

Hartlepool Local Development Framework

Shop Front and Commercial Frontages Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document





2014

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1. Why is shop front design important?

Shops and their frontages have an important role in making our town and local centres vibrant, pleasant to visit, and safe. In the same way that a theatre or film set creates a back drop for the performance, a shopping parade made up of distinctive shop frontages creates a stage for economic action.





2. How to use this document

The purpose of this document is to encourage good design within the retail areas of Hartlepool. All guidelines should be balanced with the constraints and opportunities presented by each scheme.

In this guidance, the term 'shop front' refers to the full range of commercial premises found in town centres including banks, public houses and restaurants, as well as food and nonfood retail.

3. Setting

Removing and replacing shop fronts over time is not a new trend. The key to retaining a vibrant shopping area is to ensure that the standard of shop fronts does not decline and that each design is appropriate to its particular circumstances. For example the design of a shop front in a town centre location, such as York Road or Church Street, will be different from one located in a village such as Greatham or Elwick.



TOWN

The decision over whether to repair or replace a shop front will depend upon the age, quality and condition of the existing building and shop front. If the existing shop front is inappropriate to the building or the locality, or is beyond repair; then a new or replacement shop front may be the most suitable solution.

In some instances it will be desirable to maintain the original design of a shop front or re-instate traditional features when lost, however this will not always be the best solution and a modern scheme may be appropriate. Modern shop fronts should respond to the local area and the overall design of the development through consideration of proportions, location, extent and detailing of advertising and materials.

COUNTRY





Guideline

Replacement shop fronts should respond to the context, reinforcing or improving the wider appearance of the street.

4. Shop front designs

Shop fronts are key elements in town and local centres and their appearance can contribute significantly to visual interest and add vitality to the street scene. Assessing buildings in the area will help to identify the characteristic of the area and individual details of the host building will help to inform the final design.

There will be times when a shop stretches across two or more properties. When considering a shop front in this situation it is desirable for the buildings to be seen as two units with a shop front designed specifically for each one. A unified approach to paint colours or advertising will assist in ensuring the business is seen as a single unit.



Corner shop fronts have an important visual and practical role to play in shopping areas. Special care is required for shops of 'double' aspect and window displays to ensure that these provide interest on both elevations.





Where historic shop fronts exist, these should be refurbished.



When planning a new shop front the age and architecture of the building should be taken into consideration.



- Where historic shop fronts exist, these should be refurbished as original detailing can not only enhance the individual building, but also contributes to the character of the area.
- The age and architecture of the building should be taken into consideration in any new design or alterations.
- Account should be taken of the scale and proportions of the building when considering a new shop front.
- The street scene and the design solutions adopted at adjoining buildings should be noted so that the new shop front fits into the street scene.
- The finishing materials should be chosen to complement the design of the host building and surrounding property.
- Where a shop front occupies the ground floor of more than one building, the design and proportions of each shop front should relate to each individual building. A single shop front that spans two or more buildings disregarding architectural detail and decoration will not be acceptable.
- Where a building is located on a corner site it should aim to address both elevations.

5. Creating a new shop front

A traditional shop front is made up of a number of elements. Each of these elements contributes to the overall appearance of the shop front and the character of the building. These elements are:

Fascia

This is the flat or inwardly sloping section above the shop window traditionally where the shop sign is sited. Care is needed with the proportions and detailing. In particular, fascias should not be too deep, should not obscure architectural features or first floor window cills, and should never run uninterrupted for excessive lengths across two or more individual buildings, especially when they are of differing designs.



Pilasters and corbels

These are vertical columns situated at each side of the shop front, and adjacent to doors to upper floors. Pilasters usually have a wide base or plinth at the bottom and a decorative corbel at the top which sits at the side of the fascia.

Stall riser

This is the vertical panel beneath the shop window extending downwards to the ground. It provides protection to the glass from dirt, kicks and knocks and can be reinforced to assist in providing additional security against ram raiding.

Stall risers should be either painted timber paneling (properly detailed rather than beading fixed to a plain surface), rendered, glazed tiles or marble depending on the materials used on the building. The use of plastic paneling, glossy ceramic tiles without any relief and textured paints are usually inappropriate.

In some instances, where the building and shop front is contemporary in style, the incorporation of a traditional stall riser may be inappropriate. Where the location and style of the building allows, a large expanse of plate glass with the emphasis on the interior of the shop providing the display can be an attractive solution.

As with traditional design, a modern shop front should generally comprise three elements, each of which can be modernised and adapted to function appropriately.



Guidelines

- For a shop front design to be successful three elements, the stall riser, fascia and shop window should be in proportion.
- Consider shop fronts on neighbouring properties. It may be appropriate to line up the fascia and stallriser with adjoining buildings, particularly in new developments. This can help unify a street.
- Ensure that the position or size of the fascia does not obscure any existing architectural features on upper floors.

Cash machines

Where a new cash machine is to be installed it should be sensitively sited in a well lit area where the machine can be surveyed by passing pedestrians. Existing decorative detailing on the host building should not be compromised.

6. Doors

The entrance to the shop was designed to entice customers in and still serves that purpose today. Traditional shop fronts often have two points of entrance as shown below.



2. A side door providing access to the upper floor of the building.

The design of the shop door should take into consideration the shop front and be clearly identified as the main entrance to the premises.

Wherever it is practicable, alterations should ensure access for all through the main entrance by creating a clearly defined, well lit, unobstructed and level approach.

Over time shop fronts change and very often the side entrance door is removed on traditional shop fronts, effectively abandoning the upper floors. Besides the loss of valuable space, which could contribute to the up-keep of the building by providing another income from a flat or office, the floor to the building tends not to be maintained and deteriorates undermining the long term future of the whole building.

If restoring a shop front a side access door should be included in the design and alteration. Even if there is no access created immediately as part of a development scheme, the provision of the door will allow this to happen at a later date.

Guideline

The design of all doors should be of a style and material that relate to the shop front and building as a whole.

7. Windows

The shop window and its detailing display the shop inside and are the invitation to encourage shoppers to enter. They also serve a secondary purpose in ensuring that the street scene is active and vibrant.

The window framing and its glazing should be the dominant visual element in the overall design. Advanced manufacturing techniques allow for the use of large areas of glazing however this is usually not appropriate for more traditional shop front designs. In these instances glazing should be subdivided with mullions and transom bars to provide increased strength and support for security purposes. When used in conjunction with toughened or laminated glass (which remains intact when cracked), such approaches can improve shop front security as well as having a safety benefit.



- Ensure that proportions of glazing are appropriately balanced with the shop front frame and any other windows on the building.
- Avoid using large areas of glass. Subdivided windows provided increased security and lower the cost of any replacement.

8. Security

Solid external shutters can impact on the vitality of a shopping area, particularly after shop opening hours, when the area will be less busy and for most of the year largely dark. Illuminated shop window displays, combined with a perforated shutter, throw light onto the street. This supplements the normal street lighting and allows views into the shop creating a more inviting street scene at night.



There are alternatives to solid roller shutters including

- Security glass (see section on windows)
- Internal lattice grilles or shutters
- Removable external shutters and
- External open weave shutters

Open weave shutters allow window shopping and passive surveillance during closed hours. They also have the advantage of being less visually intrusive on the shop front and surrounding area.



Shutter box housings should always be integrated within the shop front or be recessed and flush with the shop front. Removable external shutters can be acceptable if they are appropriately designed to respect the architectural character of the shop front.

Protection of the whole of the building should be considered as an integral part of the overall security. Solutions for both windows and doors to the rear or side of the property should be of an appropriate design and style which will not detract from the area.

- Ensure that all security measures are designed as an integral part of the shop front and / or building and not as an afterthought.
- Where possible consider using laminated or toughened glass as it is shatterproof.
- Avoid using external roller shutters. If there is no alternative to an external roller shutter ensure that it is open weave and the shutter box is contained behind the fascia. Solid external roller shutters will be refused in most circumstances.
- If appropriate consider using a security gate to protect a recessed doorway.

9. Materials

The choice of materials and finishes is a major factor in determining the style of a shop front. Traditional shop fronts generally use materials such as painted timber, glass, render, stone and glazed tiles. Modern designs tend to be simpler in their design and allow the use of an extended palette of materials such as aluminium or stainless steel.

Materials are often dictated by the design of the shop front. Consider the age and architecture of the building itself, those immediately adjacent, and in the wider street scene. This will ensure that the choice of materials is compatible with the design of the shop front and the wider area, contributing to the local sense of place which can be created in commercial areas.



- The finishing materials should be chosen to complement the design and surrounding property.
- Ensure that materials used for shop fronts in or near the Borough's heritage assets are sympathetic to the location.

10. Awnings and blinds

Textile or canvas retracting roller blinds are part of traditional shop fronts and were designed to protect goods in the shop from damaging sunlight or if perishable from heat. They also protect customers and window shoppers from the rain and in some instances protect goods displayed on a forecourt outside a shop.





A **roller blind** is contained within the fascia of the shop window frame. When retracted back into the shop front the blind is effectively hidden away as part of the overall design allowing the shop front to be seen.



Dutch blinds are usually fixed to the front of a shop and can obscure parts of a shop front when closed.

- Blinds should be formed as an integral part of the shop front design with the roller blind contained within the fascia either at the junction of the shop window frame and the fascia or within the cornice. When retracted away it should effectively become part of the overall design of the shop front.
- Dutch blinds consist of a frame over which a plastic material is stretched. This type of blind is capable of being folded back but can often obscure the shop front and should be avoided.

11. Signs and adverts

Signs and advertisements can have a significant impact on the street scene. External advertising is important for commercial activity, their main purpose being to attract attention. Well designed signs can greatly enhance the environment whereas poor design can detract from it.



The **fascia** to a traditional shop front is intended to provide a location for advertising the business within. Such signs can come in a variety of designs including hand painted signs or individual lettering created in Perspex or metal.

Window signage can be applied to the shop window, fanlights over doors or windows on upper floors of the property. This is often useful if a different business is using the floors over a shop. Where the upper floor of a property is used by a separate business a name plate, adjacent to the door can assist visitors in identifying the entrance. It should be modest and in proportion with other signs on the building.





Projecting or hanging signs are usually located at first floor level or to the side of the shop front at fascia level and can increase the recognition of the business within the street. **Banner signs** can be used on buildings in a similar fashion where fascias signs cannot be incorporated. Such signs should be carefully located and attached not to obscure or damage architectural details on the building.

Menu boards and blackboards advertising special offers can often be found on restaurants, pubs and clubs. These should be modest and in proportion with other signs on the building. Care should be taken not to introduce too many on the property as this creates clutter and dilutes the messages on the signs.





In some areas there are **advertisements on gable ends or signs above first floor windows**. These come in the form of adverts painted directly onto masonry gables or individual letters fixed to elevations. Such proposals should be considered in the context of both the building and the wider area it is located in.

Very often a business will create its own **corporate identity** and wish to display this message consistently on all of its premises using a pallet of specific colours and / or signs. In such instances, consideration should be given to where the branding will be placed, along with the surrounding street scene, to ensure that it will be appropriate to both the host building and the surrounding area.



Signs on pavements or business forecourts often come in the form of A-boards. Such signage should be located where it will not cause an obstruction to those using the highway and have appropriate licences and insurance in place prior to it being displayed.

- Where new shops fronts are proposed all advertisements should be designed as an integral part of the shop front and/or building.
- New signs on existing shop fronts should be in proportion and scale with the whole of the building as well as the shop front itself.
- Site signs carefully on the property to ensure that they do not obscure architectural features on the shop front or building.
- Choose signage which will reflect the character of the building and the wider area.
- As with all signage restraint is the key as excessive amounts can reduce the individual message and introduce unnecessary clutter.
- Lettering and graphics should be clear, simple and in proportion to the type of sign.

12. Illumination

The lighting of shopping streets is key to creating a vibrant and safe night-time environment. Seeing into shops is important for natural surveillance with subtle external illumination assisting with views into the property after it has closed.

On shop fronts the main external illumination is often to the signage. To fascia signs this can be in the form of picture lights or swan neck lights fixed above the fascia. Such lights should be kept to the minimum required to illuminate a sign as multiple lights can cause clutter.

Alternatively more integral lighting can be provided such as lighting within the cornice of a shop front down-lighting the fascia sign or illumination of individual lettering with lighting to the rear giving a subtle halo effect.

Subtle illumination of the building elevation by uplighting from a ground floor cornice or from above at the eaves can, with the right building, emphasise its architectural details







- Lighting of signs should be considered in conjunction with the lighting of window displays and door lobbies to achieve a maximum overall effect.
- Where possible illumination should be integrated into the design of the shop front. In all cases the size and number of fittings should be kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary visual clutter or obtrusive additions.
- Avoid using completely internally illuminated box signs or fascias. Individually mounted and lit letters or symbols on a background made of appropriate materials are usually more acceptable.

13. Vacant shop units

The accumulation of vacant shop units can have a negative impact on a retail area. Where such properties exist the continued maintenance of the shop front not only contributes to the enhancement of the wider street scene, but can also make the property a more attractive prospect to a potential occupier.

Pop-up shops can provide a short term use of an empty building. The advantage of this is that the building remains actively occupied and new uses, even on a temporary basis, can invigorate shopping areas bringing in new customers.

In some locations it is desirable to retain an active frontage to a shop front. This can be done by providing advertisements to shop windows. These displays can add colour and interest to a street scene which may otherwise have blank windows.



- If the shop is vacant consider how the window space could be used to assist in maintaining the vitality and attractiveness of a shopping area and attract potential tenants.
 For example the window could be used for exhibitions by artists, schools or community groups.
- The short term use of vacant commercial buildings in shopping parades as pop-up shops will be encouraged.
- The use of advertisements and other treatments to vacant shop premises will be encouraged where it will enhance the surrounding area by creating an interesting shop front.

14. Space above shops

Space above shops is just as important as the shop front itself. The condition and appearance of upper floors contributes to the general appearance of the street scene. Very often these spaces can lie vacant as a shop continues to trade below.

These floors can provide useful space for the shop unit itself or can be utilised to provide additional income for the property owner in the form of a flat or a business use.



- The occupation of floors over commercial buildings will be encouraged.
- The treatment of floors above shops, including windows, elevations and signage should be of a style and design which is appropriate to the character of the host building.

15. Practical Advice

Before starting any work to a shop front or alterations to the building you should consult a Building Control Body. In particular the following areas of the building should meet the current Building Regulation requirements.



All doors including the main access door to a shop and any side or rear entrances.

If level access is already available this must be maintained.

Hartlepool Local Authority Building Control will be happy to assist you with your proposals and offer a full Building Control Service to ensure your project compiles with the current Building Regulations.

Building Control Section, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool TS24 8AY Tel: 01249 523289 Email: buildingcontrol@hartlepool.gov.uk

16. Policy Context

The relevant policies from the 2006 Hartlepool Local Plan, for all shop front applications are as follows.

Policy reference	Policy title	Description of policy
GEP1	General Environmental Principles	A framework of guidance over a complete range of planning issues such as the appearance of devel- opment, its effect on the area and the need to conform to a range of standards and requirements. The policy does not refer to specific types of development or uses, other policies within the plan do this.
GEP2	Access For All	Sets requirements to ensure that developments are accessible by all residents and visitors.
GEP3	Crime Prevention	Sets requirements that develop- ment should seek to reduce or crime and/or the fear of crime.

Depending on the location of the development then the following policies may be relevant:

Policy reference	Policy title	Description of policy
GEP7	Frontages of Main Approaches	The policy states that when consid- ering development proposals ad- joining the major corridors listed in the policy development will be re- quired to be of a high standard of design.
Com1	Development of the Town Centre	The policy states that proposals for revitalisation and redevelopment within the town centre should, where possible, provide improve- ments to the overall appearance of the area. It also outlines policy in relation to the reuse of vacant buildings and proposals for A3, A4 and A5 uses.

Policy reference	Policy title	Description of policy
Com2	Primary Shopping Area	States that in this area retail devel- opment of an appropriate design and scale in relation to the overall appearance and character of the area will be approved.
Com4	Edge of Town Centre Areas	Defines 10 edge of town centre areas and indicates generally which range of uses are either ac- ceptable or unacceptable within each area particularly with regard to A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, B2, & B8 and D1 uses.
Com5	Local Centres	States that proposals for shops, local services and food and drink premises will be approved within this local centre subject to effects on amenity, the highway network and the scale, function, character and appearance of the area.
Com6	Commercial Improve- ment Areas	The policy outlines that the bor- ough council will encourage envi- ronmental and other improvement and enhancement schemes in designated commercial improve- ment areas as outlined in the local plan.
Com9	Main Town Centre Uses	States that main town centre uses likely to attract large numbers of visitors should be located in the town centre. Proposals for such uses outside the town centre must justify the need for the develop- ment and demonstrate that the scale and nature of the develop- ment are appropriate to the area and that the vitality and viability of the town centre and other centres are not prejudiced.
Com12	Food and Drink	States that proposals for food and drink developments will only be permitted subject to consideration of the effect on amenity, highway safety and character, appearance and function of the surrounding area.

Policy reference	Policy title	Description of policy
Com16	Headland – mixed uses	Aims to strengthen tourism and established economic activities to increase local employment and prosperity for this area, widen the mix of housing and conserve the environmental heritage of the Headland. Proposals for small scale retail, office and workshops, leisure and educational uses and housing developments of an ap- propriate scale and complement- ing the historic and cultural charac- ter of the area will be approved in mixed use areas identified in the policy subject to a set of criteria.
HE1	Protection and En- hancement of Conserva- tion Areas	The policy sets out that develop- ment within the conservation area should either preserve or enhance the area and its assets.
HE2	Environmental Improve- ments in Conservation Areas	policy outlines that the borough council will encourage environ- mental improvements to enhance conservation areas
HE3	Developments in the Vi- cinity of Conservation Areas	The policy informs that design and materials use in development that would affect the setting of a con- servation area should have regard to the character of the area and the neighbouring area.
HE8	Works To Listed Build- ings (Including Partial Demolition)	The policy indicates that traditional materials and sympathetic design should be retained and/or used when carrying out works to listed buildings and buildings which af- fect the setting of a listed building to ensure that the integrity of such assets is preserved.
HE12	Protection of Locally Im- portant Buildings	The policy sets out the factors to be considered in determining plan- ning applications affecting a listed locally important building.

Relevant paragraphs from the National Planning Policy Framework are summarised below.

1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

2. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

7. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

•an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

•a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

•an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

9. Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life.

10. Plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

17. Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The relevant principles are that planning should...

always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;

conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;

56. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

60. Planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

61: Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

63. In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.

64. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

67. Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built...Control over outdoor advertisements should be efficient, effective and simple in concept and operation. Only those advertisements which will clearly have an appreciable impact on a building or on their surroundings should be subject to the local planning authority's detailed assessment. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

70. To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs decisions should:

• plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

• guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;

• ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and

• ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

131: Viable uses consistent with the conservation, positive contribution to sustainable communities and local character and distinctiveness

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

•the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

•the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

•the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

132: When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset of development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

17. Glossary

Advertisement - any letter, model, sign, awnings or blind.

Cill - horizontal piece of timber at the base of a window opening projecting slightly to throw water away from the building.

Corbel Bracket - a decorative timber piece usually found above a pillaster.

Down lights - lighting typically recessed into a projecting cornice to light a fascia board.

Façade - the exterior face of a building.

Fanlight - glazed area above a door.

Fascia - horizontal board over a shop front which usually carried the name of the shop.

Finishing Materials - the materials used to construct the shop front.

Halo lighting - typically used for back-lit letters to create a glow of light around the letters by illuminating the wall surface from within the letter.

Heritage Asset - a building, monument, site, place, or area of landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment.

Mullion - a vertical element (glazing bar) that divides a window in two.

Pilasters - pillars framing the shop front.

Roller shutter - this is made up of horizontal slats hinged together which roll down over a shop front on guides located at either side of the shop front.

Shop Door - this is the main entrance door to the shop.

Shop Window - the main window to the front of the shop.

Street scene - the environment that you see around the shop.

Swan lighting - curved single metal lights that shine light typically to the fascia board.

Stall riser - the plinth on which the shop front sits.

Transom - a horizontal bar across a window.