

## Princes Street Shop Front Design Guide

### ■ OBJECTIVE

This guideline is supplementary to local plan conservation and design policies, providing additional guidance on shop front alterations on Princes Street.

### ■ POLICY CONTEXT

Local plan policies promote high quality design and protect the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas. In relation to shop fronts, policy CD23 of the Central Edinburgh Local Plan states:

“A high standard of shop front design will be promoted. Alterations to existing shop fronts will only be approved if the proposal is an improvement on what exists...”

### ■ SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guideline applies to frontages detailed in the list of shop front types in the Design Guide, and includes corner frontages on the return elevations.

### ■ STATUTORY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

The replacement or alteration of shop fronts and the display of advertisements are controlled by the Town and Country Planning Acts and Regulations. In cases where a shop front forms part of a listed building any proposed alteration that affects the architectural or historic character of the frontage will require listed building consent. Therefore, any material change to the appearance of a shop front will require planning permission and, in the case of proposals affecting a listed building, listed building consent. Illuminated signs require express consent in terms of the Advertisement Regulations.

The following drawings are required to determine applications for shop front alterations:

- survey drawings showing the existing frontage;
- detailed plans, elevations and sections to an appropriate scale showing design and materials of proposed alterations. Drawings illustrating the shop front alterations in the context of a full elevation of the building and adjacent buildings should be included; and
- a location plan at 1:1250 or 1:2500.

## **Restoration or Reinstatement**

The restoration or reinstatement of traditional shop fronts must be considered as the first option in cases where they would complement the architectural form or relate to the upper floors of the building. However, this will only be considered acceptable where the work is based on sound historical precedent in terms of archival evidence or surviving features. Schemes involving conjectural restoration or reinstatement will not be considered acceptable.

A high quality modern design following the principles in these guidelines will be the preferred alternative.

Where original details such as pilasters, capitals, console brackets, entablatures or cast-iron columns are found beneath later cladding materials the original shop front may be partly recoverable. Even if only the cornice survives, this should be retained as it provides a valuable architectural demarcation line between the shop front and the facade above.

## **Shop Front Types**

All shop fronts on Princes Street fall into one of the following 4 categories:

- 1 Projecting shop fronts (sometimes 2 storey) within original late 18th century buildings.
- 2 Shop fronts within buildings constructed with integral shop fronts.
- 3 Princes Street Panel buildings.
- 4 Shop fronts of historic or architectural merit.

## **Materials & Proportions (Type 1 and 2 Shop Fronts)**

The granite and marble cladding which has been used in recent years on many Type 1 and 2 shop fronts, although natural high quality materials, are not traditionally used in the New Town. The use of materials for shop front surrounds matching those on upper floors would assist in unifying the shop fronts within the overall building. Timber surrounds in appropriate colours will also be considered acceptable for Type 1 shop fronts.

Fascias should not exceed one-fifth of the overall shop front height. Sub-fascias are not acceptable.

The infill to shop front surrounds should be detailed to relate to features, such as pilasters, and solid to void proportions on upper floors. Fully glazed shop fronts within appropriate surrounds may also be considered acceptable. Splayed frontages will not normally be considered acceptable.

Shop front frames should be in timber or high quality metals. Polymer finished aluminium will not be considered acceptable.

Figure 1 details the main elements of the Guidelines in terms of shop front proportion.

### **Type 1 Shop Fronts**

In these cases the projecting shop fronts do not form an original part of the main building. The critical factors are the proportions and materials used for the shop front and the guidance given above will be applied. Ground floor frontages should be related to features on first floor shop fronts.

### **Type 2 Shop Fronts**

One of the factors which has the most significant adverse impact on the appearance of this shop front type is the lack of relationship between the upper floors of the buildings and the ground floor shop fronts. This is particularly the case where upper floors of traditional architectural form and character are above modern shop front units. In many of these cases, elaborately detailed sandstone upper floors are truncated at ground floor level by plain, monolithic slab fascias of polished stone. This detachment from the ground has the effect of making the upper floors appear visually to float over the shop fronts. This can only be corrected by re-establishing the connection to the ground. In many cases the most appropriate way of achieving this is by reinstating original shop fronts in accordance with the above section on Restoration and Reinstatement.

Where archive evidence is not available for original shop front restoration, shop fronts should be designed to emphasise the relationship between the ground floor shop and the building above. This can be achieved just as effectively with a modern design that adopts the principles in this Guideline. This would involve using cladding materials which match the upper floors (normally sandstone) for shop front surrounds and reflecting vertical features on the upper floors in the design of the new shop front. Other quality materials will be acceptable for stallrisers.

### **Type 3 Shop Fronts**

The Princes Street Panel buildings are typified by deep projecting fascias which form a strong horizontal division between the ground floor shop fronts and the upper floors. Cladding materials for shop fronts should match those on the fascia and full height glazing with signs behind the glass will normally be most appropriate.

### **Type 4 Shop Fronts**

The following shop frontages are of significant architectural merit and must be retained: the early 19th century frontage at 96 Princes Street which follows the original building line, the Jenners shop front, and the 19th century shop fronts at 130 and 140 Princes Street.

### Advertisements

- Projecting signs of any description including banners will not be permitted in Princes Street.
- Internally illuminated individual letters will be acceptable. Internally illuminated fascias and any form of externally mounted lighting will not be permitted.
- All illuminated elements must be white in appearance. No coloured illumination will be acceptable.
- Only static illumination of signs will be permitted.
- Fascia lettering should not exceed more than two-thirds the depth of the fascia up to a maximum height of 450mm.
- Good quality signage fixed behind the glass of shop windows must always be considered as a preferable alternative to external advertisement displays.
- A clutter of 'Sale' signage behind the glass of shop windows must be avoided.
- Signs or lettering above ground floor fascia level will not be permitted.
- Only high quality materials in appropriate colours will be acceptable.
- The standard signs of multiple stores may have to be modified in order not to detract from the character of a listed building or of a conservation area. Sponsored fascia signs are not acceptable.

### FURTHER GUIDANCE

This Guideline should be read in conjunction with the following other Guidance Notes which also apply to shop front alterations on Princes Street:

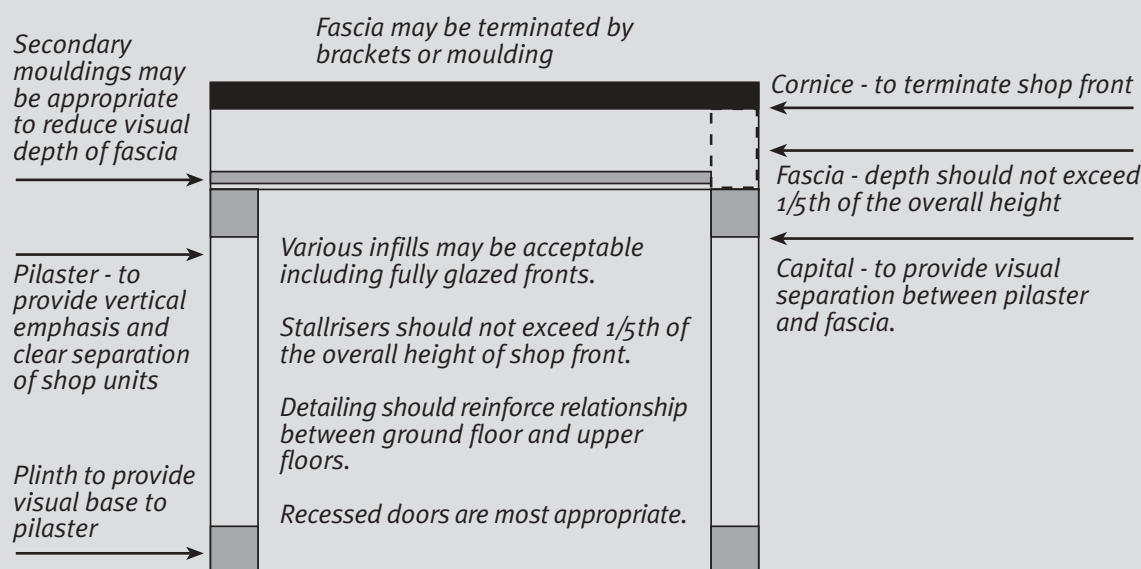
- Advertisements and Signs
- Shop Fronts - Design and Conservation
- Shop Fronts - Security
- Blinds and Canopies



INDICATIVE SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENTS

130 - 135 Princes Street

**Figure 1**



## ■ REASONED JUSTIFICATION

Princes Street is internationally recognised and is central to Edinburgh's World Heritage Site. In addition it is a single sided street visible from the Castle and Old Town and the focus of the City Centre retail core. The form of shop fronts on Princes Street is the product of a long period of incremental change and development that has resulted in a lack of unified design. It has been Council policy for many years to require the use of natural materials for shop front alterations, projecting signs are not permitted and the illumination of signs is restricted to white. Despite these controls, there are concerns that the quality of many shop fronts on Princes Street is undistinguished.

Shop fronts are a dominant visual element in the street scene and their form, proportions and appearance are a major influence in determining overall architectural character. The requirement of shopkeepers to make their presence known is recognised. However, a balance between commercialism and conservation is required. The Council is anxious to ensure that shop fronts and advertisements are sensitively designed to harmonise with and enhance both the character of individual buildings and the street scene in general. Groups of high quality, well-designed shops can substantially benefit trading activity.

Guidelines which will result in an overall improvement to the character and appearance of Princes Street shop fronts are more of an imperative in view of the New Town Ward Revision by Historic Scotland which has resulted in almost all the buildings on Princes Street being included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest. Princes Street is also central to Edinburgh's World Heritage Site which was inscribed by UNESCO in 1995. The EDAAW study, A Strategy for the First New Town, also notes that the rigorous enforcement of shop front design best practice is required for Princes Street.

These guidelines have been produced to influence the standard of shop front alterations by illustrating general design principles which will assist shopkeepers and designers to make a positive and sympathetic contribution to the townscape value of Princes Street.

## ■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Princes Street formed the most southerly street in James Craig's plan for the Georgian New Town. Craig's symmetrical gridiron plan made perfect use of the site, with its main axis George Street lying along the natural ridge, and left open spectacular views to the north and south. As in Craig's other main streets, the original houses in Princes Street were three storeys built over basements. Although a good standard of housing was provided, they were not comparable with those in Queen Street and Castle Street.

Princes Street was the first street to be affected by commercial pressures. By 1800, many of the buildings at the east end of the street were non-residential. This was in part due to the presence of industrial uses on the opposite side of the street the meat fleshers under North Bridge, and the proximity to the main traffic route over North Bridge. The Nor' Loch was also not properly drained, enclosed and planted with trees until 1821. Princes Street, therefore, suffered from being a narrow carriageway overlooking a rubbish dump, which may explain why it was never as popular a residential street as George Street. It was rapidly overrun by shops and businesses and by 1830 much of the street was commercial.

The domestic buildings of the First New Town were built with basement areas between the building and the street, with stone entrance platts to bridge the gap and provide access to the building. The gap between the pavement and the frontage made window shopping difficult, even when the windows were enlarged. This problem was first solved by fitting iron balconies in front of the windows. The next stage involved the addition of a completely new shop front, standing a little way forward of the original front wall and paving over the basement area at pavement level. Later in the 19th century, shop fronts were extended right out to the edge of the pavement, providing additional shopping space and more prominent window displays.

The next step in the latter part of the 19th century was the complete replacement or radical adaptation of the original small scale Georgian domestic buildings. There were no overall controls and the replacements were designed as individual units. The result was that Princes Street ceased to have any form of unified design and this was reflected in the form of the shop fronts.



The Abercrombie Plan of 1949 criticised the laissez-faire development of the Victorian and Edwardian periods that had produced a lack of cohesion in the street. The scheme proposed by Abercrombie prescribed an overall framework for height and massing to restore cohesion to the street. Redevelopment was considered inevitable and only three buildings were considered of sufficient quality to merit retention. Shop fronts were to be unified by a standard frame within which there was absolute freedom for the actual shop front.

This theme was taken up by the Princes Street Panel's Report in 1967, again with the intention of overcoming the criticisms of Princes Street at the time which were centred on the lack of integration between the various buildings. The Report recommended that Princes Street should be comprehensively redeveloped. A unified design being achieved by controlling height, materials, floor levels, frontage widths, and modelling of elevations. A standard section incorporating a continuous elevated walkway with shop fronts at first floor level was devised. The Panel formula was abandoned in the 1970s, with only isolated sites rebuilt.



By the 1970s, ideas regarding architecture and planning had changed. There was a move away from an ethos of redevelopment to a more conservation-based philosophy. The buildings that had resulted from the Panel's recommendations were also subject to critical comment and there was growing concern over the indiscriminate loss of buildings of historic and architectural interest.

The form of shop fronts on Princes Street is, therefore, a product of a long period of incremental change and development.

**PRINCES STREET-SHOPFRONT TYPES**

- 1 Projecting shop fronts (sometimes 2 storey) within original late 18th century buildings which may have been substantially altered but retain elements of early adaptation.

21-23 Princes Street

24-25 Princes Street

76-77 Princes Street

78 -79 Princes Street

88 Princes Street

94 Princes Street

97 & 98 Princes Street

99 & 99a Princes Street

106 Princes Street

118 Princes Street

119, 119a & 120 Princes Street

131-132 Princes Street

133 Princes Street

134 Princes Street

137-138 Princes Street

139 Princes Street



2 Shop fronts within large and small scale re-developments originally constructed with integral shop fronts.

- |                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 10-15 Princes Street           | 104-105 Princes Street |
| 16-18 Princes Street           | 109-110 Princes Street |
| 19-20 Princes Street           | 111 Princes Street     |
| 30 Princes Street              | 112 Princes Street     |
| 31-38 Princes Street           | 113-117 Princes Street |
| 39-41 Princes Street           | 121-122 Princes Street |
| 42-46 Princes Street           | 123 Princes Street     |
| 50-52 Princes Street           | 126-127 Princes Street |
| 60 Princes Street              | 128 Princes Street     |
| 61-62 Princes Street           | 129 Princes Street     |
| 70-71 Princes Street           | 135-136 Princes Street |
| 72-73 Princes Street           | 141 Princes Street     |
| 74-75 Princes Street           | 142-143 Princes Street |
| 89-90 Princes Street           | 144-147 Princes Street |
| 99b, 100 & 100a Princes Street |                        |



3 Princes Street Panel Buildings.

53-59 Princes Street

63-64 Princes Street

80-87 Princes Street

91-93 Princes Street

101-103 Princes Street

107-108 Princes Street

124-126 Princes Street



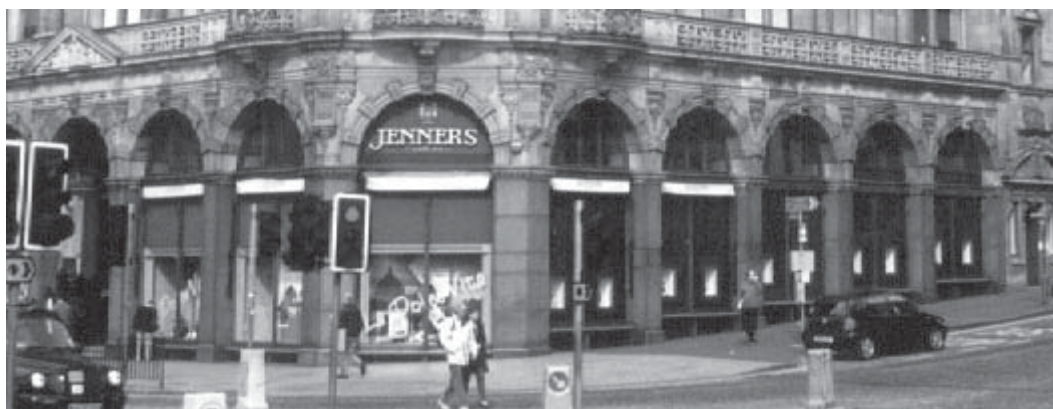
4 Shop Fronts of Architectural Merit

Jenners, 47-49 Princes Street

96 Princes Street

130 Princes Street

140 Princes Street



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