



# Newquay Shopfront Design Guide



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## Introduction

The deterioration of the visual appearance of Newquay town centre is widely acknowledged and it is clear that the plethora of competing and garish shopfronts is a major contributor to the poor impression that so many visitors take away with them after visiting the town. We believe that the streets have, in the past, been constructed with no consideration of the wider issues and have, as a result, virtually swamped the particular and special qualities of the town. Many parts of the town centre can now be accurately described 'as any place, anywhere'.

It is clear that there is strong European cultural movement that proposes to help strengthen society by redefining and accentuating particular qualities of the region, town and local community and using the process of change to create ties and linkages in the physical fabric. This approach is opposed by a largely commercially-led pressure to create repetitive solutions that can be developed regardless of place.

The debate as to an appropriate regional identity is beyond the scope of this guide, however it is a central aim of the document to reinforce the emerging local distinctiveness of Newquay by supporting individuality, quality and thoughtfulness in the manner in which the towncentre's shopfronts are designed.

It is anticipated that with the adoption of the Town Centre Design Guide and this Shopfront Design Guide a clear direction can become established that will assist the process in establishing a positive and confident course for the future with a clear direction and structures in place to control and carry forward a programme of change and improvement. This programme must rebuild a new component in the future cultural identity of the County that can provide the young people of the community an attractive alternative to the age old problem of emigration from the area in search of alternative and more attractive options.



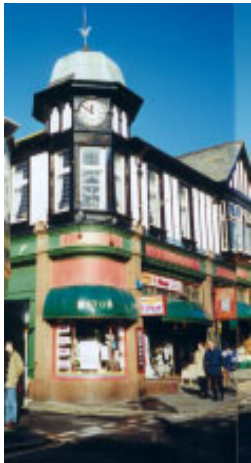


## Purpose of the Guide

It is always difficult for those long accustomed to their surroundings to recognise the gradual changes and impression given to visitors by the towns in which they live. The need to improve the quality of the central area of Newquay is, however, recognised by many. The associated Newquay Design Guide lays out best practice proposals for the layout of the public spaces of the town, these areas are primarily the responsibility of the local authority . The public realm is however only one component in the overall quality of the townscape.

This shopfront design guide therefore focuses on the contribution that businesses can make to improving the quality of the townscape and through this, to the economic success of the community as a whole. Despite first appearances, behind the confusion of signs and hoardings there are buildings of distinctive quality within the town centre which if allowed to, could contribute so much more to the character of the town.

the varied styles of the Victorian sea-side resort



## Aims and Objectives

- Arrest the visual deterioration of the towns shopping streets
- Encourage innovation and imagination combined with quality
- Improve access
- Improve the vitality, quality and success of the town centre



Many historic towns have produced design guides to conserve and enhance the quality of the distinctive character of their town centres. These have often focused to a large degree on the traditional shopfronts and street frontages still to be found in these towns and, as a consequence these guides have often glossed over the problems of effecting greater integration of more modern shopfronts into the design of both the individual buildings of which they are components and the overall streetscape. In Newquay, where a very large proportion of the pre-1950 shopfronts have been destroyed or concealed by later additions it is hoped that the erosion of the visual environment and deterioration of economic life can be arrested by using best practise rather than expediency as the basis for future change and that modern retail patterns can contribute more responsively to the visual qualities and opportunities of the communities in which they are located.

In the absence of a designated Conservation Area within the town centre there are limited statutory controls on the changes that can be made to shopfronts, forecourts and other commercial premises. The issue of implementing a process of improvement throughout the town centre must however be fully supported, the actual realisation of the overall proposals is seen as the most challenging problem and the main objective of the projected programme of enhancements, the recognition and support for the need and the process of improvement will be central to success.

It is proposed that a programme of shopfront improvements is implemented to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre using grant aid to encourage businesses to carry out improvements, using this guide as a basis for the approach. Such a scheme would offer grants for high quality shop front designs including the cost of new shop fronts, canopies, windows, signage and blinds. The scheme would also cover a percentage of professional and planning fees.

It is necessary to recognise that there will have to be a shift in attitude on the part of sections of the trading community to commit to this process of improvement through change. It is to be hoped that this communal commitment will be focused through the current programme of town centre enhancements and given impetus by local authority support and the early elements of the public sector works coming on stream. By encouraging the whole community to recognise the problem and work together to improve the situation it is believed that positive results can be achieved without the need for more limiting statutory controls.





## The Existing Situation

The incremental growth of the majority of our towns has resulted in a gradual accumulation of individual buildings varying in style, scale, materials, purpose and age. One result of this is the great richness and variety of the traditional streetscape. With the increased pace of change and resulting volume of construction arising from economic and industrial advances this degree of variety has been increasingly lost.

The design and fabrication of shopfronts has had to respond to corporate concepts of marketing and image together with regular refitting to accommodate changes in fashion and ownership. The use of standardised components and materials has also resulted in a repetitive quality to the shopfrontages and a loss of regional distinctiveness. The continuing demand by chain retailers for the imposition of house styles and shopfront requirements is a demand that should be resisted as too often representing a convenient but not essential approach to refurbishing a shopfront. The dissatisfaction with this tendency has been well documented in the numerous comments recorded at the time of the public exhibitions and it the purpose of a defined design approach to remedy this situation. Where corporate demands have to be accommodated there are a wealth of examples where this can be done in a manner that does not detract from the setting. Care and sensitivity are all that are needed.



- oblivious of the modest terrace in which it is situated the example on the left marches on...proportion, rhythm, scale and context are all ignored
- by contrast, corporate demands have barely touched this cottage situated in a conservation area

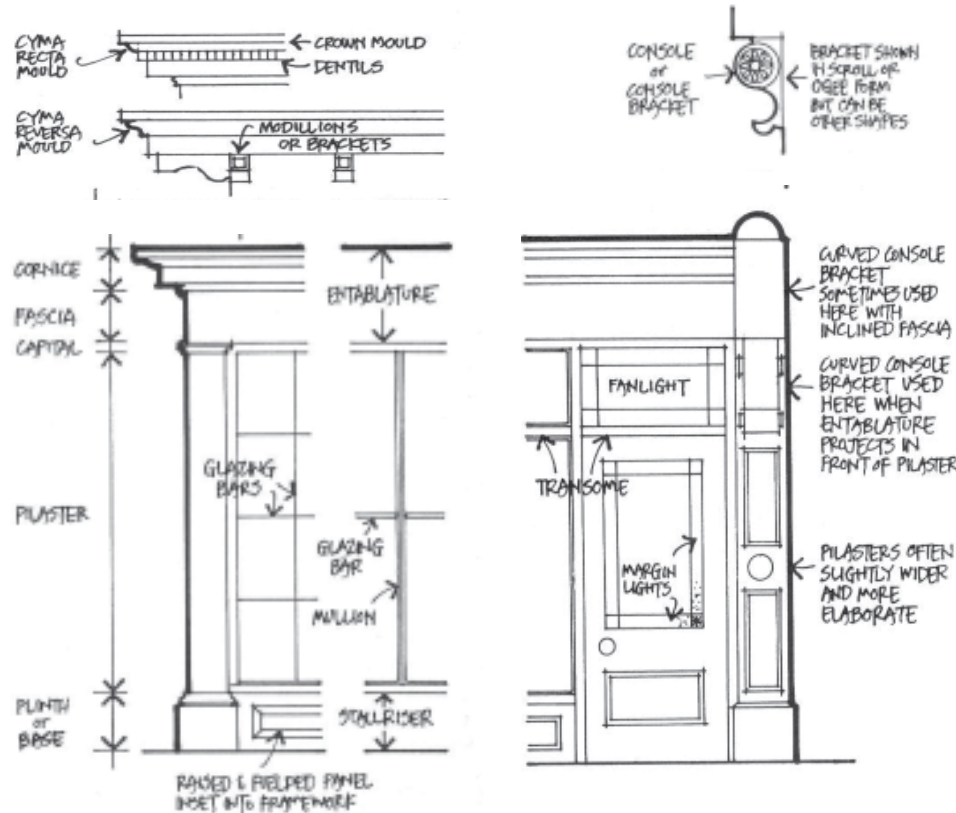
## Design Approach

It is remarkable that despite the increasing consciousness about issues of style, design and a consumer culture the visual qualities of our streetscapes lag far behind the quality of the contents within the shops that these streets contain. This design guide does not seek to impose an 'approved' overall solution or restrain the individual design freedom necessary to new uses and forms of trading but rather to ensure a high standard of design in new installations. Innovation should always be encouraged when allied to genuine qualities and thoughtfulness and, where innovation is not appropriate, guidance on good practise on dealing with traditional shopfronts is also included. The overall aim must always be to improve the overall quality and attractiveness of the town.

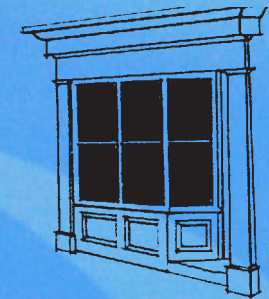
## Traditional shopfronts

The term 'shopfront' is used as a shorthand for the complete assembly of entrance display window[s] and frame that we are all familiar with. The early Newquay examples are mainly of the Victorian period when wide variation of forms and detail developed from very simple forerunners. The basic forms in the development of the traditional shopfront are illustrated here commencing with an eighteenth century example together with later Victorian forms. Edwardian frontages typically exhibit larger areas of glazing often with slimmer framing and pilasters, curved corner glazing became frequent and deeply recessed doorways served to extend the area of shopfront. The early shopfronts were additions to ordinary houses. In the majority of cases this relationship has been reversed in that the residential use, if still present, is now an insignificant element while the retail use takes precedence.

Surviving examples of early forms of shopfront are rare, it is a grave error to retrofit a shopfront of a period earlier than that of the main facade although the simplest shop window may share many of the characteristics of the earlier Georgian shops: limited size, simple signboard and plain mouldings. Proportion has also to be considered, traditional shopfronts will usually broadly reflect the proportions of the classical order. The ratio of the stallriser to that of the overall shopfront would not normally exceed 20% and similarly the entablature should also not exceed 20% with the fascia itself only comprising some 50% of this. The entablature of a 19th century shopfront would normally be contained at each end by a decorative console bracket rising from the pilaster below.



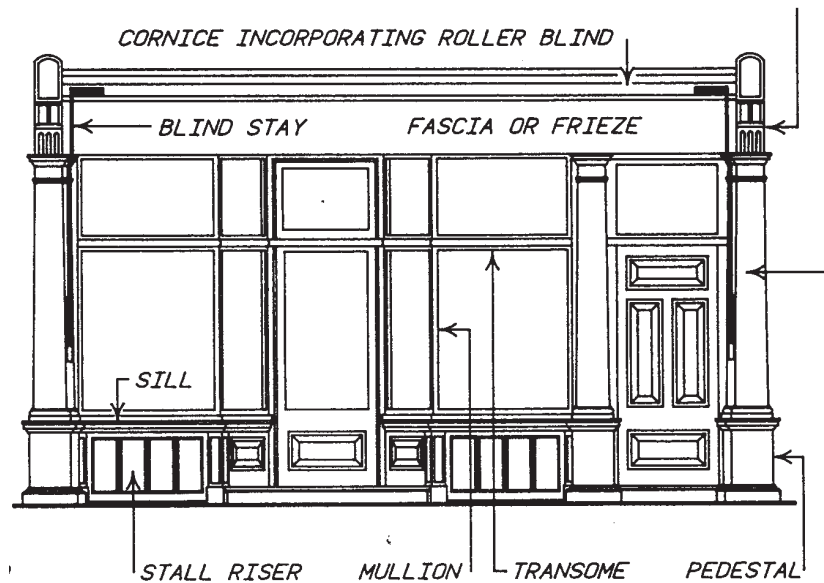
Shopfront shown in Late Victorian form





## Traditional shopfronts - design principles

Period shopfronts were frequently based upon published pattern books that were in common use throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. These gave guidance on overall composition, layout and, latterly, on technical issues but allowed wide freedom of expression in the interpretation of the detail and ornamentation. However, an understanding and the correct use of detail within the context of traditional shopfronts is essential. Detail can enhance or degrade the success and visual qualiteis of the whole. A language of working with traditional materials has evolved a conventional series of details that work well and look correct, shortcuts such as the use of planted beads on modern sheet material will never look convincing and where traditional elements are used, evidence of the understanding of good practise must be obtained before work is commenced.





The use of strong vertical elements is invariably necessary to provide visual support to the facade above the shopfront. This is partly achievable by allowing a strip of the facade to extend down on either side of the shopfront. This provides a neutral ground against which the frame, usually pilasters on a traditional shopfront, is set. This has the additional benefit of limiting the clash of perimeter detail on adjoining elevations and also permits a convenient route for rainwater pipes. Further vertical elements in the form of mullions can be included to assist this sense of visual support. Similarly the depth of the fascia should maintain a reasonable gap below the cills of the first floor windows to allow the correct balance of the whole.

Doorways to Victorian and Edwardian shops would normally have been recessed to provide better weather protection and increased display area with contemporary floor finishes, fanlights and lighting. These recesses assist the development of the vertical rhythm so necessary to provide interest and vitality to the streetscape. The doors should normally reflect the character and period of the remainder of the frontage. Victorian fascias would often incorporate roller blind boxes, these should be retained and serviced so as to ensure that they are functional. Their use, in conjunction with other enhancements, can greatly assist the visual appearance and individuality of the streetscape.

The use of so-called Dutch Blinds obscures the overall form of the shopfront together with any interesting detail. These installations are usually fabricated in shiny PVC and attempt to stridently proclaim their presence in the midst of a competing cacophony of equally incoherent claims.

anonymity amongst chaos



## Modern Shopfronts - design principles

Fashionable 'modern' materials were in vogue throughout the last century, black glass panels and chrome lettering still exist in isolated instances even in Newquay. Examples of individual designs also remain that, while not conforming to 'traditional' criteria, represent a distinctive element in the development of the townscape and enhance the qualities of the location. In these instances a judgement must be made in urban design/townscape terms as to whether loss or change would detract from the qualities of an area that the enhancement programme seeks to improve.



The majority of modern shopfronts reflect the national changes in retailing including the development of strong corporate images attempting to impose a standard kit of parts on an individual property regardless as to the sensitivity of its setting. In addition there are of course a number of instances of 'least cost' design, in most cases the level of detail is often very impoverished when compared with the richness of traditional methods. Shop fronts can reflect the nature of the goods being sold in many ways invariably adding interest and liveliness to the streetscape.

Post -1950 shopfronts are too often a cruder, simplified version of the traditional, poorly detailed and generally presenting a flat, uninspiring appearance worsened by the simplistic use of modern sheet materials often in vivid colours. As noted above these overlarge fascias in reflective material, invariably distorted and cheaply fabricated are one of the most obtrusive and destructive elements in the streetscape. The result of this pursuit of individuality is a loss of overall identity. Future proposals for fascias and signage based on this approach should be rejected.

originally a building of real quality totally ignored by the demands of corporate styling

individuality successfully combined with identity



colour and clarity without clutter





With the passing of the pattern book approach the field of modern shopfront design is left largely to the individual judgement of the shopowner with a strong input from a supplier or shopfitter whose concerns will rarely extend beyond the immediate area of the proposed installation. The consequences of this approach have brought about the ugliness which this guide attempts to improve.

The best instances of modern design within Newquay [and some of the worst] can be seen in establishments that serve the youth culture that is the distinctive feature of the town. These successful installations invariably take their design theme from some element or property of the product being marketed: fashion jewelery, surf equipment, lifestyle foods and so on. It is likely that these have had the benefit of an input from a designer and it is believed that this is essential to achieving a well integrated proposal that combines the needs of the community as a whole: overall streetscape values, consideration of the location and adjoining properties, and the retailing requirements of image, individuality and identity. To be successful the design of a shopfront will extend consideration beyond the individual installation and becomes a branch of urban design in its impact on the streetscape. It is thus essential that proposals should be prepared and tested by those with experience of design issues, a functional solution alone is not going to consider all of the necessary issues.



## Application of Design Principles

The most important elements of a shopfront, of whatever period, are good proportions, details and materials in the context of a sensitive relationship to the building in which it is placed. Support will be given to designs that are imaginative and interest to the streetscene.

Where possible, and it is rarely *impossible*, shopfronts should be contained within the frontage of the facade rather than spread in one continuous band across elevations with separate architectural identities. With changes in planning policy and a greater focus on the quality of urban design and the built environment it is becoming increasingly possible that national retailers will accept the need to tailor their shopfronts to individual locations.




To illustrate the benefits of a more considered approach to the refurbishment and redesign of shopfronts we have included as an appendix a number of instances where 'modern' shopfronts within the town could have been designed in a more sensitive manner to respond to issues of their setting and impact on the townscape. It is anticipated that these examples will set a standard that could be achieved incrementally to improve the overall improvement of quality of the town centre. Our examples are illustrated from the streets of Newquay's town centre where significant changes to shopfronts have resulted in a loss of quality to both the individual property and also the surrounding townscape. A brief critique of the existing frontage identifies elements that individually compromise the assembly as well as the main areas of impact. This is followed by a sketch proposal for an alternative form which could have been adopted and which is believed would have resulted in a positive contribution to the town centre.


These are merely randomly selected examples, it is not intended to expose them to particular criticism, there are many other instances that could have been selected that are as significant as case studies, there is no point in apportioning blame for past mistakes we aim to stimulate improvement for the future.

Proportion 


Rythm 

Scale 

Identity 

Context 



Detail 

Material 

Quality 



## Advertising and Signage

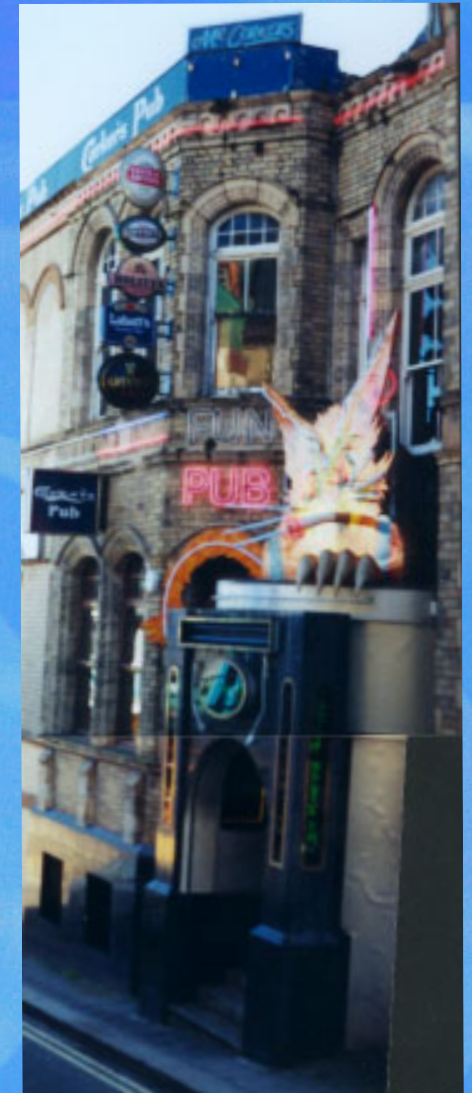
The ability for signage to result in significant visual impact is undeniable, however it is essential that retailers appreciate this whilst planning authorities must recognise the place for effective signage. It is this need for the signage to be successful in commercial terms that is the key to ensuring that an acceptable solution can be achieved; the increasing clamour of competing signs has largely desensitised people to their content.



Proposed new signage panels at Henvor Road

Where a traditional shopfront has been retained or reinstated the simplest solution is always to be preferred, this would comprise painted signwriting on a fascia or the glass of the shopfront. Raised painted lettering would be equally appropriate, however plastic fascia and lettering [invariably distorted] would not be acceptable, signage on windows should generally maintain the transparency of the frontage but can be very effective. There are instances where traditional painted signwriting has been used and this is usually both effective, attractive and also inexpensive. It is particularly well suited to the qualities of a sea-side town particularly for information and directional signage.

Projecting or hung signs are to be welcomed as long as they do not individually attempt to dominate the streetscape. Such installations provide a particularly rich opportunity for contemporary designs, these may be illuminated by external fittings rather than using internally lit box signs. Modern high efficiency projector lamps allow the light fitting to be remote from the sign itself whilst remaining tightly focused - wide opportunities for creativity exist and it is felt that the character of the town can allow itself some extravagance in terms of a language of signage involvement of local artists to develop ideas would be supported



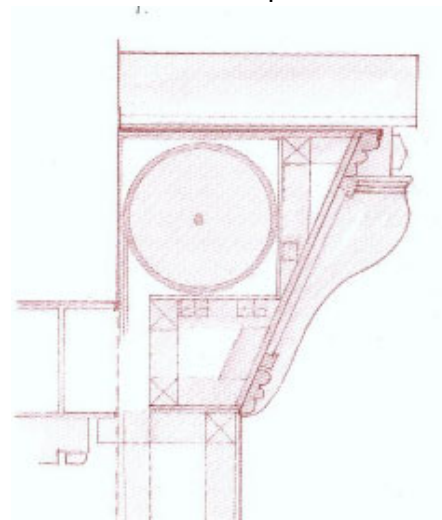
## Security

Early shop windows were closed at night with wooden shutters secured with iron bars. This is an approach still used today although metal grilles have replaced the wooden shutters. In the mid nineteenth century revolving iron shutters were introduced, housed in the entablature with guide tracks set into the glazing bars. Today this is often merely bolted onto the face of the shopfront and covers it entirely when closed and dominates with its ungainly roller box when open. This approach is not acceptable on a historic facade and should be generally avoided. Security can be obtained in more subtle and less destructive manner.

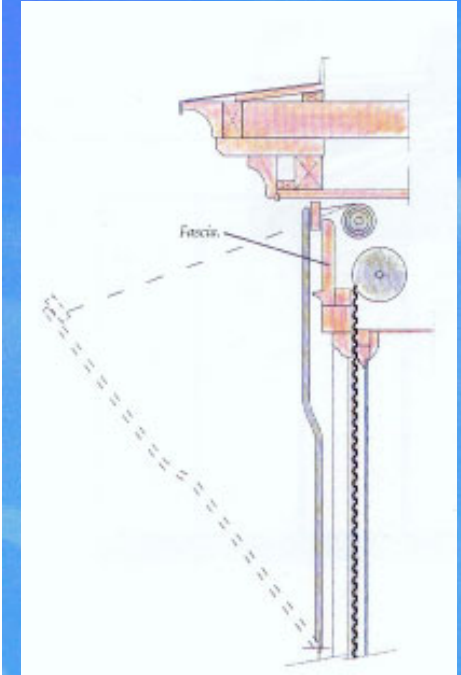
It is recognised that security is a real concern to traders and insurance companies however glazing bars can be reinforced with steel frames on the inside, ordinary plate glass replaced with the full protection of security glass or internal grilles may be used. The stall riser can be reinforced or roller shutters fully recessed and integrated into the shopfront in the original manner. If external shutters are used correctly it is also necessary to consider a decorative or signage solution to the face of the shutter so as to avoid the deadening effect of the blank shutter on the streetscape.



With the increasing use of CCTV and better lighting throughout our town centres it may be expected that the perceived need for shutters to provide security will increasingly become redundant.



Detail of window head with internally mounted shutter



Section through shop front showing blind and recessed shutter



Detail of window frame with guide track



## Design Approach :

<b>Proportion</b>	this is critical in all elements of the proposal and is the basis of all successful designs both traditional and modern.
<b>Rythm</b>	particularly important in the main elements; door ways, main divisions of the shopfront.
<b>Scale</b>	of individual components [including glazing] and the overall frontage
<b>Identity</b>	encourage a distinctive character but not at the expense of the setting, avoid the amalgamation of shopfronts across facade boundaries.

**Consideration of context** - the basic thrust of this guide

Proposals should be developed by an experienced designer, preferably a chartered architect who will consider the following issues:

- Review the proposed location in terms of building, adjoining neighbours and streetscape.
- If the main structure is of locally distinctive character or representative of its type, establish any existing [possibly concealed] elements of the early frontage.
- Confirm the retailers functional requirements as to image, profile, signage, house style, requirements for display, security, lighting, pavement display etc.
- Prepare proposals for the new/renovated shop front having full regard to the above.
- The design should be innovative, use high quality materials and incorporate signage and lighting proposals.
- Disabled and pram access should be enhanced if neccessary.

A written design statement will be required that covers the issues above including any proportional relationships and the basis for the decisions taken as to materials and detailing.

## Information requirements

Early consultation with both the Town Council and the planning authority is essential to ensuring that possible changes to frontages are properly considered and that the shopowner is fully aware of the importance of the impact of the property on the town as a whole. Adequate information about proposed changes to shopfronts is essential. In addition to a written design statement the following information will be required:

- Elevation of the whole of the property [including adjoining frontages]
- Full height sections Scale 1:20
- Full width plan Scale 1:20
- Joinery details Scale 1:5
- Lighting and signage details

## Implementation

The key to the success of any enhancement scheme is the provision of an accessible and easily negotiated process of application, agreement and implementation. It is proposed that an application be made for funding to support a programme of grant aided works to improve shop frontages and security.

A percentage of the cost of the proposed works, including design fees, would be covered by the grant scheme with the applicant covering the remainder. Priority would be given to applications that fulfill the the following criteria:

- independent traders rather than branches of larger organisations.
- Improvements should accommodate, where possible, improvements in access
- proposals have been developed in the context of advice given in this guide.

The applications should be considered in the light of the shops location and potential benefit to the community as a whole.

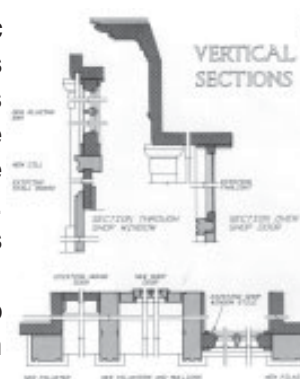
The proposal should show understanding and respect for the context and adjoining properties, durability, innovation and overall quality. Consideration should be given to the space available outside the shopfront. Applications from groups of traders will be encouraged. In some instances paving and forecourt trading would be encouraged however, if this is considered, then similar considerations of quality and impact will be considered.

Consideration of upper floors should be included, if at all possible, including basic building maintenance. Recent taxation changes seek to stimulate the reuse of upper floors of retail properties. England is almost unique among European societies in the low levels of occupancy in this type of accommodation despite the recognised social benefits that arise from a truly resident local population. Re-integration of ground floor entrances within the retail frontage should be supported as assisting to generate vitality in the life of the streets. A further aim of the scheme should be to improve disabled access to individual properties

Enhancement programmes such as that envisaged for Newquay can make a difference to our streets however it is a gradual, incremental process and commitment to a long term programme is essential if real benefits are to be gained.



the use of colour and self-control can produce simple and delightful results without great sacrifice





## Shopfronts and the Public Realm

The Newquay Town Centre Design Guide was the subject of previous public consultation. (Killacourt Exhibition September 2000) This Guide has now been adopted by key and private sector partners and will be actively used to set the quality standard for future streetscape enhancements.

It is anticipated that with the adoption of this complementary Shop Front Design Guidance the two publications will provide the basis for a greater confidence and clear direction that can carry forward a programme of improvements to instil a new sense of pride in Newquay's public realm. Another key ingredient in public realm projects is the involvement of public art as an integral part of the development. The soon to be launched Newquay Discovery Trail, provides an insight into the distinctive elements of Newquay's heritage that could provide a basis for the design of complementary public art installations.

Newquay Town Centre Design Guide, Newquay Shop Front Design Guide and the Newquay Discovery Trail are three of a number of small projects undertaken through the Newquay Tourism Enhancement Initiative led by Newquay Chamber of Commerce.

It is proposed that the local collaboration of public and private sector partners continue and applications be made to appropriate funding bodies in order to further support high quality public realm improvement projects for Newquay. The scope of the application would incorporate all of the dimensions identified above (including publicly and privately owned land and premises) with the Town Centre Design Guide, Shop Front Design Guide and Newquay Discovery Trail providing a firm foundation.

Initiatives and organisations providing potential sources of funding include:

- South West of England RDA
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Countryside Agency Local Heritage Initiative
- Objective One: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
- Restormel Borough Council
- Newquay Town Council
- Cornwall County Council
- The private sector



## Conclusion

The aspirations behind this Design Guide clearly match those of the Objective 1 Programme which is providing such an exciting opportunity to revitalise the region as a whole:

- assistance and investment for the development of local businesses
- development of the culture and community regeneration
- enhancement of local and regional distinctiveness

Good design and investment in the public realm lies at the heart of regeneration and sustainable development. Locally co-ordinated, high quality public realm initiatives can reap enormous economic, social and environmental benefits for local towns and communities. These benefits can lead to better local facilities, increased visitor numbers and spend, improved town centre safety and strengthened local identity.



## THE NEWQUAY TOURISM ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE

Co-ordinated by

**Newquay Chamber of  
Commerce**

With funding from

Restormel Borough Council  
Newquay Town Council  
SW Regiona Development Agency  
European Regional Development  
Fund

The logo for Newquay, featuring the word "Newquay" in a stylized font with a blue and orange color scheme.



# Appendix 1 Case Studies



This shopfront essentially ignores the building into which it is set, it may be attempting to project a clinical 'brand' image although at the expense of the overall impact.

- projecting signs to be encouraged as giving depth to the facade

- overlarge, featureless fascia and areas of glazing unrelated to the proportions and composition of the whole elevation

- no articulation of frames set flush with the face of the stonework results in a bland panel in the streetscape with no positive contribution to an overall richness

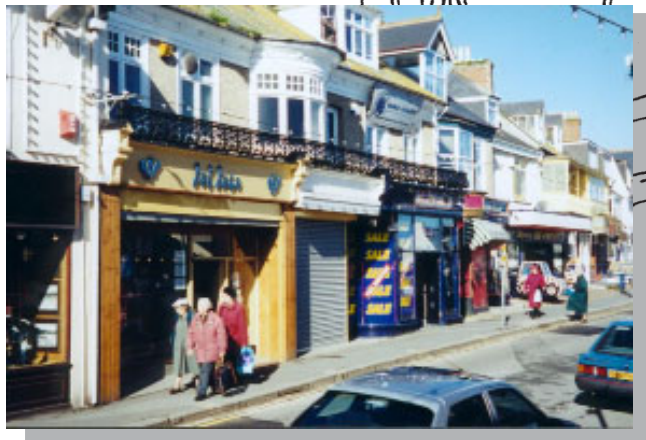




The alternative proposal is still a modern shopfront and contains only indirect references to traditional forms however it is more respectful of its surroundings and is less bland and neutral

- lintel exposed to provide visual support to facade above
- fascia reduced in depth and set back under lintel to provide contrast to a 'conventional' fascia
- shopfront to echo the proportions of the adjoining arched openings - glazing set well back into the opening, could be richly coloured to contrast with the natural stonework
- section of more articulated moulding to infill facade with greater density of detail to this smaller element

the dormer window as constructed detracts from what was once a distinctive design



The linear nature of the individual building and the streetscape as a whole has been ignored and lost by these shopfronts, the fact that they are all individually conceived is not itself objectionable but their individuality is competitive and does not share any common language.

clarity of traditional language is eroded by additional members, there are better alternatives to the problem of lowering ceilings

deadening effect of closed shutters, totally unacceptable

inappropriate and low quality casings to existing pilasters

character of original shopfront significantly changed by blanketing the windows with advertising

lack of stallrisers deprives the assembly of a base and stability and contributes to the loss of proportion





The context and extent of existing detail would here assist the re-introduction of traditional elements to achieve an appropriate balance between verticality and horizontality.

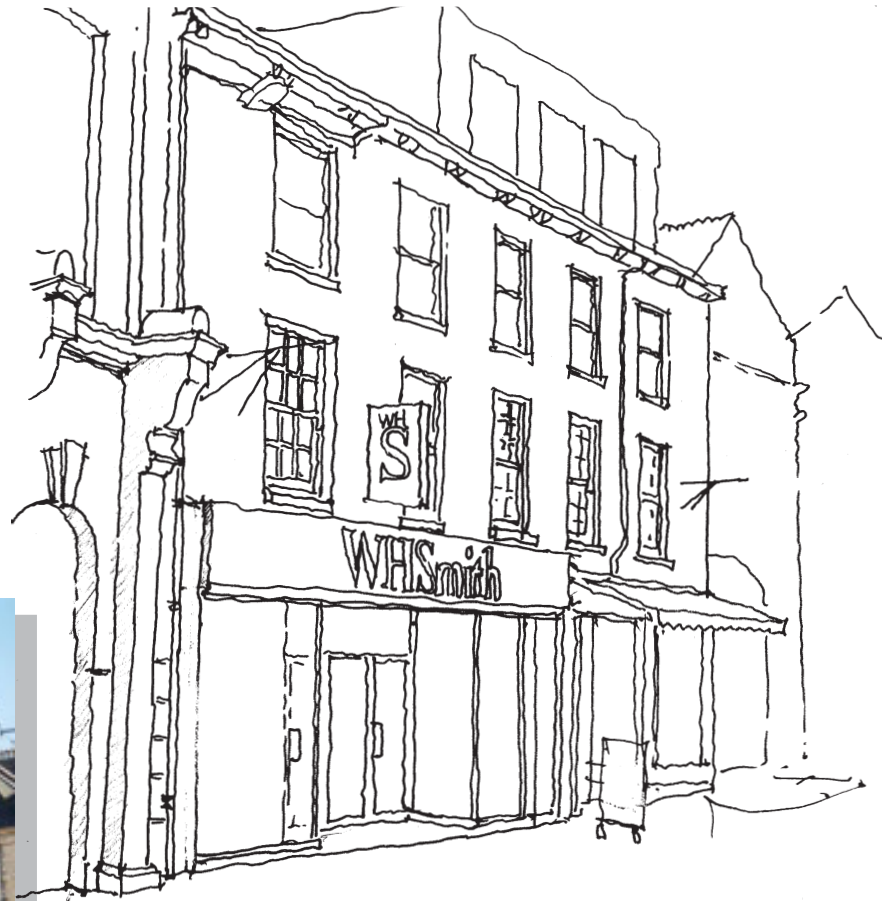
■ The central bay is recessed to counterpoint the projecting bay above and the end units framed again with pilasters and stallriser.

■ internal shutters integrated into the shopfront to replace face-fixed shutter

■ 'Dutch' blind removed to reveal an intriguing and valuable area of shopfront



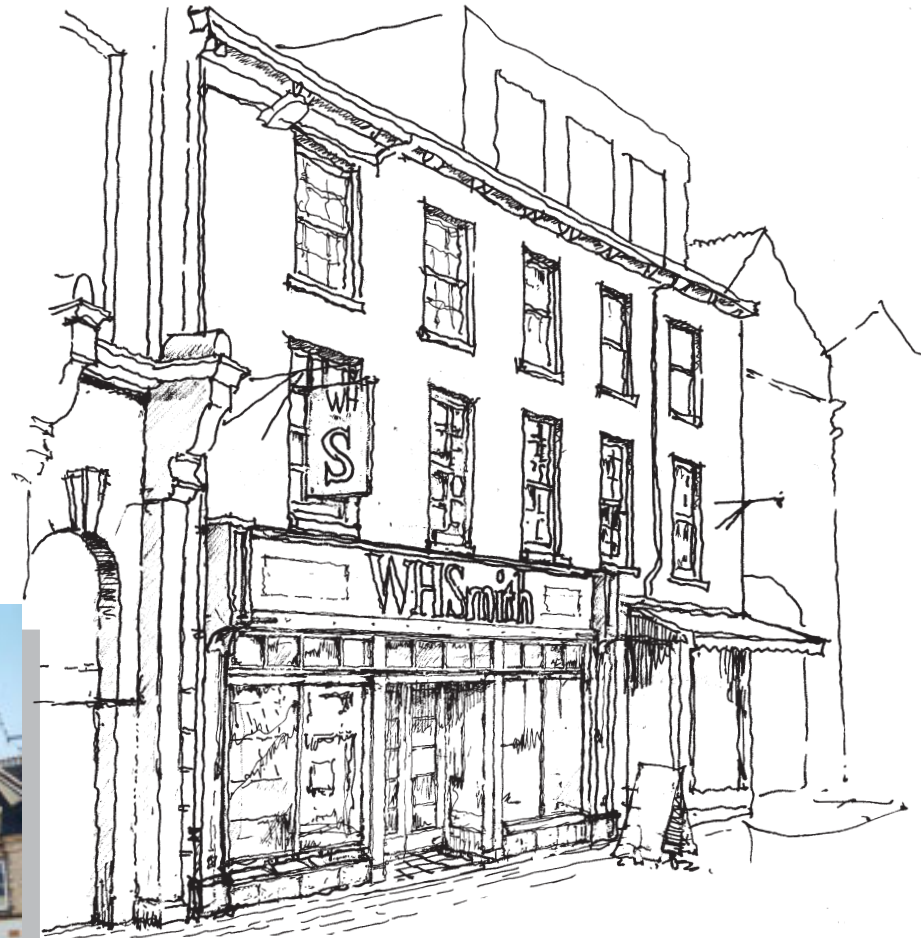
- the dormer window was obviously added when issues of the state of our streetscape were not a high priority



**A classic example where corporate requirements have been indiscriminately applied, this is not inevitable, other communities have obliged these companies to think before they act and respect the communities in which they trade.**

- standard fascia is overlarge and clearly applied over the surface of the wall
- again, the shopfront totally ignores its setting, destroys the balance of the facade and contributes nothing





An Arts and Crafts style of shopfront would be an appropriate replacement reflecting the sober regularity of the main facade and something of the companies traditions. An alternative, modern solution would be equally appropriate if well-considered and innovative.

- remnants of former pilasters expanded to form a clear frame, a broad fascia is supported by an articulated substantial timber sub-frame
- the importance of a stall-riser as base is clearly seen
- natural materials and colours would be more noticeable than the neutral finishes currently used



This was once a distinctive frontage, if still in place would have been a delight and asset to the town. It is to be hoped that this would not now be permitted, there are better solutions...

The enclosure of the balcony has ignored any wider issues other than gaining private space.

All aspects of the shopfront element are deeply unsatisfactory; materials, fascia, railings, paving and composition and colours are all equally ill-considered.





Clearly the best course here is to strip back to the original and reinsate the shopfront using the adjoining shop as a pattern, what would be lost? The reinsatement of the existing first floor wall would contribute enormously to the finished quality, as an alternative a glazed enclosure set within the balustrade line could be acceptable.

- recreation of fascia and stall-riser to give balance and emphasis, inset doorways to give rythm
- simplicity of purpose and materials replace confusion and unsightliness.
- colours should blend the tones of brickwork, paint and lichen