



GUIDE FOR THE
MAINTENANCE
AND REPAIR
— OF —
LORD STREET'S
VERANDAHS



Historic England

Sefton Council



Southport Civic Society

southportcivicsociety.org

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Introduction

Discussions about Southport immediately conjure up images of the seaside, parks, 'the golf', theatre visits and perhaps most famous of all – Lord Street. This fantastic street contains a number of fine buildings, but the one thing that everyone knows, recognises or is soon to discover is that it has a unique feature – the verandahs. These structures developed over time from the mid-19th century where individual shop owners built a covered section out in front of their shops using cast iron to make supporting columns and glass roofs. Over time, individual verandahs joined up or entire rows were built, leaving a legacy of an extended covered boulevard on the seaward side of Lord Street. This has become perhaps the defining characteristic of Lord Street itself, something that attracts visitors, provides interest (and shelter) for residents – and ensures Lord Street's status as a classic seaside resort.

The very nature of the expanse of verandahs is both a strength and a weakness; a strength because collectively they are so impressive – the sum is greater than the individual parts. However it also means that if individual verandahs are not maintained then they have a major impact on their neighbours and therefore the whole street. One blocked gutter can cause serious problems next door.

Historic England has long recognised the significance of the verandahs to Lord Street and warmly welcomes the efforts of the partners (Sefton Council and Southport Civic Society) along with the Southport Business Improvement District to encourage, urge and support shop owners in repairing and maintaining these unique features. We are delighted to have been asked to advise on the content of this guide and to support its production. With good care and regular maintenance, the Lord Street verandahs can remain a unique feature and ensure Southport is a special place to live, work and visit for the future.

Karl Creaser • Principal, Historic Places Team North West • Historic England

Southport's rich heritage is at the core of its identity, and without doubt the town's impressive rows of cast iron verandahs are integral to its character. The distinctiveness of Southport is vital in ensuring that this classic resort continues to be a desirable place to visit, work, and live. The aim of this guide is to encourage and help verandah owners to look after these structures and highlight the fact that only modest amounts of inspection, maintenance and repair is needed to preserve Lord Street's unique and cherished character. A lack of care and attention causes harm not only to the verandahs themselves, but to the town, creating a bad impression to both locals and visitors alike. Help keep Southport looking its best with this useful guide to maintaining these nationally important heritage assets.





A view of Lord Street seen on an Edwardian photograph. Many of Southport's verandahs date from this period.

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A Brief History of Southport's Verandahs

Southport is famous for its row of decorative cast iron verandahs which form an almost unbroken canopy along the frontage of the shops on Lord Street. The design was once an exciting new architectural phenomenon, borne out of the industrial revolution showcasing the use of cast iron and glass. In Southport, verandahs were erected piecemeal by individual shop owners from the 1860s onwards, and those present today remain in private ownership. Their construction also supported the promotion of the resort during the winter season, allowing people to shop and browse regardless of the weather.

The survival of Southport's verandahs is almost unheard of and as a result, Lord Street benefits from the most numerous and complete set in the country. This significance has warranted many of the structures to be listed under statute as national heritage assets and they contribute strongly to the Lord Street Conservation Area and its aesthetic appeal. It is vital that the verandahs are regularly maintained and cared for.

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Style and Type

The verandahs fall broadly into two types. The earlier verandahs have supporting columns and were designed with similar scale features, but varying decorative treatments. Columns comprise a base, column and capital, and are flanked by decorative spandrel brackets supporting a frieze (see explanatory drawing on page 8). Roofs entail narrow glazing bars running perpendicular to the building, glazed with Georgian wired glass.



Early verandahs include supporting columns beneath spandrel brackets and an ornamental frieze.

Later canopies on buildings from the early 20th century often used a cantilevered style of construction. Examples of this can be seen at the junctions of Lord Street with Coronation Walk and Bold Street, where verandahs are free of supporting columns.



In later 20th century designs, a novel cantilevered approach was sometimes preferred and offers an unusual but attractive alternative to verandah design.

Verandahs were created by qualified architects with a flair for design, and as a result can be quite elaborate and decorative. Each installation is constructed and ornamented differently, though generally they are built to relatively consistent dimensions and features. Some incorporate 'rainwater goods' within columns, others have curved glass roofs and some incorporate space for a fascia. Overall they have a strong unity of appearance and scale.



Despite their unique and individual details, Southport's verandahs remain largely similar in size and form.

A number of verandahs in Southport retain highly important historic signage which must be conserved. These panels advertised businesses that once operated from the property and are usually constructed of timber. Flaking elements of paint should be reapplied in a like-for-like manner using appropriate timber paint. Sections of damage or decay should be repaired using specialist methods and materials. Historic signs contribute to the vitality of the conservation area and are unique components in Southport's shopfronts. Contact Sefton Council before embarking on any repair work for further advice and guidance.

Any new signage should respect the historic character of Lord Street and will require permission from Sefton Council. Be sure to contact the Planning Department before installing any new signage on your building, including the verandah.

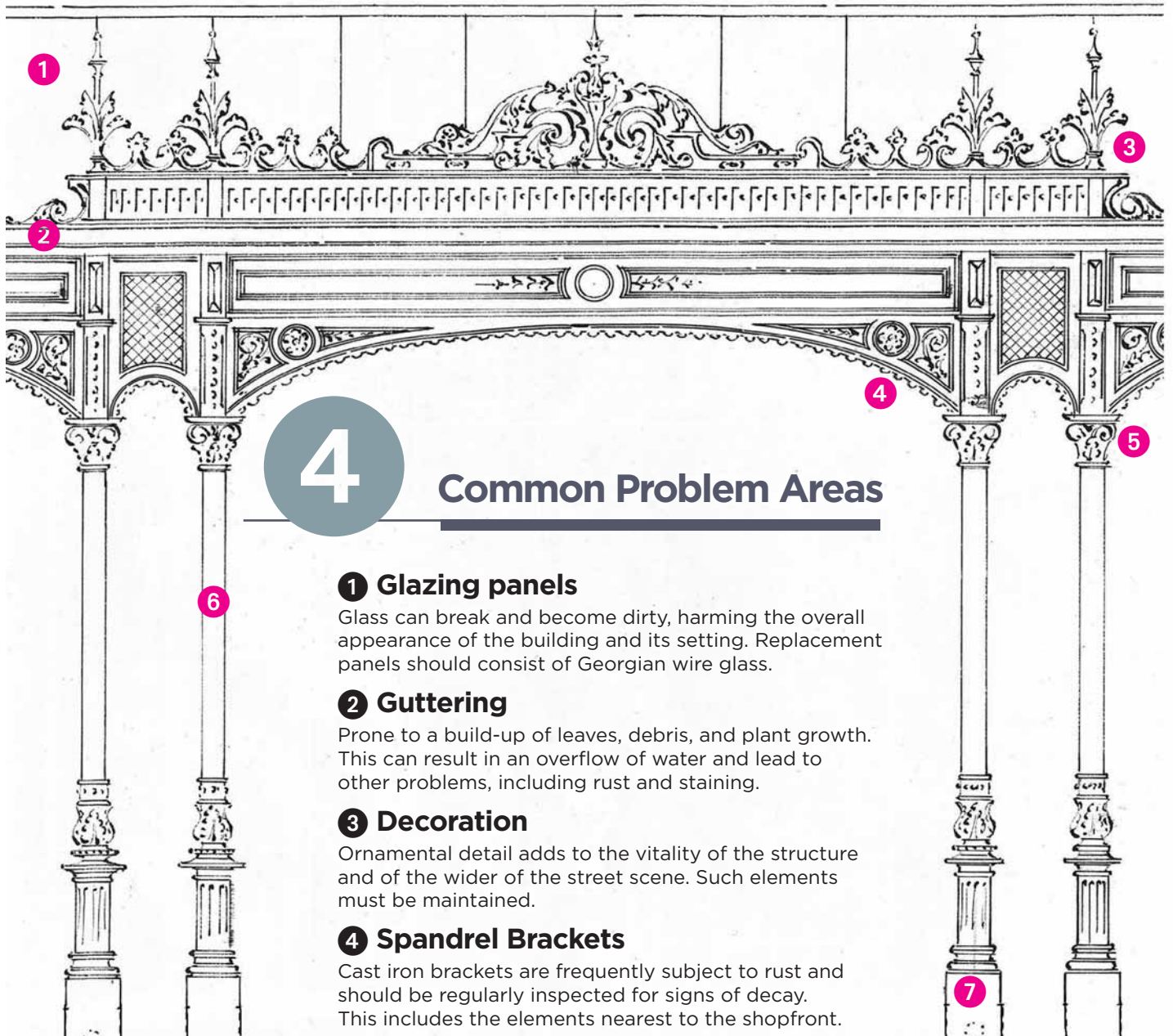
The black and white colour scheme which has been adopted for virtually all the verandahs is highly practical in the sense that it is easy for neighbouring verandahs to be painted to match, despite varying ownerships. This consistency in the colour scheme enhances their character and sense of unity. To maintain the special character of the Lord Street Conservation Area, it is important that this scheme is maintained.



Historic advertisements add vitality and enhance the visual appeal of Southport, as well as promoting the town's commercial heritage.



The verandahs of Lord Street benefit from a highly regimented colour scheme bringing a sense of unity and cohesive character to the locality.



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Common Problem Areas

1 Glazing panels

Glass can break and become dirty, harming the overall appearance of the building and its setting. Replacement panels should consist of Georgian wire glass.

2 Guttering

Prone to a build-up of leaves, debris, and plant growth. This can result in an overflow of water and lead to other problems, including rust and staining.

3 Decoration

Ornamental detail adds to the vitality of the structure and of the wider of the street scene. Such elements must be maintained.

4 Spandrel Brackets

Cast iron brackets are frequently subject to rust and should be regularly inspected for signs of decay. This includes the elements nearest to the shopfront.

5 Capitals

The head of the column, the capital is often one of the most decorative elements of a verandah, but can become encrusted with grime.

6 Columns

Cast iron columns will require regular maintenance to be kept in good condition. Beware of cracks, rust and flaking paint, as well as botanical growth.

7 Base downspouts

Some columns also serve as water downspouts in their base. These must be kept free of any blockages to avoid more serious internal issues.

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Common Problems and How to Fix Them

The vast majority of defects result initially from blocked gutters and a lack of basic maintenance. Even just a small regular investment in gutter clearance can limit the need for extensive and expensive repairs at a later date. Standing water, leaks and vegetation growth must be addressed quickly in order to avoid significant repair work.



Blocked gutters quickly leads to an overflow of rainwater. Gutters should be kept free of debris and all downspouts should allow for an unobstructed flow of water from above.

Blocked gutters

Blocked gutters prevent rainwater from running free of the verandah, and will quickly cause problems. A small but regular investment in gutter clearance will limit the need for extensive and expensive repairs later. Blockages will inevitably lead to an overflow of rainwater and unsightly areas of rust and decay, not only on the guttering itself, but also the cast iron columns which support it.

Regular inspections to ensure that all gutters are free of residue should be carried out and any deposits should be immediately removed. This will allow for an unobstructed flow of rainwater and significantly reduce the risk of more serious problems in the future. If your verandah features hollow columns, be sure to flush out any accumulation from within. A verandah's ability to discharge rainwater is crucial to maintaining the overall condition of the verandah and shopfront.

Plant growth

Similar to organic residue, active plant growth presents a clear risk of blockage and will only worsen if left untreated. Plant growth can often be seen from the street level and can make even the smartest of shopfronts appear untidy. Consistent and regular maintenance will reduce the ability of plants to take root. Plant growth may also be found in the iron work itself, particularly in and around the joints. Such growth should be carefully removed at the first opportunity to prevent water ingress and further risk of decay.



Problems such as plant growth suggests a lack of care of attention, not only to the verandah but to the premises as a whole. It can also result in other complications including rust and staining.

Water Traps

Water traps in the decorative verandah ironwork can prove distinctly problematic as corrosion tends to occur more frequently at these points. Water traps can also be caused by unsealed joints and holes, the accumulation of dirt, and where corrosion has previously developed. These problems should be appropriately addressed with the minimum levels of intervention.

Uneven surfaces and oily surfaces

An uneven surface on ironwork (also known as pitting) is a form of localised corrosion that not only looks unattractive, but is also an indicator of hidden dangers. This occurs on ironwork that has been previously painted and often provides evidence that the surface of the iron is corroding beneath the paint. This kind of corrosion is highly detrimental as it causes little loss of material with the small effect on its surface, while damaging the deep structures of the metal. A noticeably oily surface on the surface may provide further clues as to this problem.



The structural form of a verandah can be a problem in itself. Where water traps occur, ensure these points are maintained exceptionally well and if possible rectified in an appropriate manner.



Localised corrosion looks unpleasant and can be an indicator of problems beneath the paint. Such instances require swift attention to prevent prolonged decay.

Rust and Corrosion

Iron corrodes and delaminates as it expands, and the process can distort the design and composition of the ironwork by forcing its various elements apart. Iron may break under stress without warning, so it is important to rectify any instances of corrosion as soon as possible. Areas of corrosion should be removed as soon as they are detected by hand, using a wire brush, chisel and sandpaper. Do not sand-blast as this can result in a loss of historic detail and fabric. Bare metal should not be left exposed due to the high risk of further decay. If in a reasonable condition, metal should be repainted in an appropriate paint following the manufacturer's instructions without delay.



If left untreated rust can lead to fractures in the iron work and threaten the entire stability of the verandah and its various components.



Staining is often a symptom of rust or decay elsewhere on the verandah. The source of the problem should be tackled and the affected section returned to its original appearance.

Staining and Discolouration

Discolouration most often occurs when rust has washed over painted ironwork, particularly where it has been painted in lighter shades. The source of the rust should be identified and treated. Only then should the affected areas be cleaned and if necessary, repainted in a matching colour with appropriate metal paint.



Flaking paint has the potential to hold moisture and encourages the formation of rust. New paint should be applied at the first sign of decay.

Flaking or Brittle Paint

Flaking or brittle paint is not only unattractive, it also poses a serious threat. Paint in a poor condition can trap and hold moisture, preventing ironwork from drying out and leading to corrosion. A new coat will be required.

Be sure to clean away any flaking paintwork before applying a new matching coat. It is important to remember any paint system applied will only be as good as the surface beneath. This can be achieved using a chisel, wire brush heads fitted to power tools or simple wire wool. A failure to clean and prepare metal surfaces properly before painting is a key cause of deterioration and corrosion.

Remember to use an appropriate colour-matched paint designed for metalwork, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

The painting of ironwork is best carried out on warmer days to allow paint to dry properly. Wind-blown dust and dirt can also reduce the effectiveness of new paint, so breezy conditions should be avoided. Paint thickness is also important; several thin coats are more effective than fewer thick coats and will preserve important architectural details.

Glazing Canopies

Due to their delicate composition, verandah glazing panels can crack over time through general wear and tear. Regular inspections of panels should be carried out in order to ensure their good condition, being free of debris, and that they do not present a danger. Fallen masonry, timber, branches and pigeon droppings can all inflict damage, or cause glazing to become unattractive. If repairs are necessary like-for-like Georgian glazing replacements are required to respect the architectural significance.



Cracked glazing is as dangerous as it is ugly. Broken glazing panels should be replaced in a like-for-like design and kept free of growth and debris.



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General Rules for Repair



If your verandah is statutorily listed, guidance should be sought from Sefton Council prior to any repair as Listed Building Consent may be needed. Anything other than a like-for-like repairs may be deemed to be a criminal offence under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, so it is sensible to seek advice. You can search the official list held by Historic England at www.historicengland.org.uk

For larger-scale repair projects with more serious deterioration, it may also be advisable to employ the services of a qualified professional to advise on and co-ordinate any necessary works. For more detailed technical advice on the repair of cast iron please see Historic England advice at www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/metals-conservation

Before embarking on any repairs it is important to assess the condition of the ironwork in order to determine what degree of intervention is necessary. Where repairs are required, as much of the original fabric as possible should be retained. It is essential to ensure that appropriate materials and techniques are used, and a philosophy of minimum intervention is strongly advocated.

Welding Cast Iron

Cast iron welding should only be carried out by an experienced craftsman as the process can be problematic and the integrity of such repairs cannot always be guaranteed. Badly damaged and missing sections of verandahs must be replaced on a like-for-like basis using traditional manufacturing techniques. Matching elements can usually be obtained from foundries specialising in traditional casting and usually hold a range of traditional patterns in stock. Cast aluminium, fibreglass, plastic and steel are not appropriate substitutes. A number of websites can be found at the end of this guide to help you source an appropriate supplier.

Painting Ironwork

There is little point in painting over rust. A clean, well prepared surface is essential before applying any new layers. This will ensure that the paint adheres correctly to the iron and will improve its effectiveness. It will also prolong the life of the paint and ward off further problems down the line. Depending on the extent of the corrosion, it may be possible to 'spot' paint areas by feathering the edges of existing paint with sandpaper, then painting over the exposed metal. Care should be taken to form a good overlap with the existing layer.

Where the existing layer of paint is sound, it may be possible to use this as a base for a fresh coat. Clean the surface of the existing paint thoroughly using clean water, taking care to remove any areas of rust, dirt or grease. Then carefully use sandpaper over the area to produce a good base for the new paint. It is always advisable to ensure that fresh paint is compatible with the ironwork and any existing paint layers, so be sure to consult the manufacturer's guidelines for clarification.

Brushes are usually the most effective means of applying paint to ironwork. It is important to allow each coat to dry before applying the next. This prevents the upper coats being damaged by the evaporation of solvents from the undercoats. Wind-blown dust and dirt can reduce the effectiveness of new paint, so painting in breezy conditions should be avoided. Paint thickness is also important; several thin coats are more effective than fewer thick coats.

If the existing paint is in very poor condition it may be necessary to remove it entirely before repainting. If a complete re-painting is required, current best practice recommends two coats of a zinc-based primer, and one coat of micaceous iron oxide, followed by two coats of gloss paint.

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The Risk of Enforcement Action

The significance of Southport's verandahs cannot be understated and Sefton Council considers their care and maintenance to be of the utmost importance. Their contribution to the Lord Street Conservation Area is highly positive and they significantly enhance the appearance of this historic commercial boulevard.

Sefton Council has a legal duty to determine which parts of the borough feature areas of special architectural or historic interest, and it has powers to assist in the preservation or enhancement of their character or appearance. Where owners have neglected to take care of their properties, the Council can exercise powers of enforcement through the courts to ensure unkempt or poorly maintained properties are brought back to a reasonable standard.

Amongst other controls, Parliament has granted Local Planning Authorities the power in certain circumstances, to take steps requiring properties to be restored when their condition adversely affects the amenity of an area. This ability falls under Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, and the Council has issued a number of these notices in the past.

Legal action is a last resort, and it is a course of action the Council would rather avoid if at all possible. Please ensure your shopfront and verandah is suitably maintained and well looked-after to avoid running the risk enforcement action and the financial consequences that may follow.



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Useful Contacts

Sefton Council Planning Department

E. planning.department@sefton.gov.uk

T. 0345 140 0845

W. www.sefton.gov.uk

Historic England

E. northwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk

T. 0161 242 1416

W. www.historicengland.org.uk



Useful Websites

British Artist Blacksmith Association

www.baba.org.uk

BuildingConservation.com

www.buildingconservation.com

The Institute of Conservation

www.icon.org.uk

Institute of Historic Building Conservation

www.ihbc.org.uk

National Heritage Ironwork Group

www.nhig.org.uk



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