition of the building



Shopfront and entrance addressing street corner



Threshold set in from the corner



Shopfronts inserted into former domestic industrial building



Shopfront retained with professional use



Definition between buildings maintained in the shopfront



Modern shopfront sensitive to historic facade



Pointed arch detail to transom lights



Modern shopfront suited to host building



Shopfront framed by pilasters



Historic shopfront with transom light detailing



Shopfronts retained as part of change of use to maintain street frontage

Now and Then

The historic view of Mill Street shows its northern end at the entrance to Market Place. A fair amount of rebuilding has taken place, with largely modern shopfronts of varying quality.



6. Principles of Good Shopfront Design



- Existing historic shopfronts should be retained. Where parts survive (such as pilasters or awning boxes) either visible or hidden, they should also be retained and incorporated into a new design.
- New shopfronts must be in-keeping with the character and appearance of the host building, relate satisfactorily to the period and style of the upper parts of the façade and respond to the rhythm and characteristics of the street.
- New shopfronts within historic buildings should preserve those elements that contribute to the traditional character of the building including historic corbels, pilasters, fascias and stallrisers, or seek to reinstate them where missing.
- Appropriate size, scale, proportionate design and detailing, the use of correct materials and colour schemes are all important in ensuring a sympathetic design.
- Where businesses span two buildings, the distinction between the two should be maintained within the shopfront with access provided into both as far as is reasonably practical.
- When works are proposed it will be expected that the opportunity is taken to make improvements, such as removing detracting elements (see shopfront enhancement chart).
- Should a shopfront no longer be required owing to a change of use, any proposed alterations must still consider their impact on the architectural character of the host building and the role of the active frontage in the streetscene, with the retention of historic frontages and features being a priority.



Positive Shopfront



- Shopfront relating to composition of host building
- Wires and security equipment located at lower level
- Signage contained within fascia sign with modern aesthetic but no external lighting
- Opening to alleyway infilled with traditional timber boarded door
- Traditional detailing such as stallriser and mullions

Modern Shopfront



- Wires and security equipment running to high level
- Additional high level signage
- Projecting internally illuminated box sign
- Oversized illuminated box fascia sign with pigeon spikes on top
- External roller shutter with projecting shutter box
- Opening to alleyway with solid roller shutter
- Large single plate glass shopfront with low stallriser

Negative Shopfront

7. Shopfront Repair and Refurbishment



Pilasters

- Pilasters should appear at the edges of buildings or any change in level and relate to the rhythm of the façade above.
- Paint schemes should end on either side of a shared pilaster; they should not be half painted.

Doors

- New doors should be in keeping with the age of the shopfront and building above.
- Ironmongery should be in keeping with the age of the building above.

Shop Windows

- Historic glazing bars and glazing bar patterns should be retained.
- The frame of the window should match the surrounding historic shopfront and be in proportion to the historic detailing.

Materials

- Repairs should use materials to match the existing.
- Alteration and renewal of elements of the shopfront as a whole should use traditional materials such as painted sustainable-sourced hardwood timber, brick, stone and iron work.
- Plastic, sheet metal, reflective modern materials and painted ply should be avoided.
- The use of rendered brick stallrisers finished to match the shopfront above can overcome maintenance issues with timber stallrisers.



Appropriately detailed replacement shopfront retaining pilasters



Late 19th century shopfront with decorative leaded transom lights

Colour

- Colour should be used to enhance the character and appearance of the individual frontage and wider townscape.
- Colour palettes should relate to the architectural character and date of the building and allow for variety in the streetscene.

Accessibility

- Following the Equality Act 2010, level access through the principal entrance of the shopfront is required.
- Sensitive alterations that remove the need for step access into the shop are encouraged.

Security

- 10mm toughened glass can provide robust security and be incorporated into double glazing.
- If roller shutters are required these should be lattice rather than solid and located internally where possible - discretely concealed within the joinery behind the fascia.
- External security cameras and alarms to be incorporated into the joinery or located discretely on the façade.



Colours used to create distinctive shopfront without compromising appearance of the building



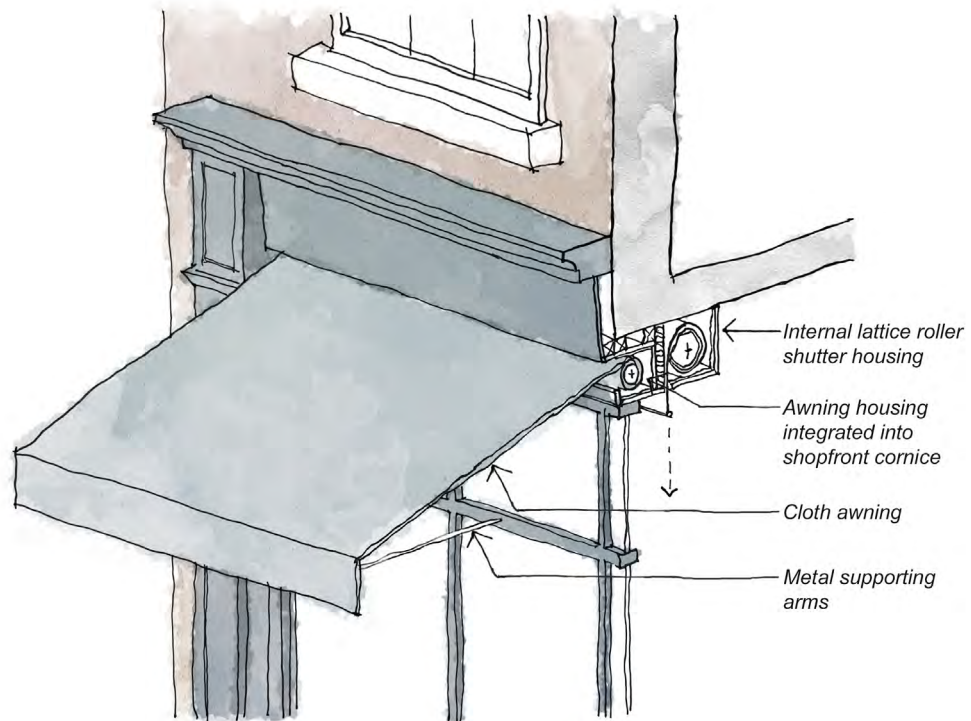
Tiled threshold and recessed entrance



Internal lattice shutter

Awnings

- Where awnings are replaced or reintroduced they should be traditional cloth awnings with metal supporting arms and retract fully into the fascia cornice.



Awning integrated into shopfront



Sensitive awning and high level sign



Retracting awning with metal arms

Lighting

- Obtrusive floodlighting the façade will be discouraged.
- Traditional carriage style light fittings may be acceptable over entrance doors or alleys.

Services

- Whenever new services are installed redundant wires, cables, pipes etc should be carefully removed.
- Surface wiring and air extract grilles should be avoided.
- Visually intrusive services such as air conditioning units should be located to the rear of premises.
- New vents in stallrisers should be painted cast iron style grilles.



Lighting and pointed arch detail to transom lights



Branding sensitive to the traditional shopfront



Run of varied attractive shopfronts on Chestergate

8. Shopfront Enhancement Chart

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156
PARK LANE

OPEN

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The following chart is intended to guide minor incremental improvements which are economically realistic to uplift the quality of Macclesfield's commercial frontage over time.

	Excellent	Good	Medium	Poor
<i>Historic shopfront</i>	Intact or largely intact historic shopfront.	Historic shopfront with minor alterations, missing features or damage.	Largely altered historic shopfront but maintaining some key features / proportions.	No historic features visible.
<i>Modern shopfront</i>	High quality modern shop design and materials which respects the overall design of the building	Simple modern design with some detailing in good materials which respects the overall design of the building	Plain modern design in reasonable materials.	Poorly detailed plain frontage, poor materials.
<i>Reproduction shopfront</i>	Authentic reproduction of traditional shopfront, respects the overall design of the building.	Well-designed traditional shopfront which exhibits a number of features and respects the overall design of the building.	Traditional design with some awkward or clumsy elements and/or which relates poorly to overall building.	Clumsy attempt at traditional design, badly detailed.
<i>Security measures</i>	No visible security measures OR internal scissor grille or lattice shutter not visible during day time.	External scissor grille or lattice shutter not visible during day time.	Well integrated external perforated roller shutter.	External solid roller shutters, obvious tracks and/or box external housing.
<i>Awnings / canopies</i>	Traditional fabric roller-retractable awning on hinged or scissor supports, in original and/or fully integrated housing.	Traditional fabric roller-retractable awning on hinged or scissor support, well integrated new housing / existing external box.	Modern awning with telescopic supports and/or external boxing.	Plastic, Dutch canopies or other similar awning types.
<i>Colours / finishes</i>	Matt or soft sheen paint in dark, muted or neutral colours, or polished hardwood.	Glossy paint in dark, muted or neutral colours, or varnished timber. Limited use of brighter colours for emphasis.	Glossy monochrome or modern colours. Use of brighter colours for emphasis.	Shabby decoration, bright primary / secondary colours, day-glo and other vivid colours.
<i>Vents / service</i>	No vents or other services visible.	Well disguised vents or other services.	Noticeable vents or other services.	Detracting vents or other services.

Now and Then

This mid-20th century view shows the eastern end of Chestergate, opening onto Market Place marked by tall high-quality buildings. By the 21st century some of the historic shopfronts have been lost and replaced with ones of lower quality using inappropriate colours and materials.



9. Principles of Good Signage Design



- Signage must be sensitively designed and integrated into the shopfront and streetscene; the proliferation of multiple advertisements should be avoided.
- Signage must not dominate the building façade and should relate to its character, scale and architectural features.
- Internally illuminated box fascia or projecting signs should be avoided.
- Shop signs should be located at fascia level and follow the pattern within the street.
- The location of signage on non-retail buildings must be carefully considered so as to not harm the appearance of the building.
- The use of standard corporate signs may not be acceptable in the historic context and firms may need to adapt their standard design and image in order to be acceptable.
- When preparing designs for new advertisements, the opportunity should be taken to improve their impact on the appearance of the building, reduce the number of signs and remove those which are redundant (see signage enhancement chart).





Sensitive fascia signage



Traditional shopfront with barbers pole



Traditional fascia signage suited to character of the shopfront



Sensitive signage to modern building



Corporate branding varied to suit architecture of the building



Attractive painted fascia board

10. Signage Renewal and Replacement



Fascia Signs

- Signs should fit within the fascia and not cover surrounding corbels, console brackets or cornices.
- The depth of the fascia should be in proportion to the design of the shopfront as a whole and should not encroach on the upper floors above.
- The fascia should respect the original division between properties even where a business extends into the neighbouring property.
- The building name and/or number should be displayed on the fascia.
- The fascia should be made from painted timber with painted lettering; bulky box signs should be avoided.
- Acrylic or shiny materials, and use of fluorescent colours clash with traditional finishes and are visually inappropriate.
- No additional advertising apart from the name of the shop, the trade and the street number should be on the fascia.

Lettering

- Lettering should ideally be hand painted or individual letters formed from another suitable material.
- Modern plastic or reflective material should be avoided.
- Lettering should be in proportion to the fascia.



Other Signage and Features

- Traditional hanging signs are appropriate when located to follow the prevailing street character, either positioned centrally on a pilaster or at higher level if following an identified historic pattern.
- Hanging signs should be a clear distance from vehicles and above pedestrians - the minimum ground clearance is 2.4m with 0.5m clearance from the edge of the carriageway.
- Hanging signs should be limited to one per building.
- Traditional signs such as barber's poles and pub signs are welcomed.
- Projecting box signs are inappropriate.
- Fixing points for signs should be made into mortar joints or render which is easily repairable wherever possible, breathable paints used be used for painted signage.
- Window vinyls which cover the whole or the majority of a window will be discouraged and will not be permitted on listed buildings, but their limited use can be effective and stylish and may be acceptable depending on design, coverage and reversibility.
- It may be appropriate to reinstate or introduce painted signage on the sides of buildings / blind gables / alleys – as was typical in the late-19th and early-20th century.

Lighting

- Large, internally illuminated fascia signs and internally illuminated lightbox projecting signs are inappropriate.
- There may be instances where subtle illumination of signage would be acceptable with halo-illuminated letters.



11. Signage Enhancement Chart



The following chart is intended to guide minor incremental improvements which are economically realistic to uplift the quality of Macclesfield's commercial frontage over time.

	Excellent	Good	Medium	Poor
Signage	Fully integrated and well-proportioned fascia signage.	Well integrated and/or well-proportioned fascia signage.	Fascia sign too large or not well integrated into overall shopfront.	Oversized, poorly aligned and/or projecting box fascia signage.
Fascia design	Timber fascia with painted lettering or small non-illuminated mounted lettering, matt or soft sheen finish.	Fascia sign with painted, printed, mounted or halo-illuminated lettering, small to medium size in matt or soft sheen material.	Glossy modern materials, visible joints in fascia and/or printed or mounted lettering of medium to large size, bright halo illumination or small external lights.	Shiny modern materials or plywood, unsightly joints, very large / bright / brash lettering, internal illumination or large external lighting.
Additional signage	Any additional / alternative signage sits within the overall design of building, is appropriately sized and is kept to a minimum.	Any additional / alternative signage pays attention to the overall design of building and is appropriately sized.	Any additional / alternative signage is poorly located within the overall design of building or is too large.	Extra signage which proliferates, is poorly located, oversized and/or ignores overall design of building including projecting box signs.
Branding	Minimal or no corporate or chain brand identity.	Low key corporate or chain branding or heavily modified to suit historic setting.	Low key corporate or chain branding or slight modifications to suit historic setting.	Overtly dominant corporate or chain branding with no modification to suit setting.

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