



Shopfront Design Guide

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Aerial view of Seaham

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to promote and encourage good shopfront design, restoration and refurbishment within Seaham. The aim is to improve the general standard of design when bringing vacant buildings back into use and when carrying out general shopfront improvements. This is especially important in the areas that are designated a conservation area (see aerial photo below and information on page 7).

The guide is for the use of building agents, owners and tenants who may be embarking upon repair or replacement of a shopfront. Where possible we would always recommend that existing features should be retained or repaired, and any historic evidence of a frontage should be used in developing a new design.

The guide sets out the principles to be followed when designing shopfronts. It explains the national and local planning policies, the need for planning permissions and consents. However, we strongly recommend that you seek the advice of professional designers and contractors who have experience of similar types of work. The guidelines are not prescriptive but tools to allow for inventiveness in achieving good design that contributes to the character of the area.

With increasing competition from online and out-of-town outlets it is important that the traditional town centre should be attractive and project an image of quality. Seaham has a good deal of special architectural and historical interest and an emphasis on good quality design will encourage investment and spend which will benefit all traders in the town.

A shopfront is the first point of contact between a business and the public, a well-designed shopfront will entice customers inside. Shopfronts contribute to an immediate impression and can create a lasting image of a place. High quality, well maintained shopfronts make a town feel more welcoming to locals and visitors.



Existing street scenes



Seaham Aerial Conservation Area

Policies and Strategies

The design guide is based on the following national and local policies.

National Policy

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** recognises that planning should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning should promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allowing a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characteristics. Town centre boundaries should be defined along with primary shopping areas (PSAs), making it clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future.

National policy also recognises the importance of design and conservation. Areas of the town centre are within the Seaham conservation area. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work which help make development acceptable to communities.

Local Policy

The adopted **County Durham Plan (CDP)** will provide the local planning framework for the County and for Seaham town centre.

You can find detailed information on [The County Durham Plan](#)

Policy 9 Retail Hierarchy and Town Centre Development

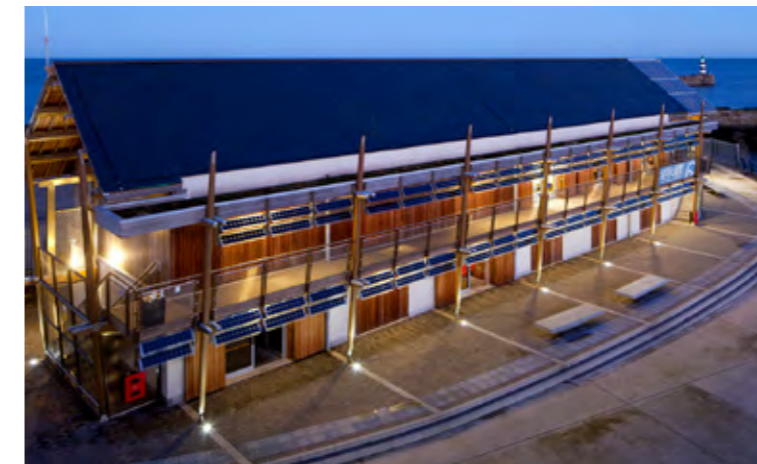
Seaham's defined primary shopping area aims to maintain the retail offer but recognising the challenges that town centres face, allows provision of non-retail facilities. Outside the primary shopping area, non-retail uses are supported across the town centre allowing for growth and diversification. Support will be given to the appropriate provision of non-retail facilities, given the positive contribution they can make to the vitality and vibrancy of town centres. In addition, support will be given to re-using buildings for art and cultural facilities. Proposals that would positively contribute to the evening economy in Seaham will also be supported.

Policy 29 Sustainable Design

Promotes good design and states that all development proposals will be required to achieve well designed buildings and places. New development will be expected to be of a high quality design that respects and responds to the local context and the distinctiveness of the area.

Policy 44 Historic Environment

As identified, areas of Seaham town centre fall within the conservation area, there are also a number of listed building that are located within the town centre. Development will be expected to sustain the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting.



Seaham Harbour and Marina



Pre-application Advice

The Council offer a pre-application advice service offering professional advice on the likely acceptability of development proposals, including whether planning permission is required or not. This may be the case with a change of use application. Some changes from one use class to another are covered by 'permitted development' rights (meaning that planning permission is deemed to have been given). The Council can also advise on design and conservation issues through the pre-application service.

www.durham.gov.uk/media/3739/Pre-application-advice/pdf/PreApplicationAdviceProtocolV2.pdf?m=636868609237770000



Conservation Area

A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” The designation of a conservation area is not to prevent development, but to manage change in a positive and proactive way that benefits current and future generations.

In an area with this status, you will be required to seek planning permission for the demolition of buildings over 115m and boundary walls over 1m in height next to the highway. The loss of buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area would be discouraged. Additional controls are also placed over trees within the area. Permitted development rights (works that can be done without Planning Permission) are different in designated conservation areas.

The appraisal is an assessment of those features and qualities that make the area special. This includes individual buildings, groups of buildings, other structures, architectural details and materials, open spaces landscaping, street furniture, and the relationship between all of these. The appraisal provides a consistent and evidential base on which to determine planning applications affecting the town.

You should refer to the appraisal when writing a heritage statement.

You can find detailed information regarding the Seaham Conservation Area:
www.durham.gov.uk/SeahamCA

Seaham Townscape Heritage Project

There have been numerous successful regeneration projects within Seaham and its vicinity, since the 1990s. These were undertaken to improve the town’s attractiveness as a destination for visitors, following the decline of the local coal mining industry.

Despite these efforts, since 2012 Seaham Conservation Area still remains on the ‘At-Risk’ Category of the English Heritage At Risk Register (now Historic England).

In response to these concerns (which relate primarily to the commercial centre of the town), Durham County Council applied to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for support to reverse the changes that have been detrimental to the town’s character.

In September 2019, the Council secured £1.6 million for the Seaham Townscape Heritage Project, a three-year programme to regenerate and transform the town centre.

The project focuses on the heritage-led regeneration of historic properties in Church Street by offering grants to property owners or occupiers for works to repair and reinstate traditional features, and to provide access to currently inaccessible vacant upper floor spaces. Emphasis is being placed on bringing vacant buildings back into use, developing and sustaining business confidence in the area.

Public spaces are being upgraded and decluttered to make them more attractive and accessible, increasing the connectivity of the town and providing better interpretation of its historic features, such as the Rainton Railway Line.

The project offers a range of activities and training opportunities for local people to improve the wider understanding and enjoyment of the town’s heritage.

You can find detailed information regarding the Seaham Townscape Heritage Project:
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/seahamtownscape>



Church Street historic shopfronts

Principles of Shopfront Design

Views

In deciding on the appropriate design solution within the Seaham Conservation Area, consideration should be given to how and from where the building will be viewed.

Long distance view and approach

The design should consider and be respectful to the wider street scene. This shouldn't aim to exactly replicate the near neighbours or unite buildings of differing styles but should contribute to the interest of the street. The design should take its cue from the existing fabric and historical references.

Near view

The design should be considered as part of the building as a whole and be sympathetic to the buildings architectural style and materials. The scale, proportion and detailing of the original building should influence the decisions and can be used as a historical reference point.

Close view

The detailing, and decoration of the older shop fronts adds a real charm and sense of identity to the street. Where possible existing features should be repaired and retained with consideration given to the longer term planned maintenance. Where repair is not possible then replacement should be considered. Where no existing fabric remains then wholesale replacement of modern shop fronts should be considered. The replacement should follow the basic rules of shop front design to provide an interpretation that is interesting, respectful and contributes positively to the street.

The Shopfront

The approach, near view and close view will obviously be assessed in relation to the existing building as well as the condition style of the shopfront.

The first stage of the process will involve historic research and investigation, which will be followed by a review of the existing, both in its design and state of repair.

Decisions can be made as to the level of intervention, maintenance, repair or replacement required.

Most shopfronts have been adapted and altered over time to suit the changing building use. In some cases, this may have simply over clad some historic features and in others it may have involved whole-scale removal.

Page 10 describes the inappropriate changes that have been undertaken over the years. In addition, it also highlights the deterioration of the fabric as a result of choosing low cost materials with a short lifespan.

It also compares this to a suggested form of shopfront design that has been based on surviving photographic information and is used to describe the basic items that are used in the design and building of a shopfront.

Low Quality Shopfront - Inappropriate Changes



- 1 Badly dressed flashing to upper fascia in very poor condition
- 2 Poor fascia design, flat metal section with no regard to overall design
- 3 Inappropriate applied mouldings instead of using fielded panels
- 4 Inappropriate use of softwood skirting to the external plinth
- 5 Poor quality Ironmongery
- 6 "Modern" plush painted door with no detail
- 7 Inappropriate materials used for stallriser, plywood delaminating
- 8 Oversized framing to shopfront with little or no detail to section
- 9 Previous alterations: Removal of historic shopfront including projecting corbels

Example of Replacement Shopfront - Based on Historic Data



- 1 New lead flashing above architrave with straight edge to arch before becoming stepped
- 2 New fascia to be tilted towards the street with traditional fonts and approved colour palette
- 3 Mouldings to be hardwood recessed panelling painted to match the approved colour palette
- 4 Plinth to protrude from stallriser and be constructed using stone
- 5 Traditional door with fielded lower panels and decorative framing painted to match shopfront
- 6 Stallriser to be finished in a historically relevant material with different but complimentary colour to shopfront
- 7 Decorative framing with fluted columns and miniature capital detail
- 8 Ridged corbels with decorative sides to sit underneath short rounded capitals

Basic Rules

The different parts of a shop front are relatively straightforward and can be considered as “framing” the view and opening into the shop itself. Historically each element has its own recognised name and role. A glossary of terms is provided at page 22. The sketch shows all the different parts referred to below and how they fit together to create a shop front.

Pilasters

These are shallow depth elements that are intended to look like columns either side of the shop front. On larger shop fronts they tend to be repeated in order to break the design. They can be highly decorated with fluting or a very simple with a flat surface. Traditionally they can have a wider base or plinth which connects to the stall riser and a decorative capital and or corbel at the top linking to the fascia and cornice.

Consider the proportion and detailing of pilasters so that the design complements the neighbours and is balanced

Plinth or Base

These tend to be simple details which become the starting point for the pilaster and link to the stall riser. The materials can be timber, stone, tile, render or occasionally brick.

The plinth should not be designed in isolation

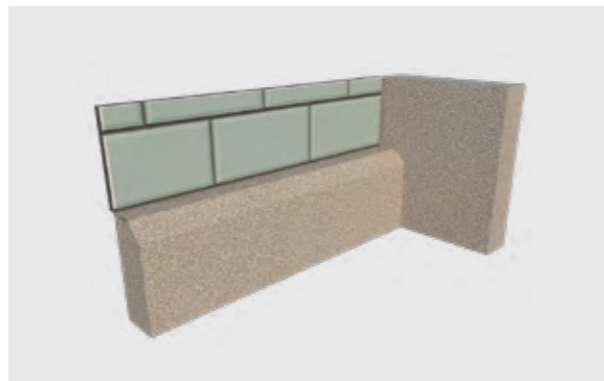
Stall Riser

This became an essential component of the shop front; it gives protection to the base of the window from damage and water splashing and roots the frontage to the ground. The material is likely to be the same as the base or plinths and the most robust and maintenance free treatments are those that use masonry. Timber panelling is used quite often as a cheaper alternative that allows the design to be built up from moulded panels. The drawback with this solution is its inability to withstand damage and constant wetting without a robust planned maintenance strategy; this would generally be annually to ensure that the stall riser can have an extended life. The stall riser is also used to introduce ventilation into the shop or occasionally light and ventilation to the basement. The building design and materials above ground floor will provide a potential material type for the stall riser and could be combined into the design solution.

Preserve, retain and repair historic fabric and take design clues from history where no existing fabric exists

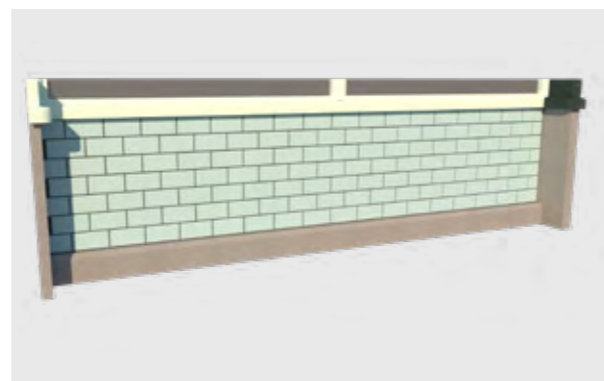


Pilaster



Plinth or base

Consider the materials for the stall riser in relation to lifespan and maintenance. Check the height and proportion in relation to neighbouring



Stall riser

Corbels and Capitals

A capital finishes off the top of the pilaster. Visually the pilaster line is carried through with a moulded bracket or “corbel”. These were elaborate timber carvings traditionally formed in an “S” profile with the upper part larger than the lower part. These were often bought “off the shelf” from pattern makers some of which still exist today.

Consider the proportion and detailing of corbels/capitals so that the design is balanced across the frontage and complements the neighbouring properties

Cornice and Fascia

These define the top of the shop front, frame the view and act as the primary signage zone. As well as acting as the primary signage zone they provide a number of other functions, acting as a device to shed water away from the shop front, act as a housing or boxing for concealed security devices (grilles and shutters), conceal the structure behind and can be used to conceal an awning. The main fascia could be angled slightly towards street level in order that the angle of view is improved. The design of the cornice can be elaborate or relatively plain dependant on the context. There has been a tendency to overboard existing fascia’s with larger signage boards in inappropriate “plastic” type materials with the fine detailing of the original “chopped back” to allow this to happen. The design should leave a suitable gap or “visual breathing space” below the first-floor windowsill and needs to be considered in line with the 4 key principles above. Where a store shop front extends across several buildings then the pilaster detail and corbel should be used to break up the design rather than run these

Windows

The earliest of shop fronts were constrained in their design due to the manufacturing capabilities at the time, with shopfronts using larger individual glass panels as they became available. The display of goods is fundamental, however large glazed panels that do not reflect the history of the property should be avoided. Consider the horizontal and vertical emphasis that can be created within the design and how the glazing bar design will appear. The smaller the panel the smaller the section of the glazing bar. The window layout should pay attention to the building design above the fascia, and whilst several shop fronts are symmetrical with a central door location, it can be designed with an offset location in some cases.



Corbel

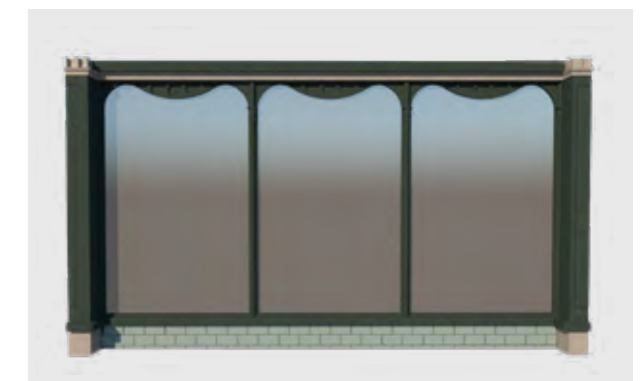
Corbel topped with large architrave running full length of facade
Edges to have traditional decorative details, such as fielding
Lower architrave wrapping round the base



Cornice and Fascia

Remove inappropriate signage boards and restore and repair the existing

Intricate designs can encourage the shopper to stop and stare. Consider dividing large windows with glazing bars



Windows

Doors

The door is often directly off the street but is often recessed from the street front with glazed returns to the windows which “visually invite” the customer into the shop, add to the weather protection and allow the customer to step out of the line of moving pedestrians and view goods on offer. The architectural style of the door should reflect the overall shopfront design and tend to be part glazed; the lower door section being panelled and generally matching the height and setting out of the stall riser. The door and window assembly should be made from a naturally durable and sustainable hardwood where possible and provided with door ironmongery that has a practical and decorative purpose. Kick plates at the base, push plates and pull handles with locking latch and door closer.

The height of the overall shopfront will dictate whether a bottom hinged window termed a fanlight (when viewed it can look like an open fan) will be required. These vary in design and should be in keeping with the overall composition.



Recessed door

Restore and repair, or replace with ironmongery in keeping with the design
Retain any original ironmongery and door furniture where possible



Recessed door

Other ironmongery and metalwork

When surveying the existing shopfront or researching the building care should be taken in order that any other metalwork is recorded. This could range from the more obvious letter boxes and handles to boot scrapers and brackets for awnings and or seasonal hangings which may have been temporary.



Salvaged letterbox



Salvaged door handle

Use of colour

Colour within the overall shopfront design should be considered in the context of the street and overall character of the area. In some cases, the overall character and quality may be less than satisfactory, and the opportunity should be taken to address that in any new proposals. The colour of the shopfront and signage should be in keeping with the historical character of the area. Where this has been lost through inappropriate changes, research should be carried out to allow an informed decision to be taken. External paint finishes should not be excessively bold, or garish and Matt or Satin Matt paint should be selected. Most paint manufacturers provide “Heritage” paint ranges, often broken down into periods - for example Victorian and Edwardian, and this makes an initial selection easier.

Consider access and visual impairment when selecting colours in order that suitable contrast exists to the entrance door

Corporate image

In conservation areas and on listed buildings some corporate colour schemes, styles and logos can be obtrusive and overbearing.

We would encourage large corporates to consult with us through a pre-planning application on how the standard design can be modified to respect the character of the building and its surrounding area.

Preserve and enhance as a first priority



Before



After



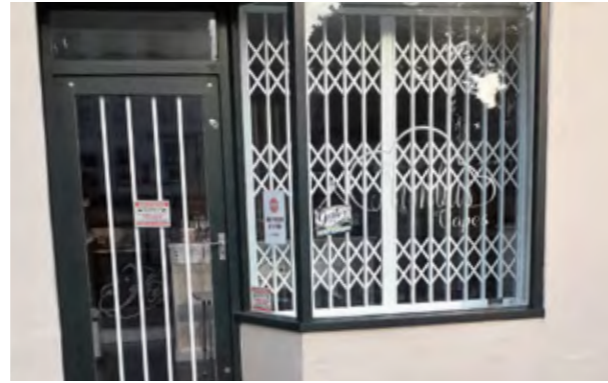
Corporate colour scheme



Colour scheme adapted for a conservation area

Security

Protecting shops and premises is very important, however very visible external roller shutters will detract from the street scene and may also appear unwelcoming to the shopper. Generally external shutters should be avoided if possible, in favour of an internal shutter or lattice inside the glazing. This can be used in conjunction with toughened laminated glass to meet building insurance needs. Recessed doorways can be protected with decorative metal gates that can be retained in both the open and closed positions. External shutters mean a street looks dead when shops are all closed. If external security shutters are required for insurance reasons, then concealed shutter guides with a concealed shutter box behind the fascia should be provided.



Security shutters

Consider the street scene “afterhours”

Lighting

Modern street lighting should provide enough illumination for a shopfront or fascia. Internally illuminated fascia box signs and projecting signs are not in character in a conservation area and would not be considered an acceptable lighting solution. An appropriate lighting solution would in most cases require Advertisement Consent, particularly in the Conservation Area. However, it is possible to successfully incorporate lighting into a shop front design.



Symmetrical projector beam

External lighting

Where external lighting is to be used it should be discreet and minimal. External lighting may be achievable by trough lights to match the background colour of the fascia. Alternatively, the use of small individual spotlight units positioned appropriately and concealed as much as possible is preferred to large spotlights or swan-neck lights. On hanging signs if illumination is proposed it should be very discreet and ideally attached to the sign bracket.



Trough lighting

Lighting adds character; consider variation in lighting levels to create interest

Internal lighting

Interior window lights can have a positive impact on the vitality and sense of security within a shopping street. Illuminating your window display can help to create an attractive street scape and allow people to window shop out of trading hours.

Signage

One or two well-designed signs look better than a multitude of signs and clutter that obscures the shopfront. One fascia sign and a hanging sign may be deemed enough. Care should be taken when positioning signs so as not to obscure any architectural features. Attaching a sign to the fascia of the shopfront is the most prominent place for signage but must complement the overall façade. Timber should be used for sign boards, painted in a matt colour to match the shopfront scheme.

Traditional handwritten sign writing, vinyl sticker letter or individual letters in timber or metal are preferred. Where individual letters are being applied, the fixings should not be visible. Projecting box signs are unsightly and inappropriate in a conservation area or on listed buildings. Where a building has an upper floor that is in use it is recommended that lettering be applied to the inside of upper floor windows and a name plate to the side of the ground floor entrance, a hanging sign or individually applied letters to the front upper elevation are considered appropriate. The scheme for the upper floor should be considered in relation to the ground floor signage.

Pavement Signs/A Frames

Signs on the pavement, such as A boards will not be permitted as they obstruct the highway and are a hazard for disabled or partially sighted people.

Window Displays

Shops are encouraged to consider how the use of posters, banners and vinyl's in shop windows affect the overall impression of the shopfront. The extensive use of vinyl is not encouraged as it deadens the streetscape making the area look less inviting to shoppers. It is also worth considering how good merchandising and an attractive window display will attract customers into the shop and improve the character of the shopfront.

Alarms

Alarm boxes should be sensitively positioned upon the building and not onto the fascia. Garish colours should be avoided.



Raised lettering

Consider well designed permanent signage rather than temporary applied signage or loose signage to the approach to the shop front

No freestanding signage on the pavement is permitted



Graham Sanderson Interiors, Harrogate, display by Made You Look!



Alarm box

External masonry

Many existing buildings have external finishes which have been painted over the years, this includes, stone, brick and render. Prior to completing any new decoration, the existing background should be checked and repaired as required. Often painting traps moisture within the existing fabric and a suitable “breathable” paint or lime wash should be selected. Consulting a suitably qualified heritage specialist is important to ensure that the specification is correct.



Stonework

Access

Many older shops and properties have steps up to the ground floor or a single step at the door position. Any upgrading of a property must carefully consider how access for all can be accommodated. The use of colour and texture is important when considering the design of the entrance in order that it is obvious and clearly defined for those with impaired vision. The use of the recessed doorway can assist in providing a gently ramped non slip surface instead of a



Level entranceway and wide doorway provide easy access

The Equality Act applies to all places of work, make sure your premises is compliant

Canopies and Blinds

Historically blinds and canopies were used to protect goods from damage from the sun and could be retracted when not in use. Where used, they should not detract from the style of the shop front or from the character of the building or street scene. Traditionally blinds were retractable and made of canvas with a blind box incorporated into the cornice. Where existing blinds remain, we would encourage repair and retention. Care should be taken to ensure that architectural features are not obstructed. Canvas is the preferred material and colours should match or be in keeping with the fascia colours.

Garish colour schemes should be avoided. Any lettering should be minimal and should not dominate the canopy area. The lettering style should co-ordinate with the design of the shop front, especially the fascia sign.

Regulations state that all blinds, fixed or retractable, must be positioned at least 2.43m above ground level and with their outside edge at least 1.0m away from the outside edge of the kerb.



Canopy

Where existing blinds remain, we would encourage repair and retention.

Garish colour schemes should be avoided.

The lettering style should co-ordinate with the design of the shop front, especially the fascia sign.

Conversion of Upper Floors

There are several design considerations when undertaking a conversion. Access arrangements to the upper floors should be considered in any refurbishment or development including individual joint access to facilitate access to upper floors – reducing the need to change the street scape.

Access to units can be to the front, rear or side of the building as appropriate. If there is an existing entrance this should be retained where possible, if not it should be integrated with the ground floor façade in an appropriate design and style. Additional noise proofing may be required seek advice from building control.

The management of refuse and recycling storage should be away from the front street. Service equipment such as meter boxes, gases pipes, satellite dishes etc. can have an adverse effect on both the individual property and the street scene. The siting of these fixtures should be considered at an early stage in the design and conversion process. Parking for residents should also be considered.



Careful consideration should be made of access arrangements and for the provision of services for residential units

Materials

It is recommended that where there are original materials within a shopfront they are preserved and where necessary repaired using appropriate techniques, minimising the need to replace materials on a like for like basis. The design of new shopfronts should aim to use these same materials and techniques or achieve the characteristics of these historically appropriate materials and their external finishes.

Fascia panels should be made of solid natural timber and not a lower grade equivalent that may delaminate. The use of stone, brick, or ceramic tiles or other such impervious materials should be considered for stall risers as they are vulnerable to rising damp and splashing from passing vehicles. The use of plywood, chipboard, MDF or other timber composite panels is discouraged. Traditional joinery techniques should be applied to timber shopfronts if they are to remain robust and attractive. Materials should be from a sustainable source.



Lime Mortar - pointing



Slate / stone roof



Sustainably sourced wood



Stone/brick/ceramic - stall riser

Preserve and enhance as a first priority

Excessively glossy or reflective materials such as acrylic or plastic will not normally be supported in new shopfront design or alterations. In new or replacement shopfront design, it is preferable to have a matt finish to prevent an overly reflective or bright surface. The focus of a shopfront design or alteration should be on the appropriateness of the material to the age, style and character of the building. Replacing original timber, aluminium or other metal shopfront frames with uPVC will not be supported. We recommend consulting a specialist such as an architect or heritage consultant when designing or specifying a shopfront.

Maintenance

We recommend that an annual maintenance plan is drawn up detailing a programme of checks to ensure that the shop front remains in good condition. Regular maintenance is less costly than large repairs that may result from neglect, it also protects the value of the property and keeps the street scene looking smart. This helps maintain business and shopper confidence in the town centre.

The landlord and tenant should agree who does what and ensure it happens. Checking a timber shopfront annually is recommended, including touching up paintwork, minor repairs with resin, if required and a full repaint at least every 3 years.

Timber stall risers should be checked as they are subject to a lot of damage when they are carried down to the ground as they are splashed with water from the pavement. Clearing out gutters at the top of the building will avoid spillages down the façade damaging stone or brick. Flashing should be checked to ensure they are not cracked and are sufficiently pinned back to the wall. Downpipes should be kept clear and checked to ensure they discharge properly into drainage and don't splash back onto the shopfront.

We recommend an annual maintenance plan is drawn up. Agreement is made between landlord and tenant who is doing what.

Regular maintenance is cheaper than major repairs.



Well maintained shop front

Permissions and Consent

Before embarking on any changes to the shop front consideration should be given to:

Planning Permission

Works that materially affect the building frontage, for example changes to the window/door positions, signage and installation of security shutters may require approval. It is advisable to consult with the local planning authority before commencing with any work. This can be done via the submission of a pre-application request for planning advice.

www.durham.gov.uk/article/8280/Before-you-apply-for-planning-permission

You may want to refer to the Conservation Area Character Appraisal in your application see the second link below.

www.durham.gov.uk/conservationareas

Listed Building Consent

This is separate and distinct from planning approval and it may be a criminal act to complete work on listed structures without consent in place. Refer to Historic England's National Heritage List for England for information relating to individual listing and locations. Design and Access Statements will be required for listed buildings or buildings in the conservation area. This statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the following aspects: amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance. The access component should explain how the design ensures all users have equal and convenient access. The statement may take a proportionate approach based on the scale/sensitivity of the proposals. If the building is Listed or in the Conservation Area you will be required to provide a Heritage Statement as part of your planning application. A template and guidance can be provided by emailing:

www.durham.gov.uk/seahamtownscape

Business Use

The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 put uses of land and buildings into various categories known as "Use Classes". Change of use can occur with the same use class or from one use class to another. Depending on the changes proposed an application for approval of the change may be required from the County Council. From 1 September 2020 changes will be made to the Use Classes Order through the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. This includes the revocation of Use Classes 'A', B1 and D, and the introduction of new Use Class E (Commercial Business and Service), and F.1 (Learning and non-residential institutions) and F.2 (Local Community Uses). These changes will mean that a change of use is not required for many reuses of empty retail premises i.e. changes within the same use class do not require permission. Any physical, external alterations to a building (required to accommodate the proposed use) would still require separate planning permission. Those uses classed as Sui Generis, A4 pubs and bars and A5 takeaways, cinemas and live music venues will still need permission for change of use.

Advertising Consent

Many forms of advertising require consent under Control of Advertisement Regulations. It is best to seek advice from the Council as to whether consent is required and if it is likely to be granted. Where consent is needed, applications are considered based on size, form, location, materials, finishes and illumination. The two detailed considerations are impact on amenity and highway safety.

Building Regulation Approval

Work involving structural alterations, changes to means of escape, sanitation and fabric alterations may require building control approval. These can be interlinked and are often complex in nature. Contacting the local building control department in advance is good practice when carrying out any work.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) is a statutory process under the **Europa: Habitats EU Directive** and is used to determine whether plans or projects are likely to have a significant effect on European protected Wildlife sites through an initial risk assessment, known as screening, and a more detailed assessment, known as Appropriate Assessment.

European wildlife sites, also known as Natura 2000 sites are protected because they are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. Seaham forms part of the Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation, which is one of nine European wildlife sites within County Durham. The law states that agreement can only be given to implement, plans and projects after having ascertained that they will not adversely affect European wildlife sites.

Other Consents and Considerations

The use of the building and its existing constraints can involve the owner/tenant in:

Party Wall Act

The Party Wall Act prevents building work undertaken by one neighbour undermining the structural integrity of shared walls or neighbouring properties. It is also designed to avert and resolve potential disputes with neighbours. If you are unsure whether this applies to works on your building, then please seek advice from an architect or surveyor. Further information can be found at www.gov.uk/party-walls-building-works

Premises Licence Forms

You need to obtain a premises licence from the council if you want to sell alcohol, provide regulated entertainment or supply late night refreshment at any premises in County Durham. Further information can be found at www.durham.gov.uk/article/2137/Apply-for-a-premises-licence

Highways Act

A licence under the Highways Acts is required for any works affecting the public highway, including the pavement. This includes the display of goods, siting of advertisements such as 'A' boards or serving food and drink.

Equality Act

Equality law applies to every business that provides goods, facilities or services to the public or a section of the public. This includes any business, large or small, that is selling goods. This requires consideration to be given to all users of a building/facility.

Landlord consents

Any restrictions imposed on the lease.

Legal restrictions

Any covenant or easement that may affect the property.

Early consultation with the local authority is essential and you should seek specialist advice if you are unsure on any matters
Lists of local suppliers etc can be obtained by emailing: seahamtownscapeheritage@durham.gov.uk

Glossary

Alteration	To change or improve the function of a building or artefact or to modify its appearance.
Architrave	Moulded frame around a door or window.
Awning	Sheet of canvas or other material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a show window or doorway.
Awning/Blind Box	Area integral to the shopfront surround often behind the fascia, but found elsewhere such as around the cornice, which contains a retractable blind.
Canopy	Hood suspended or projected over a door or window.
Capital	Topmost member of a column or pilaster
Cill (or Sill)	Horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame often timber but sometimes granite or bronze or with a brass cill plate.
Conservation	Action to secure the survival or preservation of buildings, cultural artefacts, natural resources, energy or any other thing of acknowledged value for the future.
Conservation Area	Area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Conversion	Alteration, the object of which is a change of use of a building or artefact.
Console Bracket	At the top of a pilaster and/ or either end of the fascia forming a bracket, often moulded and decorative. They are a characteristic feature of Victorian shopfronts, typically carved from wood with a curved outline. Usually of greater height than projection.
Cornice	The ornamental moulding or projecting structure along the top of a wall, arch or building exterior (including the shopfront).
Façade	The whole frontage of the building including shopfront and upper floors.
Fanlight	A window over the door within the main door frame.
Fascia	A plain horizontal band projecting slightly from the surface of a wall, forming a part of the entablature above the shop window. Angled fascia was introduced in the Victorian period and pressure to accommodate larger fascia lettering resulted in increasingly larger fascia areas.
Flashing	A sheet of thin, impervious material used to prevent water penetration or seepage into a building and to direct the flow of moisture in walls.
Fielded Panels	A raised or recessed panel with a wide flat surface surrounded by mouldings also such a panel divided into smaller panels.
Intervention	Any action which has a physical effect on the fabric of a building or artefact.
Lights	The openings between the upright posts or mullions of a window.
Mullion	Vertical post or upright dividing a window or opening into two or more lights.
Pilasters	A rectangular shaped column or shallow pier which projects out slightly from a wall often with a decorative moulding.
Plinth	Found at the base of the pilaster in a traditional shopfront often with a decorative moulding, or chamfer at the top.
Stall Riser	Material installed between the shop window and the ground.
Transom	Horizontal member dividing a window into two or more lights.

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