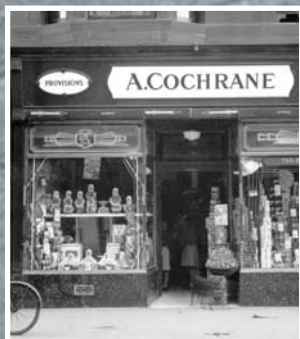


# Improving

# Govan's

## shopfronts



Past



Present



Future?

# Introduction

## WHY SHOPFRONTS ARE IMPORTANT

### Introduction

This booklet is intended to offer guidance and advice on best practice for repairing, altering or restoring traditional retail frontages in Govan.

It aims to help traders upgrade their shopfront in a way that will not only enhance Govan Conservation Area and contribute to the special character of the place, but also increase sales and profitability.

### Why shopfronts are important

Shopfronts play an important role in defining the character of an area and in determining its economic success.

Because they are situated at ground level, shopfronts are highly visible and the image they project has a huge impact on the quality of the built environment and the way people who live, work and visit feel about an area.

Well-designed shopfronts, constructed from high quality materials with appropriate signage, interesting window displays and inviting entrances,



Above: Shopfront Improvements at Burleigh Street (top) could make it similar in appearance to Parnie Street (below).  
Right: Successful Scottish shop fronts

fulfil their commercial purpose to display goods for sale and attract customers. They also make for more attractive streets and encourage people to visit or spend more time in an area, thus increasing business for traders.

The opposite is also true. Rundown, unattractive and out of character shopfronts can have a negative impact, detracting from the area they are situated in and discouraging shoppers.

Properly maintained traditional shopfronts in particular can have a positive impact on an area. They add interest and variety to a street, help to foster local distinctiveness and define a unique 'sense of place'.

This attractiveness is increasingly important nowadays when shoppers can choose to shop on the internet or in out of town shopping malls. In order to remain competitive local shopping areas need to offer a different experience - such as a nice environment to spend time in and interesting places to interact with the community and meet people. So it makes sense to make the most of heritage features and foster local distinctiveness in order to attract visitors and shoppers to Govan.

It has long been accepted that there is a clear link between the

quality of the built environment and the economic success of a place.

Improving Govan's shopfronts is not just about aesthetics or 'doing shops up' - it can also have a positive impact on the economic and social success of the area and contribute to the regeneration of Govan through:

- Improving the overall attractiveness of the street;
- Creating a high quality urban environment with a unique character - a place that people will want to visit, linger, meet friends and shop;
- Enriching the quality of life of people who live in Govan;
- Increasing footfall to the shopping area, leading to new opportunities for businesses and jobs.





# History

## HISTORY OF SHOPFRONTS IN GOVAN

### In the past

In the past shopfronts were designed as an integral part of the building they were situated in. Shop owners took pride in the quality of their shopfront, using the best quality materials and incorporating highly decorative elements such as tiled entrances, specialist joinery and stained glasswork.

As can be seen from historic photographs, Govan once had a vibrant shopping area with

traditional shopfronts as fine as anywhere else in Glasgow. There were a great selection of interesting and varied frontages, which were well designed, constructed from high quality materials and finely detailed. They acted as a frame for the goods for sale and showcased beautiful window displays.

Many Govanites still remember the upmarket nature of the retail offering on Burleigh Street and the wonderful array of shops that once existed there.



### The current situation

Like in many other places in Scotland, shopfronts in Govan have suffered in more recent times from inappropriate alterations:

- the original proportions have been distorted;
- fascia boards have deepened, often becoming multiple;
- low quality, out of character materials such as plastic, uPVC and aluminium have been used;
- fine details and decorative elements have been lost;
- signage and advertising has become excessive and cluttered.

The quality of the shop frontages in Govan has deteriorated as a result, negatively affecting the character of the area and making it a less attractive place to live, work or visit.

External roller shutters are a particular problem. They give a street an intimidating 'under seige'

appearance, which tends to deter shoppers and keep people away from an area.

However, this situation can be reversed. It is still possible to find remnants of traditional shopfronts – such as decorative pilasters, tiled entrance ways and specialist joinery – lurking behind modern frontages.



As can be seen from the images later in this booklet, shopfront improvement schemes elsewhere have been successful in returning a sense of quality to an area, and subsequently increasing economic activity.

*Left: Govan Road looking towards the Lyceum Theatre. Licensor [www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)  
Above: Past shopfronts on Burleigh Street & Langlands Road. Copyright Mitchell Library  
Below: Present day shopfronts in Govan*





# Best Practice

## THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DESIGN

### Best Practice

The following pages set out best practice for improving traditional shopfronts in Govan Conservation Area. The purpose is to enable local shop owners to make positive changes to improve the image of their frontages as and when the opportunity arises.

In order to carry out a successful shopfront improvement scheme it is first necessary to understand the principle of good design and what has gone wrong in recent years. The diagram opposite describes the various elements of a traditional shopfront and the image below shows a frontage that has suffered from inappropriate alterations and a loss of character.

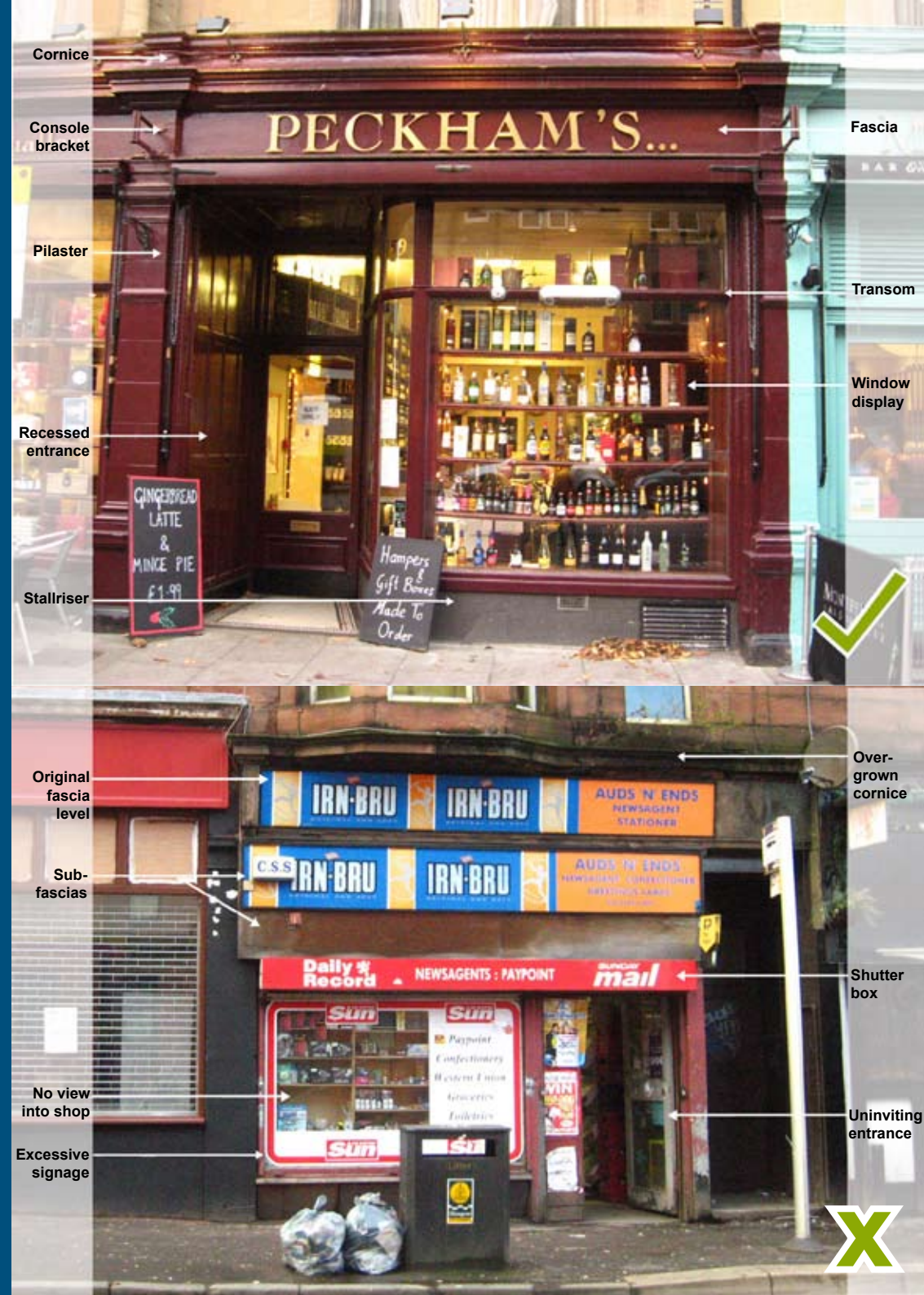
Some general principles to consider when restoring traditional shopfronts are set out opposite, followed by more detailed guidance overleaf.

### Permissions

Before proceeding with any shopfront improvement project you should contact Glasgow City Council Development & Regeneration Services, who will assess the appropriateness of your scheme. Planning Permission, Advertisement Consent and/or Listed Building Consent may be required. Contact details are given at the end of this booklet.

### Basic principles to consider

- The aim is to reinstate the original details, scale & proportions of the shopfront;
- Some archival research may be required;
- New design should be in keeping with the building style & sensitive to the context;
- All new work should enhance the special character of Govan Conservation Area & add quality and interest to the street;
- Any original features should be retained or restored;
- Only high quality, traditional materials should be used, such as timber with painted finishes;
- Standard 'off the shelf' shop front systems are not acceptable;
- When two shops have merged, vertical and horizontal divisions should be retained;





# Best Practice

## THE DETAILS OF GOOD DESIGN



### Cornice

The cornice provides an attractive separation between the shop and the upper floors of a building. It also has a practical purpose – to throw water clear of the shop front to prevent decay. It is usually constructed of stone or timber with a lead flashing.

- Surviving cornices should be retained and restored, or reinstated if missing.

### Console bracket / Corbel

Console brackets provide a visual support for the cornice. They are often highly decorative and add to the character of a shopfront.

- Original console brackets should be retained or restored.

### Pilasters

Pilasters are shallow columns that provide vertical separation between shops. Along with the cornice and console brackets they form a 'frame', which the rest of the shopfront should be contained within.

- Any remaining pilasters, including their details, should be uncovered, retained and restored. If lost, they should be reinstated.



### Fascia

The fascia is a horizontal board situated beneath the cornice, usually constructed from painted timber. This is where shop signage should be situated. Many survive in Govan, often unused (see above).

- Fascias should be restored to the original level and depth with no sub-fascia advertising.
- They should sit below the cornice level and between the pilasters.
- Surviving fascia boards should be retained & re-used.
- Internally illuminated box fascias are not appropriate in a Conservation Area.

### Signage and Advertising

Signage should be confined to the fascia of a shopfront. Advertising clutter, such as posters & window stickers should be avoided - it detracts from the appearance of a frontage & can put off customers.

- Lettering should be in proportion to the shopfront -

not more than two-thirds of the height of the fascia board.

- Traditional hand-painted lettering is encouraged. Cut out individual letters are also acceptable.
- If historical evidence exists, a maximum of one, modest, projecting sign per shop is acceptable.

### Stallriser

The stallriser is the built up area between the pavement and the window of a shop. It reduces the risk of damage to the glazing, provides a solid base for window displays and allows for ventilation into the shop interior.

- Surviving stallrisers should be retained and restored. If lost or altered they should be reinstated to the original height & materials.

*Left: The two smaller images show traditional elements surviving in Govan. Above: Examples of inappropriate fascias, advertising & signage in Govan. Below: Good examples of traditional signage*





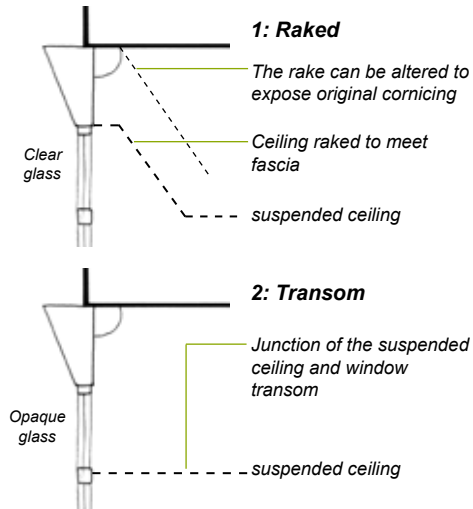
# Best Practice

## THE DETAILS OF GOOD DESIGN

### Windows and doors

Traditional shopfronts had large window areas for displaying goods, often with recessed doors. They were constructed using timber joinery work. These have been lost in Govan, replaced by multiple sub-fascias and 'off the shelf' aluminium shop front systems.

- The original glazing & door pattern should be reinstated, including vertical and horizontal subdivisions.
- Where lowered ceilings cannot be removed they should be raked to fascia level or positioned to meet the window transom (see diagram).



Above: Diagram illustrates two ways to deal with lowered ceilings in shops.  
Below: Before & After photograph of a shop in Parkhead, which was improved by the owner without THI assistance



### Window display

An interesting window display should showcase the goods for sale in the shop, which attracts customers & enlivens the street.

- Windows should be used to display goods for sale, not for advertising signage.

### Colour

Shopfronts should be painted in appropriate colours that add to the character of the Conservation Area.

### Other elements

- Decorative elements: such as tiling, mosaics or trade emblems like barber's poles should be retained.
- Blinds & Canopies: that were retractable were part of the historic street in Govan. Any surviving blinds should be retained and any new ones designed in a traditional style.
- Lighting: is best used internally to illuminate the goods for sale & allow light to spill onto the street, making it feel safer after dark.
- External alarm boxes: act as a visual deterrent, but can also detract from the shopfront. They should be sited inconspicuously & painted to match the frontage.

Top right: A traditional Chemist with large windows, recessed door, attractive window display and trade emblem.

Right: Before & After improvement works





# Security

## IMPROVING SHOPFRONT SECURITY IN GOVAN

### The problem of external shutters

Achieving security for traders while also maintaining vibrant streets and thriving businesses is an important challenge. In recent years the solution to security concerns has often been to fit solid roller shutters across shopfronts, but this has contributed to the decline in popularity and prosperity of shopping areas.

This is because external roller shutters are rarely appealing to either shoppers or residents:

- the siting of shutter boxes is not usually integrated into the design of the shopfront and often distorts proportions and cuts through architectural features, resulting in cluttered, unattractive shops & streets;
- external shutters 'deaden' the street, particularly at night, creating an abandoned appearance, which often feels unsafe;
- window displays are obscured, making the shopfront unenticing.

As a result, shoppers and visitors are deterred from the area, the streets become empty, trade

declines, profits fall and a cycle of decline can set in.

There are also certain situations where solid shutters are undesirable even from a security viewpoint - e.g. when shops are broken into from the rear the solid shutters allow a property to be emptied unseen from the street.

### Alternative solutions

There are other ways that retailers can achieve security for their shopfront without compromising aesthetics, the viability of their business and the vibrancy of an area. Some good alternative, cost effective, options include using:

- Toughened, laminated safety glass;
- Removable external metal grilles, which can also be decorative;
- Internal shutter systems of the 'brick bond' open grille type;
- Improved CCTV & policing;
- A combination of all of the above.

The images opposite show examples of where this has been achieved successfully elsewhere.





# Help Yourself

## FUNDING, ADVICE & HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

### Funding

Govan Cross Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is undertaking a number of grant funded shopfront improvements as part of the THI programme. Initially this funding will be targeted at certain priority shopfronts in strategic locations in order to have the most impact in enhancing the Conservation Area. These THI funded projects will follow 'best practice' as set out in this guidance booklet and will aim to fully restore traditional shopfronts to their original detail.

### What you can do yourself

If your shopfront is not one of the targeted properties there are still a number of ways in which you can improve your frontage yourself. The list below suggests ways that you can carry out improvements one step at a time, as and when repairs and alterations are required:

- Bear in mind that the ultimate aim is to fully reinstate the original proportion and detail of the traditional shopfront;
- Avoid using low quality, 'cheap' looking materials such as

plastic, uPVC, or 'off the shelf' shopfront systems;

- Consider replacing your solid roller shutters with alternative security measures - or at least incorporate the shutter box into the frontage and paint to match the rest of your shopfront;
- Aim to reinstate the original depth & position of the fascia board and remove any sub-fascias;
- Retain and, if possible, restore any decorative features you uncover, such as tiling, console brackets or pilasters.
- Create interesting window displays and remove excess signage & advertising;
- Paint your shop front in a 'heritage' colour;
- Hanging flower baskets can add colour to your shopfront.

If all shop owners make incremental changes for the better, aiming towards the 'best practice' set out in this booklet, there is no reason why Govan's shopfronts cannot achieve a re-birth, increase trade, visitors and jobs in the area, and become a source of local pride once again.



### Advice

If you would like further advice on shopfront improvement in Govan, including suggestions on how you can improve your own shopfront, then please get in touch with the Govan Cross THI team on:

0141 440 2334  
susie.dibdin@grasouthwest.co.uk  
govancrossthi@gmail.com

### Useful Contacts

For information on permissions contact Glasgow City Council:

City Design  
Development & Regeneration  
Services  
Exchange House  
229 George Street  
Glasgow  
G1 1QU

0141 287 8634 or 5

### Further Information

Historic Scotland also provide guidance on traditional shopfronts:

[Traditional Shopfronts: A short guide for shop owners](#) (2010)

[Managing Change: Shopfronts](#)

*Left, top to bottom: Hanging baskets add colour to a shopfront in the Merchant City (from Merchant City THI); The original fascia still exists above a sub-fascia on Govan Road; An Interesting window display in Brunsfield, Edinburgh, catches the eye of a passer-by.*





Leaflet produced by:



With funding from:



Front Cover: Govan Road looking East. Licensor [www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk).  
 Above: Langlands Road, Govan, 1938. Copyright of Mitchell Library, Glasgow.  
 Cover Images: Langlands Road (as above); Empty shop on Langlands Road; Restored shopfront, Parkhead.  
 Content, design & layout: Susan Dibdin. Except where otherwise noted, all images by the author.