



Wansbeck District Council  
Regulatory Services  
Division

# Shopfront Design Guide

Bedlington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Areas

October 2007



## Acknowledgements

This Shopfront Design Guide has been prepared for Wansbeck District Council by North of England Civic Trust and Spence & Dower.



## Note on Local Government Reorganisation

This guide has been prepared in the knowledge of local government reorganisation in 2009 when all the existing councils in Northumberland, including Wansbeck District Council, will be replaced by a single unitary authority. As the life of this document is longer than 2009, it must continue to apply after reorganisation.

## Contents

1	Introduction	3	8	Above the Shop	19
2	Conservation Areas and Design	4	9	Getting Advice and Consents	20
3	Setting the Scene:		10	Planned Maintenance	21
	- Bedlington	5			
	- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	7			
	- The Economic Environment	9			
4	Historical Development of Shopfronts and Glossary	10			
5	A Strategy for Good Design	12			
6	Guidance on Good Shopfront Design:				
	- Introduction	13			
	- Spanning the Opening	13			
	- Entablature & Pilasters	13			
	- Shop Window	14			
	- Doorway	14			
	- Materials and Colour	15			
	- Awnings	15			
	- Shopfront Security Measures	15			
	- Disabled Access	16			
7	Guidance on Good Signage:				
	- The Importance of Signage	17			
	- Fascia Signs	17			
	- Projecting Signs	17			
	- Illuminated Signs	18			
	- Signage for Upper Floors	18			
	- Other Signage Matters	18			

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# 1 Introduction

## Shopfront Design Guide

This guide is part of Wansbeck District Council's commitment to achieving high standards of design quality, and strong protection of its conservation areas.

It contains policy and guidance to assist developers, retailers, design professionals and building owners in the district's two town centre conservation areas, to prepare designs for shopfronts which respond well to local character.

It will help the District Council assess the quality of new shopfronts when determining applications for planning permission.

It will also help in determining applications for grant assistance for shopfronts, under the following (where available):

- **Bedlington Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**  
The Heritage Lottery Fund is due to decide on a five year funding programme early in 2008, to be spent on building repairs, reinstatement of lost architectural features (including shopfronts), and other works.
- **Conservation-led Regeneration in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea**  
In 2007-10 there will be Go Wansbeck grants to restore and repair commercial town centre buildings, including shopfronts.

## Status

This guide applies to Bedlington Conservation area and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area. It also applies to Newbiggin town centre which is recommended in the draft Management Strategy as an extension to the existing Newbiggin Conservation Area (see below).

This guide has been adopted as Council planning policy. It supplements relevant policies in the Wansbeck District Local Plan, adopted June 2007, in particular Policies RTC9 (Shopfronts), GP17 and GP18 (Conservation Areas).

Although it will not form a component part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), this guide is nonetheless a material consideration when determining applications for planning permission.

All relevant development must have regard to this guide.

Where planning permission is not required, the District Council will encourage the use of this guide to influence the design of new shopfronts to help protect the conservation areas' character and appearance.

## Policy Context

In addition, this guide supplements policy and guidance contained in the following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

- **Wansbeck Design Guide**  
District-wide architectural and urban design guide.  
*Adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in July 2007.*
- **Bedlington Conservation Area Management Strategy and Character Appraisal**
- **Newbiggin Conservation Area Management Strategy and Character Appraisal**  
Each of these conservation area SPDs will contain a Management Strategy setting out how the area is to be preserved and enhanced, and a Character Appraisal which describes and evaluates the character and appearance of the conservation area.  
*To be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents in 2008.*

This guide incorporates the following existing adopted guidance:

- **Shopfront Security Measures, Bedlington Conservation Area**  
*Adopted as planning guidance in 1998.*
- **A Guide to Advertising in the Bedlington Conservation Area**  
*Informal planning guidance.*

Therefore, both of these existing pieces of guidance will now apply equally to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area and (if designated) its extension.



## 2 Conservation Areas and Design



Above: Character Appraisals and Management Strategies for both areas.

Left: Wansbeck Design Guide



### What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation areas are “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. They are designated by the local planning authority using local criteria.

Conservation areas are about character and appearance, which can derive from many factors including individual buildings, building groups and their relationship with open spaces, architectural detailing, materials, views, colours, landscaping, street furniture and so on. Character can also draw on more abstract notions such as sounds, local environmental conditions and historical changes.

These things combine to create a locally distinctive sense of place worthy of protection.

Conservation areas do not prevent development from taking place. Rather they manage change, controlling new development and other investment to reflect the character of its surroundings.

Being in a conservation area does tend to increase the standards required for aspects such as repairs, alterations or new building, but this is often outweighed by the ‘cachet’ of living or running a business in a conservation area, and the opportunities they provide for

conservation-led regeneration, including access to external funding.

The first conservation areas were created in 1967 and now over 9,300 have been designated, varying greatly in character and size. There are three in Wansbeck district:

- Bedlington
- Bothal
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

Bedlington and Newbiggin’s SPDs contain more information (see p3).

### Why have a Design Guide?

Shops are fundamental to both Bedlington and Newbiggin and are very prominent, making up a large part of the ground floor space in the main streets. It is important they look good so shoppers and visitors find them appealing places to be and are enticed to stop and shop.

Successive studies of Bedlington and Newbiggin have shown that the poor appearance of some of their shopfronts contributes to low economic activity.

Bedlington’s Front Street, Newbiggin’s Front Street and High Street, and others in both towns have many modern shopfronts which are basic in design, use plain modern materials, and which allow signs and fascias to dominate. In amongst these are some impressive historic shopfronts, many surviving

well. Others however have been poorly altered over time, harming their character and integrity.

Some work has been done over the years to encourage good design. For example, the Council has adopted guidance on shopfront security, ran a grant scheme in Bedlington, and encourages pre-application meetings in both areas.

But, still, the overall impression in focal parts is of a disjointed series of low quality shopfronts, many with little to make them distinctive or attractive. It is lucky that other parts of the scene are attractive. Both towns have a broadly sound nineteenth century building stock, and each has a distinctive character – Bedlington’s green streets and market place, and Newbiggin’s bracing seafront and narrow alleys.

A good shopfront is more than just large windows, a door and a sign. Proportions are important, as are building materials, colours, and the way it fits in with the host building and its neighbours. Getting it right is key to making the building and the street as appealing as possible to regular shoppers and passers-by.

A good quality shopfront shows business confidence leading to shopper confidence. So, improving the attractiveness of shopfronts helps uplift the local economy as well as enhancing the street scene.

# 3 Setting The Scene



## Bedlington

Bedlington is a vibrant conservation area with a very distinctive street scene, dominated by grassy banks, trees and small triangular market place.

It has a large number of shops, mostly small independent traders, with some larger local and regional outlets, plus one or two national multiple retailers.

Most buildings in Bedlington are pre-1918, with most of these being late Victorian. It would be normal for a conservation area of this nature to have groups of buildings of that age listed for group value. However, of Bedlington's 17 listed buildings, only 4 are habitable (the rest being monuments and memorials). This unfortunately indicates that few buildings have been left sufficiently unaltered to justify it. Collectively, however, the overall scene created by the buildings and the streets is still worthy of its conservation area status.

But it must be recognised that many alterations to the town's buildings have not been beneficial to its character. Since so many buildings in the area are in use for shops or service provision, it is true that retail development has not always carried



with it a respect for the building or a commitment to the appearance of the wider street.

Nevertheless, taking a stroll through Bedlington and looking above shopfront level, there is still quite a

Over quite a period of the late nineteenth century, Bedlington enjoyed a very high standard of development, and this would have been reflected in its shopfronts.

*Below: Part of East End Front Street, Bedlington*



strong historic character visible in the upper floors of the mainly two-storey street frontages, and in the skyline of roofs and chimney stacks. Many buildings of the period are interesting, some quite bold, but all broadly consistent in materials, scale and detailing.

## WANSBECK DESIGN GUIDE SAYS...

*"Front Street and Market Place maintain the town's historic character ... There is a mismatch in scale and styles which detracts from the inherent quality of the town. ... The shopping and leisure provision in Bedlington is modest."*



## Bedlington Conservation Area



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## Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

The existing conservation area and its proposed extension contain the retail and service town centre in Newbiggin, on the north end of Front Street and on High Street.

These streets are a somewhat disjointed collection of buildings. The combination of coal mining, fishing and the growing industrial base of the town gave Newbiggin a certain prosperity toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Some individual buildings of this period are of considerable sophistication and impact. They and the early twentieth century rendered developments tend to dominate the older two storey stone or rendered buildings with which their scale, materials and style seem out of harmony.

Nevertheless these later buildings are mostly fair representatives of their time and confirm the local architectural interest of the town.

Front Street continues eastward into High Street, with broken frontage and yards and lanes. There are some particularly good examples of shopfront design and detailing in Newbiggin town centre.

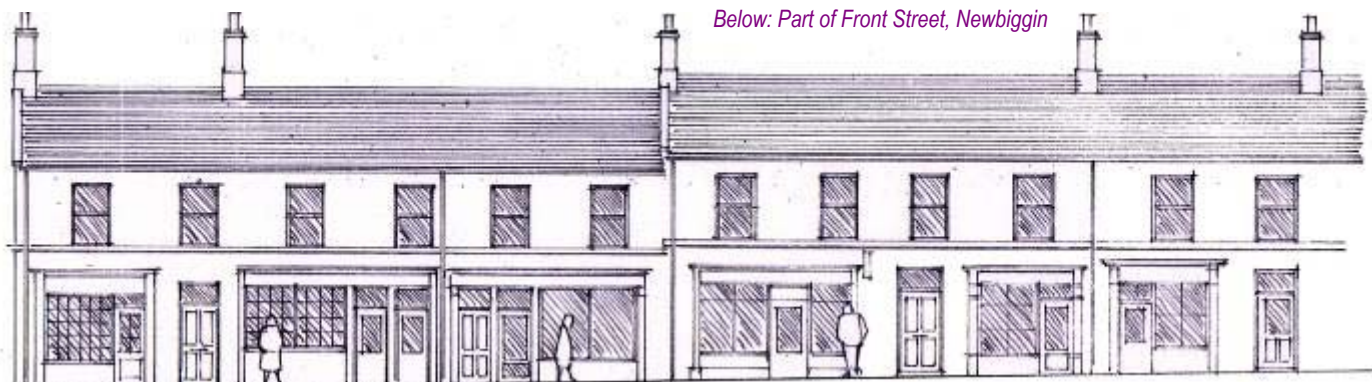
It is the consequence of a rather fragile post-War economy that has allowed Newbiggin to retain so much evidence of older shopfronts from the mid nineteenth century right through to the 1920s.

A first approach to considering shopfront design in Newbiggin should take stock of this surviving evidence, emphasising the quality of existing traditional and later details which remain.



## WANSBECK DESIGN GUIDE SAYS...

*"The town centre has a very strong character ... demonstrated through variety in building eras. ... The retail offer is relatively limited but in line with what would be expected in terms of retail hierarchy. The [conservation area's] influence on the town centre is high and consideration will need to be given to how this can be drawn upon in improving the quality of the built environment in the town."*



*Below: Part of Front Street, Newbiggin*



## Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area



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## The Economic Environment

Unfortunately, the later twentieth century's contribution to the retail scene in both Bedlington and Newbiggin town centres has largely been to detract from the high quality of nineteenth and early twentieth century work.

A general economic decline has been the cause for this. The first impact, as with so many towns, was the depletion of a strong working community from south east Northumberland in the First World War, followed by the Depression of the 1920s. The Second World War was followed by the terminal decline of coal mining and heavy industry in the region, and in Wansbeck in particular. This will have contributed to low economic activity, with too little money circulating to allow adequate investment in building work.

As with many places with financial hardship in the last decades of the twentieth century, a strong culture took hold that a job done

cheaply was a job done well. Making do with minor alterations and quick-fix solutions has left a legacy of shopfronts with a low grade feel.

Other factors have driven the ever-changing retail environment. Shopfronts designed to display current fashion in clothing, shoes or furniture would often be expected to reflect the state of the art in display design, and their forms could be seen as out of date or unsuitable as fashions have changed.

With a change of ownership might come a change of merchandise, and a change in presentation in the shopfront. Change of ownership would also provide an opportunity for larger enterprises from outside the community to create a foothold for a new outlet, particularly in the rapidly expanding post-War food distributive trades – supermarkets. Increasingly, these brought with them their own house-style of shopfront, and aggressive advertising sometimes spreading over several frontages.



Nevertheless Newbiggin in particular was largely by-passed by these considerations and its economy has not been strong, with several properties empty for long periods. Bedlington has a bigger retail base and supports a greater number of small enterprises in a slightly stronger economy, but here too a number of retail premises are empty and some upper floors under used. In both towns, however, there is recent evidence of some vacant shops being taken up.



## 4 Historical Development of Shopfronts

### From Street Vendor to Shop

Even from ancient times traders vied with each other to sell their wares. The noisy shouting of the street vendor, the pungent aromas of the covered market, the cheerful competition of hanging signs and painted notice-boards along congested streets have long been with us.

Surprisingly, much of this all over the world has been controlled by town bye-laws or government proclamation. For example hanging signs, growing ever larger, were banned in London in 1764.

### Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The classical eighteenth century shopfront, which remained the norm throughout the nineteenth century too, developed a 'language' of ornamentation which drew on the architectural culture of the time.

The rapid expansion of towns and cities in

Britain during the Industrial Revolution led to a rapid growth of shops.

Manufacturers started offering catalogues of standard shopfront designs incorporating larger glass (machine produced plate glass began to appear in the 1840s though probably not in the outlying towns), slender columns and curved arches. Sun blinds could be housed in the *fascia* or *cornice*, and roller security shutters, with their boxes concealed behind the *fascia*, began to replace demountable panelled shutters.

All of this conformed to an overriding aesthetic of respect for building and neighbour.

There are a number of examples in both Newbiggin and Bedlington of good nineteenth century shopfronts in this tradition, which relate well to the dominant architectural character of the buildings around them.

### Modern Alterations

Today in spite of the endeavours of planning authorities, our towns have been the scene of more than half a century of advertising battle.

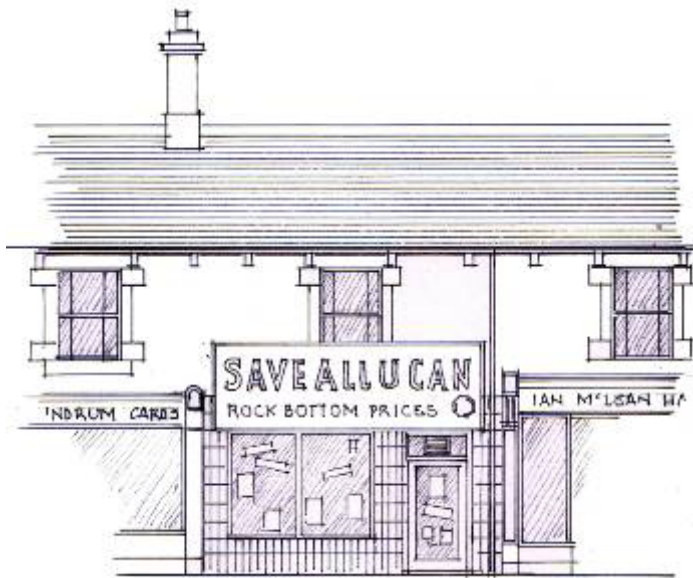
Advertising as a specialist profession thrived on the back of competition, and drew its ethos from outdoing the competitors. The twentieth century has seen an explosion of unbridled and often ill-

mannered showiness – but it is not always obvious that traders have benefited as a result of these intrusions.

Local authorities are increasingly concerned at the negative effect of brash modern shopfronts and signs on the character of town centre conservation areas, and are urging a degree of reticence and respect both for the architecture of the buildings the shops are in, and for the interests of the character and appearance of the retail street scene.

### Recovery and Restoration

They are also concerned to protect original components of older shopfronts. Often, what seems like a recent shopfront might contain original detail hidden behind later alterations, and in sufficient quantity to enable accurate restoration or incorporation into a sympathetic new design. In such cases restoration can result in the recovery of a balanced relationship between shopfront and building frontage, complementing the intended character of the upper floors to the general gain of the streetscape.



### POOR DESIGN, LOW QUALITY

*In this fictitious example, an over-large fascia cuts across the top window. The original shopfront is gone. Metal door and window frames are crudely emphasised and the tiling is inappropriate in the context of adjacent shops. The lettering is out of scale, a security alarm box is randomly placed, and the extract vent is intrusive. The shop window is full of garish stickers which add to the overall low grade of the scene produced.*



## Typical Historic Shopfronts in Bedlington and Newbiggin

There are two main types of historic shopfront in the conservation areas:

### Traditional Shopfront

This is the most common. It combines windows and door in one Classically-inspired timber feature, usually the full width of the building. Here, they are often quite simple and free from lots of ornamentation.

### Hole-in-the-Wall Shopfront

This is where the shop trades from windows in a masonry wall, and the door is separate from the windows.

Hole-in-the-wall shopfronts are often domestic in scale, being obviously converted from what was originally a house.

### Other Types

There are other types too, such as pub fronts and those on commercial premises such as banks. Some of these can be more ornate with decorative stonework instead of timber and might have different proportions. Much of the guidance and principles in this document will, however, still be relevant.

## GLOSSARY

**BRESSUMER** Timber beam across wide openings, with entablature in front. Now, steel girders are used.

**CORBEL** or **BRACKET** Moulded timber element at top of pilaster, 'holding up' entablature.

**ENTABLATURE** Horizontal feature at top of shopfront, comprising moulded projecting **CORNICE**, flat **FASCIA** for signage, and moulded projecting **ARCHITRAVE** beneath.

**FANLIGHT** Window above a door.

**GLAZING BAR** Timber sub-dividing glass in window or door, narrower than a mullion or transom.

**JAMB** Side face any projecting element, such as a pilaster.

**MULLION** Vertical timber dividing glass in a shop window.

**PILASTER** Flat or moulded timber panel either side of shopfront.

**PLINTH** Base of a pilaster.

**SILL** Horizontal element below shop window, projecting to disperse rainwater from stallriser.

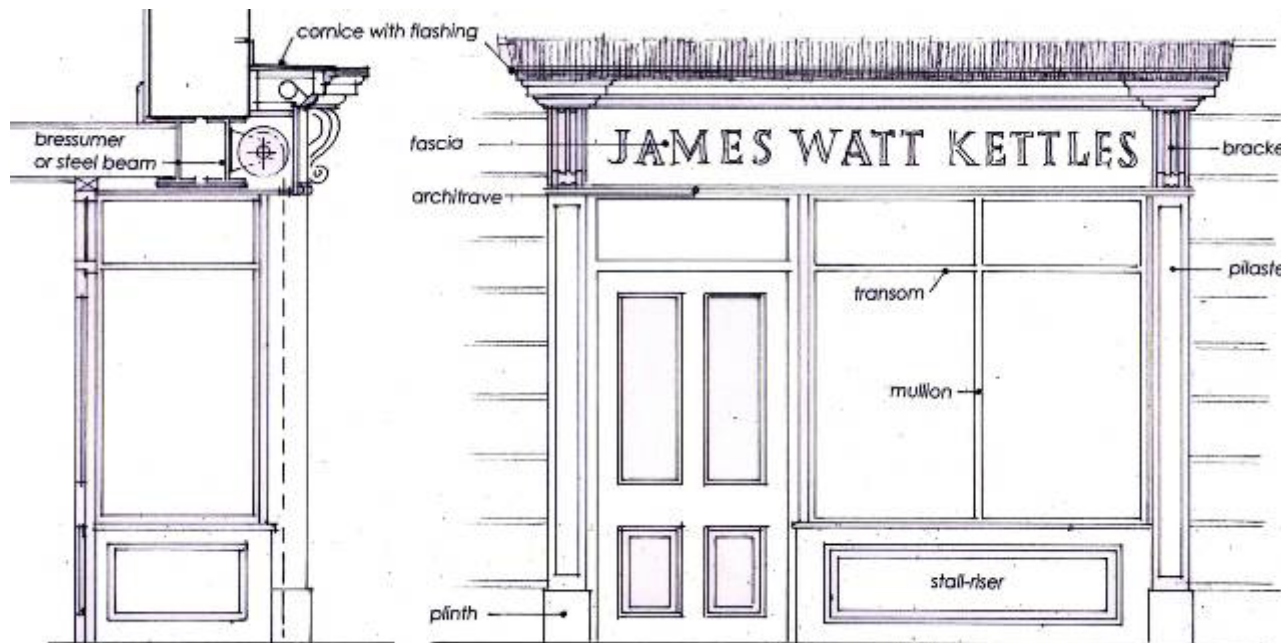
**SOFFIT** Underside of any recessed element, such as a recessed doorway.

**STALLRISER** Timber or masonry element beneath a shop window.

**TOPLIGHT** High level glass in shop window, separated by a mullion.

**TRANSOM** Horizontal timber dividing glass in a shop window.

## TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONT



## HOLE-IN-THE-WALL SHOPFRONT



# 5 A Strategy for Good Design

## PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

- 1. Be willing to change.** Shopfronts are the retailer's showcase and must speak well of the shop owner and trader.
- 2. The shopfront is a component of the whole street** and should therefore be considered as part of that context, sympathetic to the architectural character of the adjacent properties.
- 3. The shopfront is not the only component of a property or even the most significant.** The design of the shopfront should respect the proportions and scale of the front elevation as a whole.
- 4. Where one shop occupies two or more buildings of different character, it is likely to diminish the value of each to spread one shopfront across all.** It is better to respect the identity of each shopfront in the design.
- 5. Traces of old shopfronts are rare and valuable.** In making alterations to apparently modern fronts, always look out for hidden older components, record them and be prepared to re-use them in the new design, adding appropriate materials and details to allow their conservation.
- 6. Existing out-of-character shopfronts should be seen as temporary intrusions failing to achieve the high standard of good design needed in the conservation areas.** Plan for their replacement with designs and materials that reflect the higher standard aimed at today, and respecting the character of the conservation areas.
- 7. Where no original design or detail has survived, a high quality modern solution, most likely using traditional materials, might be the best approach.** Alternatively, a high quality traditional design may well be appropriate, particularly in otherwise characterful historic buildings. Good design is not necessarily about a choice of styles – the quality of detail is crucial to the execution of any new work, whatever the style. All new work should have visual interest and be high quality.

## The Way Forward

The District Council is taking a lead in encouraging change because it believes that, in doing so, it will benefit traders, local people, visitors and the character and appearance of the conservation areas.

## Principles for Action

Guidance must be based on sound principles for tackling good design in shopfronts in conservation areas, shown left. They accord with the key aspects of good building design in the Wansbeck Design Guide.

The Wansbeck Design Guide recognises that shops add to the character of both Bedlington and Newbiggin town centres, but that their quality is variable. It suggests bringing vacant units back into use to lift the image of the towns, backed up by guidance to ensure new development respects their historic quality. It also suggests uniform colour schemes to avoid a cluttered and mismatched appearance.

## Benefits of Good Design

Following guidance on good design will have wide benefits:

- A general upgrading of the town centre environment which the whole community can enjoy.
- A benefit to each business in improved showcase of goods.
- A general sense of confidence in the focus of a vibrant enterprise culture, good for the local community and good for visitors.
- Enhanced lifespan by planned maintenance.

Use of an experienced, professional architect or designer is advisable when seeking high quality. This will

be taken into consideration when considering any consents needed (see p18), as well as for any potential grant aid for works (see p3).

## Benefits of Traditional Design

This guide stresses the significance of traditional shopfront design. The reasons for this are straightforward:

- The street frontages of Bedlington and Newbiggin town centres are largely composed of pre-1918 buildings and the traditional shopfront can be expected to blend safely with the character of the many attractive buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that line the main shopping streets.
- A well-trying formula has ironed out problems and solutions which do not need to be re-invented.
- Shop owners and retailers may feel more confident about achieving successful results from a long established tradition.

## Exceptions

It is possible for good designers to produce high quality shopfronts which do not strictly follow the guidance in this document. Not every shopfront will look exactly like those on page 9! Different designs may well be acceptable, provided they are high quality and respect their context. All cases are considered on their merits.



# 6 Guidance on Good Shopfront Design



Above (Newbiggin): Dominant box fascia sign to the right may conceal original features like that to the left. Below (Newbiggin) and bottom (Bedlington): Simple timber shopfronts with 'goal posts', recessed doors, subdivided glass and moulded timber detailing.



## Introduction

It is important to start with the ambition of achieving a high quality feature which will show the shop in the best light, and contribute to the character – and therefore the viability – of the whole street.

It is important to get the proportions of each component of the shopfront right – whether traditional or hole-in-the-wall. This is more than a matter of guesswork or convenience and it involves understanding the proportions of the host building and the space available for the shopfront. No single element should dominate, in particular the *fascia*.

Where an entirely new shopfront is required, and there is good historical evidence of an appropriate earlier design (such as an old photograph), replicating this is likely to be the best option. However, modern designs may well be acceptable provided they are high quality, informed by traditional themes such as scale and proportion, and are designed to respect the host building and the street scene. It is not normally appropriate to blend traditional and contemporary themes in one design.

Whilst thinking about new works, it is worth investigating the survival of any historic features behind existing modern shopfronts, perhaps by removing small parts to see what is behind. This is called a 'soft strip'.

## Spanning the Opening

Most shopfronts in Bedlington and Newbiggin have large window openings. Many were created by converting a house to a shop, perhaps in the nineteenth century. Others are part of the original design of the building as a shop.

Wide openings would traditionally be spanned by a timber beam (a *bressumer*) and, later, by a steel girder. Intermediate masonry piers, or columns of steel or timber, might support it along its length. So the essence and variety of traditional shopfronts is the way this 'naked' structure is hidden with timber, and windows and doors inserted into it.

For it to look right, it is important to get the elements in the right order. For example, *corbels* should be below the *cornice* so it looks like they are supporting it.

The principle of these components can apply to modern shopfronts too.

## Entablature & Pilasters – the 'Goal Posts'

Traditional shopfronts are made up from a long horizontal section at the top (*entablature*) supported at either end on vertical sections (*pilasters*). Usually wider than they are tall, this gives the impression of 'goal posts'.

### Entablature

The horizontal element across the top in front of the structural beam is

the *entablature*. It consists of a *cornice*, a *fascia* and an *architrave*.

The *cornice* has a practical as well as aesthetic purpose. Being deeply projecting, it forms a visual 'cap' to the whole shopfront, and also protects the *fascia* and the window head from decay by shedding rain away from the timberwork. The *cornice* is usually covered in a lead flashing tucked into the masonry above. It can also be used to house a retractable canvas awning.

The *fascia* is a wide band with the shop sign. There is some flexibility in how high this band can be, but it should generally not exceed 380mm and should be in proportion with the shopfront and the whole elevation. New applied *fascias* should not hide existing architectural detail. New works to existing tall *fascias* should seek to reduced their height.

The *architrave* is a minor component of the *entablature*, sometimes no more than a narrow moulding above the window. The *architrave* is also another place an awning might go.

### Pilasters

The *entablature* is usually visually supported on *pilasters*, representing the columns of Classical architecture. They cover the *jamb*s of the structural opening. The base of each *pilaster* is a *plinth* which is often the same height as the *stallriser*.



Left: Corbels must be expertly designed and made or will look clumsy. Right: Many originals are very simple.



Above (Newbiggin): Simple design with decorative toplights, stallriser, recessed doors and plain colours. Below (Newbiggin): Domestic door to flat accurately incorporated into shopfront. Good colours and signs.



Below (Newbiggin): Neat rendered, painted stallriser.



*Corbels* at the top of the *pilasters*, which support the *cornice* or whole *entablature*, are often the most varied and distinctive elements, an opportunity for interesting designs.

### Shop Window – the Display

The purpose of the shopfront is, of course, to showcase merchandise.

### Stallriser

The shop window is normally raised up on a *stallriser*, bringing the display up to eye level. Often up to 900mm high, the *stallriser* gives the shopfront a visual anchor to the ground, and protects the glass.

It is usually in panelled timber to match the shopfront. Where historic *stallriser* masonry matches the rest of the façade, it should be left as such. Where masonry does not match, it might instead be plastered and painted to match the shopfront. Tiled stallrisers are not found in these conservation areas and so modern tiles should not be used.

Even without a stallriser, a shallow *plinth* should be used to protect the glass and to give visual strength to the composition. This can carry through from the *pilasters' plinth*.

### Mullions and Transoms

Very large panes of glass can now be made, but large windows can harm composition. So windows are often subdivided into bays using moulded *mullions*. These enhance

verticality, add balance, and provide a feeling of greater solidity. *Mullions* should look slender seen head-on, but might be quite deep front-to-back to hold the glass.

Horizontal subdivision can also help with appearance, using a *transom* at the same height as the door. This creates a *toplight* window beneath the *architrave*, which traditionally has stained or leaded glass for both decoration and sun shading.

*Toplights* with opaque glass can also be used to obscure a suspended ceiling inside the shop.

It is also possible to sub-divide shop windows further, using *glazing bars*, but these should be visually lightweight and thinner than *mullions* or *transoms*.

### Doorway – the Access

Getting in and out easily is important to running a welcoming shop.

### Position

The position of the door in the shopfront can be influenced by the internal arrangement of the shop, or by the arrangement of first floors windows in the building, or perhaps by the layout of adjoining shops.

In smaller shops, the doorway is usually at one end to avoid breaking up the width of the window display. In hole-in-the-wall shopfronts, the door is usually completely separated from the window by masonry.

It is not uncommon for there to be a separate doorway giving access to the upper floors, alongside that to the shop itself. This second door should then form a component in the shopfront design. This second door should be a solid panelled domestic door rather than a glazed shop door. It is best, however, for its basic design to match and for it to be the same colour.

### Recessed Doorways

Shop doors are often on the same line as windows, but in larger shops, the door is often better set back off the street into a recess.

The recess is where a change in level from pavement to shop floor is accommodated, using a shallow ramp and avoiding a step to help with disabled access. The recess offers shelter when moving from the shop to the street, and the flanking window in the recess increases the shop window display space. The floor of the recess should be a non-slip material, and a mat-well just inside the door is a good idea.

### Fanlight

Where a door is shorter than the shop window adjoining it, there will need to be a panel above it. Traditionally, this would often be designed as a decorative *fanlight* using patterns of *glazing bars*. Today, it more common to have plain glass. Signage might also be incorporated in the glass here too.





Above (Newbiggin): Adapted hole-in-the-wall shopfront with some surviving features and good colour scheme.  
Below (Newbiggin): Neat historic shopfront but with externally-mounted security shutters and shutter boxes.



Below (Bedlington): Restoring this altered historic shopfront would be quite straightforward and is likely to be cheaper than wholesale replacement.



### Door, Glass and Door Furniture

In traditional shopfronts, the door itself is best part- or all-glazed to echo the windows it adjoins. The glass should be set at the same height as the *stallriser*. In a hole-in-the-wall shopfront, the doorway will often have changed little from its original domestic character and, in these cases, the door itself should be a solid panelled domestic door rather than a glazed shop door.

Doors should be in painted timber in keeping with the detailing and colour of the whole composition.

Door furniture, handles and closers should be selected not only with the character of the building in mind but also considering the ease of use by those with disabilities. The position of door handles is particularly important for wheelchair users and for the frail elderly.

### Materials & Colour

These are crucial to the overall appearance of the shopfront

### Traditional Shopfronts

Shopfronts with a traditional aesthetic should normally be built in timber which allows for easy working of the details. It is important that each element is correctly moulded to avoid a heavy, clumsy look to the finished article.

Features should be finished with good quality paint. The colour

scheme for a shopfront should be restrained and in harmony with its setting, not brash and competitive. A monochrome scheme, however, is not always essential since some detail can be enhanced by being picked out in complementary colour or a family of established colours. In particular, the lettering on the *fascia* should stand out and be legible, but this will not be best achieved with clashing colours or bright reflective surfaces.

While window *mullions* may in some cases need the strength of metal, it will generally be expected that all features of the shopfront will be painted to reflect the colour scheme of the whole composition.

Aluminium, plastic, mosaics and tiling do not form part of traditional shopfront design and detailing in these areas. A cheerful addition of bright colour could be made in the traditional striped retractable awning protecting merchandise from sun.

### Hole-in-the-Wall Shopfronts

Timber will also be most appropriate for hole-in-the-wall shop windows, again finished in good quality paint, rather than stain.

### Awnings

Nearly all of Bedlington's shops face south or south-east, as do some in Newbiggin. External blinds or awnings might be desirable to protect goods from direct sunlight.

The simplest, cheapest and most visually satisfactory solution is often a blind inside the shop. External blinds are to be discouraged but a fully retractable canvas awning is the most satisfactory type. In traditional shopfronts it would be housed either just below the *cornice* or in the *architrave*. For hole-in-the-wall shopfronts, it would be above the window and below any sign.

It should, when open, be high enough to walk beneath without ducking, and far enough back from the highway to not cause a hazard to passing or parking vehicles.

Fixed awnings, 'pram hood' blinds and plastic or shiny materials will not be acceptable.

### Shopfront Security Measures

Shopfront security measures have significant potential to harm the character and appearance of the conservation area, both in terms of roller boxes and the visual impact of grilles and shutters when down. This is particularly true of measures added to existing shopfronts at a later date, as the two are then not designed in harmony.

The District Council adopted guidance on this issue for Bedlington Conservation Area in 1998 (see Appendix B). This will also now apply to Newbiggin Conservation Area and its proposed extension.



Above (Newbiggin): Later additions can harm the appearance of a traditional shopfront. Below (Bedlington): Shutter boxes are best hidden internally.



Above (Bedlington) and below (Newbiggin): Old photos can be invaluable in designing works to old shopfronts.



The guidance recognises:

- the need to reconcile protection against vandalism and theft with the need to protect special local character,
- pressure from insurers to provide measures, and the need to take account of cost and disruption to retailers in doing so,
- the strong negative impact on appearance from externally mounted solid roller shutters, and the need to discourage them.

It sets out several options to take into account instead of solid roller shutters, all of which should be actively considered:

- security without shutters,
- internal sliding or roller grilles,
- demountable grilles or shutters,
- folding / sliding grilles or shutters,
- external roller grilles or perforated roller shutters.

It includes sketch diagrams, and sets out general principles for shopfront security, such as fitting boxes internally and painting security measures to match.

The District Council will encourage new shopfronts to incorporate appropriate security measures to avoid the need for retro-fitting at a later date, which can lead to visually intrusive and functionally difficult solutions.

## Disabled Access

New work to buildings used by the public or as a place of work is required to provide access for disabled people on an equal basis to the able-bodied.

Disability includes those dependent on wheelchairs, those with impaired vision or hearing, the frail elderly, and others. Consideration must be given not only to manoeuvring a wheelchair at a doorway, but also to lighting, colour contrast, signage design, strength of door closers and obstruction to free movement in front of the shop.

*Building Regulations (Approved Document M)* 2004 sets out the requirement for door widths, manoeuvring space, thresholds and ramps, etc. Shops on slopes may have difficulty avoiding a ramp but the problem can be overcome by recessing the doorway behind the window frontage so that the change in level can be reconciled in the depth of the recess.

Automatic doors cannot be expected of every shop. Good management might be sufficient, with the shop keeper helping those struggling with opening a door. A bell-push is also a good solution. Some elements can be chosen for ease of use by disabled people, such as door furniture and closers.

More information can be obtained from [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org) (dealing with Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and the Sign Design Society at [www.signdesignsociety.co.uk](http://www.signdesignsociety.co.uk) which is setting standards in sign design for disabled and non-disabled users. The District Council's Building Control Officer can offer advice on the impact of building regulations.

## THE PROCESS FOR WORKS

*Be clear about what you want to achieve – a new shop window? A new sign? A whole new shopfront?*



*Talk to the District Council about your proposals.*



*Find out what consents you will need.*



*Find out if you are eligible for grant aid.*



*Find a professional architect or designer who understands your needs.*



*Give them a copy of this Design Guide.*



*When your plans are developing, meet the Council on-site to discuss the detail of your plans (and possible grant aid).*



*Ask for advice on contractors who could carry out the work to the right standard.*



*Prepare the required drawings and other information for your applications.*



*Be prepared to amend or justify your plans if they depart from this guide.*



# 7 Guidance on Good Signage



Hole-in-the-wall shop signs. Above (Newbiggin): Full entablature. Below (Bedlington): Simple sign board.



Below: Dominant plastic fascia signs spoil the scene.



## The Importance of Signage

Well designed signs can add to the quality of the area. Poorly designed and sited signs can significantly detract from it. Signage should be an integral part of the shop and shopfront, not a separate addition.

The strategy will be to optimise the number and size of signs, and their impact on the conservation areas, whilst recognising the need for signage as part of healthy trading in the town centres.

The starting point for signs should be only the name of the shop or proprietor, and the merchandise, eg:

- J A Martin – Family Butcher
- Wendy Arundel – Hair stylist
- Tiny Tots – Children's Clothes

National multiple retailers must be able to demonstrate how they have adapted their standard identity, including signage and colours, to fit with the host building and the area.

Certain types and sizes of signs have deemed consent. Please seek advice from the District Council before carrying out signage works.

## Fascia Signs

Fascia signs for ground floor shops should only be on the ground floor.

## Traditional Shopfronts

The fascia offers the best location for signage in traditional shopfronts. Other positions are not appropriate.

Fascia signs should be timber or exterior grade plywood.

## Hole-in-the-Wall Shopfronts

Where there is no fascia above the shop window, one of three solutions is acceptable:

- a full entablature with cornice, fascia, architrave and corbels,
- a simple sign board,
- individual applied letters.

A full entablature would be suitable for traditional buildings (Newbiggin has several), but are unsuitable for modern shops or where the shape of the shop window head is part of the building's architectural interest.

Full entablatures and sign boards should be timber or exterior grade plywood. Plastic or metal will not be acceptable. The width of a sign board or the fascia element of an entablature should not exceed the width of the window itself. The depth should be in proportion to the shop window and the building elevation, and should leave visible masonry between it and first floor window sills. Applied entablatures and sign boards should not obscure existing architectural detail.

Individual letters should also be in proportion with the shop window and building elevation. They should, where possible, be fixed into mortar joints rather than the masonry face.

Generally, these solutions should be fitted above the shop window; there should be no fascia sign above the doorway of a hole-in-the-wall shopfront, unless it can be incorporated in the fanlight glass.

## Projecting Signs

Projecting signs have the potential to significantly impact on the street scene, and their number and visual impact should be minimised.

Projecting signs for ground floor shops should be sited at the same height as fascia signs, and over the door. Projecting signs for upper floor premises should also be sited over the door rather than higher up the elevation. They should provide safe head-room to pass beneath.

Projecting signs should be painted timber or exterior grade plywood; plastic will not be acceptable. They should be fixed (or restrained by chains) rather than swinging, and be mounted on metal brackets fixed into mortar joints. Projecting box signs are unacceptable as they contradict the traditional character of the conservation areas' shopfronts.

Where more than one business in an upper floor needs a sign, sharing projecting signs is encouraged.

Individual letters on a modern hole-in-the-wall shop.





Above (Bedlington) and below (Newbiggin): Effective signage to the right proportions for the shopfront.



Above (Newbiggin) and below (Bedlington): Good displays enhance the shop and street scene.



## Illuminated Signs

Illuminated signs have the potential to significantly impact on the street scene and will only be acceptable in certain limited situations, where:

- it is advertising a pharmacy, or a business open to the public at night (eg. pub or restaurant), and
- it is a projecting sign as set out above, or
- it is a *fascia* sign comprising individual halo-lit letters.

Internally illuminated box *fascia* or projecting signs in plastic or metal will not be acceptable.

Lights should be carefully focussed on the sign to avoid nuisance or glare to pedestrians, motorists or adjacent windows.

The visual impact of light fittings can often be more intrusive than the sign itself, particularly projecting fittings. Lighting technology has advanced in recent years and very discrete fittings are now available, the use of which will be sought. Subtle and clever use of lighting can also highlight building façades attractively.

## Signage for Upper Floors

Business use of upper floors is important in keeping whole buildings in use and enlivening the retail and service offer of the town centres.

To avoid a clutter of signage on buildings containing more than one business, signage for upper floors

should be limited to lettering applied to the inside of windows (traditional painted letters look better than applied transfers), and a name plate by the street door.

In some cases, individual applied letters on the elevation might be acceptable where there is sufficient masonry to avoid it looking cluttered. The same conditions as with *fascia* signs would apply (see above).

## Other Signage Matters

### Lettering

Lettering need only be legible to the passing pedestrian. It should reflect the shop's trade, contributing to the business' overall image. Logos can enliven lettering but should not replace it altogether.

Classical letter types are best for traditional shopfronts. A good rule is that lettering should fill the middle two quarters of the *fascia* height, and not exceed 200mm high.

Lettering should generally be hand painted using good quality non reflective paint. Light lettering on a dark background improves legibility. Plastic lettering is unacceptable as it is out-of-character with both areas' traditional scene. In addition, the plastic's reflective surface does not aid legibility by those with impaired vision.

Incorporating address numbers in *fascia* signs is to be encouraged.

Traditional hand signwriting is still a thriving profession. The District Council can offer advice (see p18).

## Pavement Signs

Pavement signs (such as 'A'-boards or trestle signs) will not normally be permitted as they obstruct the public space and are a hazard for disabled or partially sighted people.

## Window Displays

Although beyond planning control, shop keepers are encouraged to consider how poster and banner sticking in shop windows affects the overall impression of the shopfront.

There is a big difference between the neatly arranged property advertisements in an estate agent's window, and the untidy clutter of random stickers in a general store. The latter tends to create an unattractive presentation, often adding to a down-at-heel feel. In contrast, logos or shop names etched into door or window glass can sometimes be very effective, particularly if cleverly back lit.

It is also worth considering how stock, storage and display are placed inside the shop to avoid obscuring shop windows and presenting uninviting views inside.

*Signs can also be fun and locally distinctive.*





## 8 Above the Shop



### Upper Floor Uses

Most of the street front properties in Bedlington and Newbiggin are two storeys, with shops on the ground floor.

Space above the shop may bear no functional relationship to the shop downstairs, often used by another business with separate access by a side door, or perhaps a flat reached from the rear. Both conservation areas also have evidence of some empty or under-used upper floors, which can lead to neglect and poor repair. The District Council will always encourage the re-use of empty upper floors and, even if not, keeping them properly maintained (Local Plan policy RTC8 applies).

### Contribution to Street Scene

The condition and appearance of upper floors also contributes to the street scene. Shopfronts are only a part of the conservation areas' wider architectural legacy, with historic upper floors a key part of the street frontage. However, there has been considerable alteration here too.

There are a few original timber sliding sash windows, cast iron gutters and downpipes, and timber eaves and verges. There is a good mix of slate and pantile roofs in both towns, but many chimney stacks have been taken down or truncated to stubs. Extensive replacement of windows has not improved the

appearance of quality – aluminium, PVCu or dark-stained timber jostle, disregarding the original historic sash pattern and the appearance of neighbours. Gutters and downpipes are replaced with plastic with a short life, often becoming brittle and discoloured when exposed to the sun.

### A Positive Future

The District Council encourages

greater care and respect of the character and quality of the historic fabric of the conservation areas.

It will seek to influence through planning consents, design guidance and general awareness-raising, the many small alterations made to town centre buildings which accumulate over time to harm character and appearance. It will also do so using grant aid, where this is available (see page 3).

## 9 MARKET PLACE, BEDLINGTON

*Poor attention to detail and invasive loss of architectural features can have a very harmful effect on the character of shops in these conservation areas – and not just with shopfronts themselves, but the whole building.*

*Well-planned intervention can reverse this loss of detail and character, enhancing the contribution to the conservation areas' character.*

*No.9 Market Place (former Somerfield) is used as an example, shown left. It was once an imposing Victorian pub with 'polychromatic brickwork' (different coloured bricks used in patterns), a lively roofline with timber dormers, shaped chimneys, and regularly-spaced downcomers, as well as richly moulded, sub-divided timber pub-fronts and doorways.*

*Today, it is bland, characterless bulk with thick render over the brickwork, lost chimneys, dormers and eaves, clumsy replacement windows, blank modern shopfronts and a crude projecting canopy. Security grilles and a large CCTV camera and equipment also disfigure the elevation.*

*Action could be taken to dramatically improve its contribution to the area. Upper floor windows could be reinstated with traditional timber sliding sashes, dormers and eaves restored, the canopy removed and a traditional ground floor frontage reinstated. CCTV equipment could be re-sited to a less significant building. The overall improvement would not be just the shopfront, nor just the rest of the building, but the entire Market Place and, in turn, the wider conservation area. A major enhancement could be achieved with relatively 'cosmetic' improvements to enhance historic character and respond to the building's architectural style.*

## 9 Getting Advice and Consent

### Getting Good Design Advice

Although typical historic shopfronts in Bedlington and Newbiggin are quite simple, designing good quality shopfronts is not always a simple process. Balancing all of the above considerations takes skill and judgement. But making the right choices often costs no more than making the wrong ones.

The services of a qualified architect or designer, experienced in carrying out similar work in historic areas, are indispensable, and need not be expensive. Their fees can usually be included in the calculation of any grant aid available for new shopfronts (see page 3) in the conservation areas. Using the right shopfitter and signwriter is also important to achieving a good job.

The District Council can give advice on contactors who are known to do work locally of a suitable standard.

General advice is also available from the District Council and should be sought early in the process.

### Further Reading

The following are of interest:

- *Shopfronts*, A Powers, Chatto & Windus, London, 1989
- *Shopfront*, N Whittaker, Civic Trust North East, Durham, 1980
- *Shopfronts & Adverts in Historic Towns*, English Historic Towns Forum, 1991

### Getting Consents

Works to shopfronts – even relatively minor works – may require one or more of the following types of consent:

- planning permission
- advertisement consent
- building regulations consent
- listed building consent

It is recommended that shop owners or retailers discuss with the District Council any plans they have for works to their shopfronts. The Council is here to help you. Early consultation can lead to a smooth application process later on.

Even where consent is not required, following the guidance in this document will help protect and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation areas, to the benefit of the general trading environment in the town centres.

*This is not a definitive source of legal information. If you are in any doubt, contact the District Council before undertaking any work or changes to your premises. Carrying out works without necessary consent may lead to enforcement.*

### Planning Permission

You will need planning permission for most works involving shopfronts. You may also need it for other works to your premises, including changing

its use. Planning permission is not generally required for internal works, or for small alterations to the outside such as installing telephone connections and alarm boxes.

### Advertisement Consent

You will need consent for almost all hoardings, illuminated signs (outside the deemed consent allowances), fascia signs and projecting signs on shopfronts or business premises which are higher than 4.6m above ground level, and most advertisements on gable ends. You also need permission for signs advertising goods not sold at the premises where the sign is placed.

### Building Regulations

You will need approval under the Building Regulations to carry out many types of building work. Such approval is very likely to be relevant for works to shopfronts, and advice should be sought from Building Control (see p2).

### Listed Building Consent

Listed building consent is required for the demolition of a listed building (in whole or in part), or for any works of alteration or extension that would affect its character.

None of the listed buildings in Bedlington or Newbiggin are shops (however, in Bedlington, both Barclay's Bank and The Grapes PH are listed).



# 10 Planned Maintenance

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## Forward Planning

There must be a strong recommendation that responsibility is taken for the upkeep and continuing good condition of the property. Where the shop is tenanted, the landlord and tenant should agree who does what, and ensure that it happens.

Maintenance of the shopfront and the entire property will not only protect the value of the property and prolonging the life of its component parts, but it also keeps the local street scene looking smart and attractive. This helps maintain business and shopper confidence in the town centre.

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## Rainwater Protection

In particular, regular inspection and clearance of rainwater gutters and downpipes will be an important activity in protecting the building frontage from being persistently wetted, for example by a blocked hopper or a dripping gutter.

Checking that the flashing above a *cornice* has not pulled out of the mortar joint in the wall above will save damp reaching the timberwork of the *entablature* or the *bressumer* beam behind.

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## Re-painting

In largely south facing shops, exposure to the sun's ultra violet light, plus wet conditions, will hasten the breakdown of paint and the

fading of pigments rather faster than on north-facing elevations elsewhere.

Paint will particularly need renewal on *sills* and horizontal members, and at the base of *pilasters*, *plinths*, *stallrisers* and *mullions* where wet gathers and penetrates hairline cracks. The situation at low levels is aggravated by the effect of salt splash from roads and pavements, creating a hostile condition for both timber and masonry which needs to be managed.

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## Maintenance Pays

As with all maintenance, regular care on a planned cycle of inspection and preventative action will reduce the amount and cost of remedial or replacement work made necessary by lack of attention at the proper time.

This message is vital – overall, the cost of maintenance is far less than the cost of repair and where cash is tight, a mop and bucket or a paintbrush is far cheaper than the services of a builder, joiner or structural engineer.

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## Appendix

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### ***Guidance on Shopfront Security Measures for Bedlington Conservation Area, adopted 1998.***

This is included on the following pages. It comprises a guidance document and drawings of possible solutions.

The guidance it contains should now be taken to apply equally to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area and its proposed extension.





# Shopfront Security Measures

## Bedlington Conservation Area

Guidelines for Bedlington Town Centre Conservation Area, Northumberland  
Wansbeck District Council

### Please Note

The security options described in these guidelines should be read in conjunction with the set of five Design Guide Drawings which provide selective illustrated examples.

### Bedlington Town Centre Conservation Area

The main shopping streets in Bedlington, Front Street and Market Place, are the focus of both commercial and social activity in the town. They offer a good variety of local neighbourhood shops, services and cafes supported by two national multiple supermarkets and a twice weekly market nearby. Together with several pubs, which create a lively evening economy, this neighbourhood shopping centre has the potential not only to serve Bedlington's resident population but in addition, due to its pivotal location in south-east Northumberland, those that pass through.

But these streets are also the backbone of a Conservation Area. Designated in 1971, Bedlington Town Centre Conservation Area is one of only three places in Wansbeck District deemed worthy of recognition in this way, and it is the only former pit village in Northumberland to be protected by such a designation. This is a distinction of which Bedlington should be proud.

Front Street is a wide tree lined street which climbs up a long ridge from the banks of the River Blyth and is centred on the former Market Place which boasts an unusual obelisk shaped market cross. The streets are mainly lined with terraced two storey houses, many of which were converted into shops as the village developed into a small town with the growth of the mining industry. There are several other buildings of architectural note such as The Grapes, Barclay's Bank and the former Laird's House, now the Top Club. The Church and former vicarage are of particular architectural and historical note.

Bedlington deserves its status as a Conservation Area. Many of the buildings in themselves are not of particular architectural or historical merit, but a conservation area, as its name implies, is about more than just individual buildings. Bedlington Conservation Area benefits from the mixture of different building types and materials, their orientation to each other and to the spaces around them, from the collective contribution the shopfronts provide to the street scene, from the lie of the land, from the siting and nature of its trees and grassy banks, from the streetscape itself and from the bustling, welcoming

character of its daytime and evening activities. The visual appeal of narrow mediaeval plot widths resulting in classically designed stone buildings creates attractiveness in itself and is stimulating to businesses and customers. Bedlington Conservation Area is a classic example of where the 'sum of the parts' creates a character and appearance worthy of preservation and enhancement.

In the past, the commercial nature of Front Street and Market Place has only occasionally been at odds with the historical and architectural value which the area possesses. Conversions to shops in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were largely carried out successfully and only more modern infill developments, such as Kwik Save and the former Netto store, have begun to detract from the special character which the attractive street ought to retain.

However, one issue has brought the aspirations of the Conservation Area into conflict with the requirements of businesses and their insurers – the installation of shopfront security measures, predominantly externally housed roller-shutters, to guard against the threat of vandalism. Several small businesses in Bedlington Conservation Area have suffered random attacks which have prompted them and others to consider increasing security to prevent physically and financially damaging vandalism from re-occurring, and to enable them to continue trading.

These guidelines offer a range of solutions to reconcile protection against vandalism with the need to maintain standards of good design, providing an attractive but secure environment in which to trade. They take into account factors such as cost and the need to enable their installation with the minimum of inconvenience and disruption.

Commerce and conservation have a mutual interest in establishing and maintaining good shopfront design standards in Bedlington. The impression of turning the town into a fortress by extensive use of solid roller-shutters will otherwise inevitably destroy the livelihood they are installed to safeguard.

Compiled for Wansbeck District Council by North East Civic Trust following consultation with businesses in Bedlington Conservation Area, Bedlington Town Forum Environmental Working Group, Bedlington Chamber of Trade, Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Constabulary, the Association of British Insurers and the National Association of Shopfitters.

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Wansbeck District Council and North East Civic Trust



## Types of Shopfront in the Conservation Area

Three main types of shopfront can be identified along Bedlington Conservation Area's shopping streets

### 1. Small 'Domestic Scale' Shopfronts

Many shops, particularly at either end of Front Street, have been created by alterations to buildings that were originally houses. Their windows tend to be smaller than more modern shopfronts and are usually separated into small panes by thin glazing bars. Doorways usually have a separate opening in the façade and the whole composition has a 'hole-in-the-wall' appearance.

Commercial pressures on this type of shopfront usually lead to the addition of oversized advertising on the walls above the windows and the loss of character by the removal of glazing bars and original doors, or by the insertion of unsympathetic bay windows to attempt to increase the area of glazing.



A domestic scale shopfront in Front Street West - the windows and door have a 'hole-in-the-wall' appearance. The door is surrounded by dressed and moulded stonework, contributing to the character of the building and the Conservation Area.

If roller-shutters are introduced then this invariably results in the addition of substantial projecting steel boxes onto the façade above windows and doors as there is no simple method of inserting the box housing into the wall. As with over-sized signage, these detract from the appearance of the shopfront by their crude, alien, 'bolted-on' appearance and by reducing the visible area of wall around windows and doors.

Demountable metal grilles or timber shutters which fold back to rest on the walls between the openings are easier to install and less intrusive.

A 'traditional' timber shopfront with a recessed doorway plus a fascia and cornice 'supported' by pilasters and corbels. This complete joinery element contains some original features but could be restored to enhance the Conservation Area.

### 2. 'Traditional' 18th & 19th Century Shopfronts

Later buildings constructed in Front Street and Market Place were purpose-built with shopfronts as an integral part of the façade. The shopfront tends to occupy nearly the whole width of the façade at ground level with doorways usually to one side and recessed.

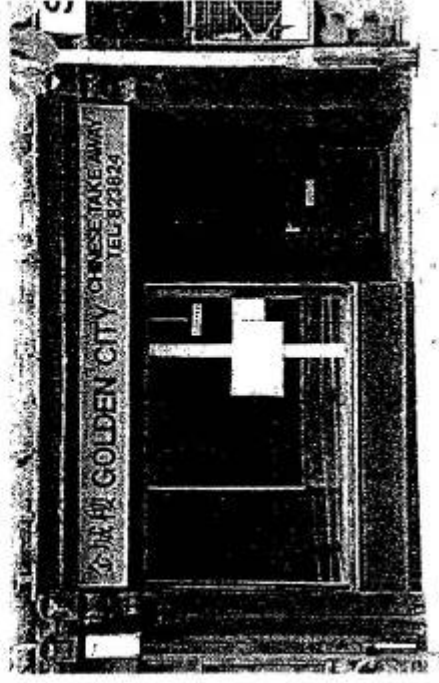
The windows themselves usually consist of two or three lights, subdivided by mullions (vertical) and transoms (horizontal), and are raised from the ground on a timber stallriser. Columns, or 'pilasters', flank the shopfront on either side which support the fascia, bearing the name of the shop, and a cornice above. The pilasters, fascia and cornice project out from the façade of the building and frame the shopfront as a complete joinery composition.

Commercial pressures on this type of shopfront can lead to the removal or replacement of various elements such as doorways and windows and, sometimes by a lack of investment in maintenance and repair, result in decay and unsympathetic replacement.

Security pressures can themselves unnecessarily destroy the attractive appearance of this type of shopfront. Projecting fascias are often able to house the boxing for roller-shutters, with pilasters hiding the recessed guide channels down which they run. A well detailed traditional shopfront is not destroyed by the addition of sliding collapsible grilles which can also be accommodated on many examples of this type.

### 3. Modern 'Infill' or 'Floor-to-Ceiling' Shopfronts

The proportion and scale of modern shopfronts is less sensitive to the incorporation of new measures than traditional designs. Nevertheless, they form an integral part of the street character of the Conservation Area and should still, together with their shopfront security measures, be designed sympathetically.





## Shopfront Security Options

All of these options should be investigated when considering the installation of security measures in Bedlington Conservation Area

### Security Without Shutters

With forethought and consideration of design, it is possible to incorporate simple but successful security measures into a new or refurbished shopfront without the need to resort to the expense and disruption of unattractive solid roller-shutters at a later date.

The use of floor-to-ceiling glazing may increase display areas but in practice also increases vulnerability to vandalism or burglary and is then expensive to repair. The use of a timber stallriser, reinforced behind with concrete or steel, is visually more attractive, cuts the risk of it being kicked and reduces the amount of glazing which would need to be replaced if damaged were caused.

Similarly, subdividing windows through the use of glazing bars reduces the amount of glazing which can be broken in one attack and enlivens their appearance. Recessed doorways afford the opportunity for greater protection by demountable or sliding grilles, effectively doubling the security to the shop's front door.

Glazing itself is the most vulnerable part of the shopfront. However, this can be addressed by the selective installation of laminated glass which will not shatter at all and only cracks and crazes. Of particular benefit to the trader is that planning permission or conservation area consent is not required to install replacement glazing, unless it is being further subdivided by beading.

There are several other measures which, although of great importance in the fight against crime, do not necessarily relate directly to vandalism. However, all should be considered in new or replacement shopfronts in the Bedlington Conservation Area depending on the shop's existing shopfront type, its location and the type of trade involved.

Alarms act as strong burglary deterrents and internal camera surveillance systems are an investment which can pay off well in the long term. Both have been used successfully in Bedlington Conservation Area in the past. The display of fewer, 'fake' or less expensive items in windows reduces the temptation for crime, and the installation of well-sited vandal-proof lighting in recessed doorways and in front of shop windows removes the opportunity for criminals to loiter unseen.

### Grilles and Shutters

All security measures to shopfronts in a Conservation Area must take account of the desirability to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. The appropriateness and affordability of each option should be carefully considered and discussed with the local authority and insurer before work is undertaken, discounting each only after its suitability has been properly appraised.



Such appraisals will result in different solutions for different shops depending on their location in the street, their trade, the type, character and dimensions of the existing shopfronts, etc, thus contributing to a lively diversity, rather than a monotonous 'barricade' of identical roller-shutters.

Replacement glazing (see above) should always be the first option when considering increased shopfront security. Only then should others be considered, in the following order:

#### 1. Internal Sliding or Roller-Grilles

These are effective at preventing intrusion into the shop and deter premeditated attacks. Used alone, they do little to prevent random vandalism to glazing. Both types are easily fitted with little visual intrusion to the shopfront with roller housings usually concealed above a suspended ceiling or in the window soffit.



#### 2. Demountable Grilles or Shutters

External timber shutters or steel mesh grilles which can be removed during trading hours are a very effective deterrent to random vandalism and premeditated burglary. If well designed, secured and maintained they can positively contribute to the character of the building and area. Whilst grilles do not prevent objects being pushed through the mesh, they do provide valuable night-time views into a partially lit shop which deter unnoticed intrusion or vandalism.

Individual shutters or grille sections should be small and light enough to mount and remove easily and designed so they cover all vulnerable glazing. The need for storage space when removed should also be considered.

### Grilles and Shutters (continued...)

#### 3. Folding or Sliding Grilles or Shutters

Folding shutters or sliding grilles are easier to operate than demountable ones and are less likely to become damaged through use. This solution could easily be fitted to many 'Type 1' shopfronts in Bedlington as they benefit from the length of wall between door and window openings required to fold or slide the shutters back.

Decorative iron gates, used advisedly, can provide an unusual and attractive addition to a shopfront's façade, and timber shutters, painted to match the existing shopfront scheme, enliven the street scene. They must be well maintained to operate effectively and sliding grilles should be designed to be as unobtrusive as possible when folded back.

#### 4. External Roller-Grilles and Perforated Roller-Shutters

These are generally a better option than solid roller-shutters although they are still intrusive on the street scene. Perforated roller-shutters offer even greater protection but move closer still to the appearance of the crude solid steel roller-shutter. However, with suitable back-lighting the best designs can offer good visibility when closed.

Both perforated roller-shutters and 'portcullis' roller-grilles (preferably with a vertical rather than 'brick-bond' pattern) should be in sections which echo the window and door arrangement they cover and should not conceal pilasters of stallrisers when closed. Such divisions into smaller widths also increase overall strength. 'Type 2' shopfronts in Bedlington will have the capacity to house the roller box within the fascia and the guide channels recessed into the pilasters.

#### 5. Solid Roller-Shutters

Not only do solid steel roller-shutters prevent views into the building, but their repeated use creates a besieged, hostile appearance which is particularly deadening to visual amenity and character. Consequently in the long term, they can detract from the commercial attractiveness of the street.

Where they are permitted the greatest of care in their design and installation should be taken to reduce their intrusion on the façade and the street. They should be suitably factory-coloured and should be divided as described in 4 above. Box housings should be concealed within the fascia or otherwise integrated into the shopfront.

### General Design Principles and Other Considerations

Most traditional and many modern shopfronts are designed with a visually attractive vertical emphasis which wide solid roller-shutters destroy. Vertical elements are not only more suitable in design terms but are generally stronger than horizontal ones.

Generally, no security element should protrude beyond the profile of the original or existing shopfront. Fixings should not damage architectural features or mouldings. Consideration should be given to the durability, maintenance requirements and sustainability of materials used. All visible security elements should be carefully painted to match the shop's colour scheme. Each shop should be appraised individually but bearing in mind the relation it has to its neighbours. The impact of any security solution on the image it will portray to existing and potential customers should also be considered.

Ensure manufacturers, installers and products are reputable, principally through their approval under BS EN ISO900 (BS5750) quality assurance standard. Finally any security measure is only as secure as its fixings and locking system, advice on which can be obtained from a Police Crime Prevention Officer.

### Before Considering Your Shopfront

The following should be consulted on your plans *before* any works carried out. Contact Wansbeck District Council regarding planning permission, conservation area consent and, where relevant, listed building consent, advertisement consent and the building regulations.

Consult your insurers on your plans. The Northumbria Constabulary Crime Prevention Officer and/or Architectural Liaison Officer can also provide valuable assistance.

#### Contacts

**Wansbeck District Council**  
Front Street West, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 5TU  
Tel (01670) 530 033 Fax (01670) 530 278

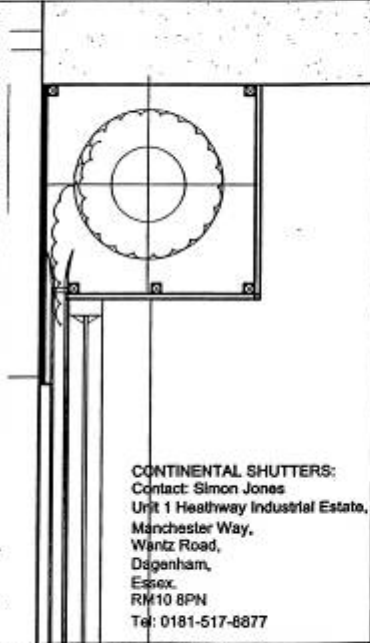
**North East Civic Trust**  
Blackfriars, Monk Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4XN  
Tel (0191) 232 9279 Fax (0191) 230 1474

**Northumbria Constabulary, Crime Prevention Unit**  
Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 0BL  
Tel (01661) 872 555

**Association of British Insurers**  
51 Gresham Street, London, EC2 7HQ  
Tel (0171) 600 3333



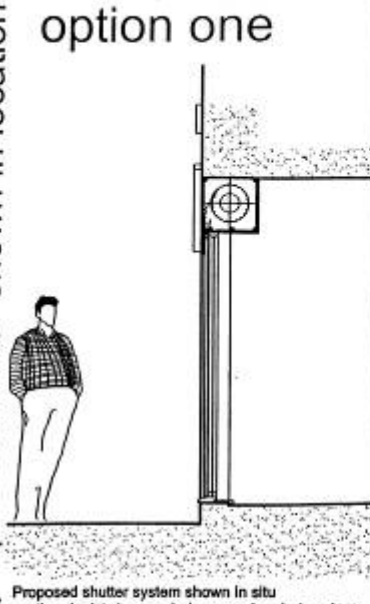
proposed shutter shown in location



**CONTINENTAL SHUTTERS:**  
Contact: Simon Jones  
Unit 1 Heathway Industrial Estate,  
Manchester Way,  
Wentz Road,  
Dagenham,  
Essex,  
RM10 8PN  
Tel: 0181-517-8877

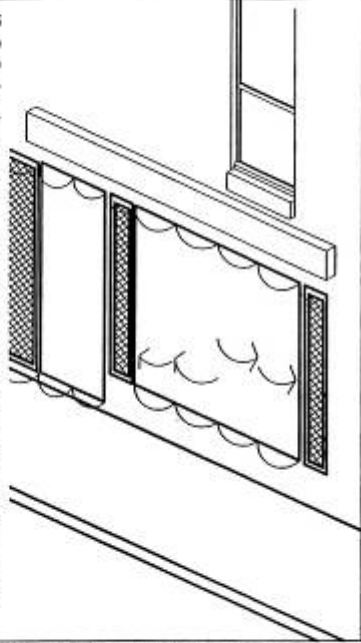
Proposed shutter system shown in situ.  
Continental type K75 'night view' steel roller shutters.  
The K75 Night View steel rolling shutter. Allowing for use on shops needing to display their products at night or allowing minimal visual intrusion of the facade during the hours when the premises are unoccupied.

proposed shutter shown in location



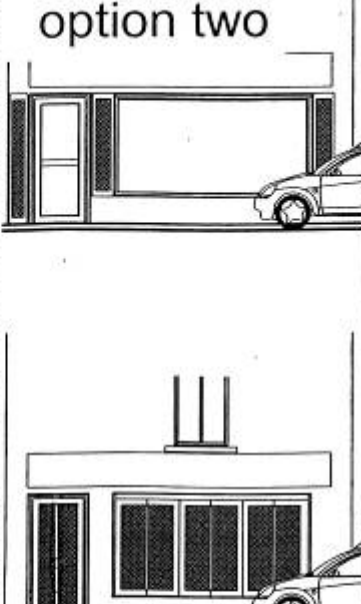
Proposed shutter system shown in situ section depicts larger window opening, but system can be fitted to various opening types & sizes.

how timber shutters are to be used

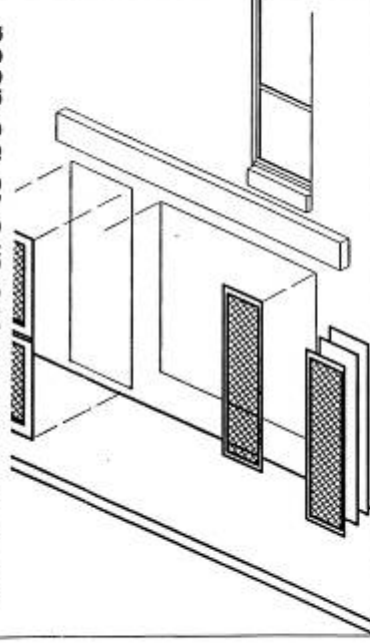


Proposed timber shutter system shown in situ. Elevation shows how shutters are sited with little intrusion. The shutters allow easy locking and fold back on rails at the head & base of the shutters, or are clipped at the hinge points along the head & base of the opening.

proposed timber shutter in location

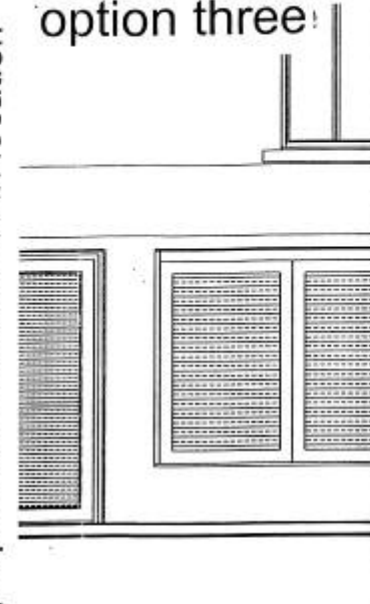


how metal shutters are to be used



Proposed metal shutter system shown in situ. Elevation shows how shutters are sited with little intrusion. The shutters allow easy locking and are fixed via clips or rails at the head & base of the shutters.

proposed metal shutter in location



## ● proximity of facade to pavement

The proximity of the facades along the street must be considered carefully when considering the type of security measures to be adopted. the possibility of attack may well be far greater when the facade is close to the route taken by passers by. The further away from this route the likelihood of casual damage will be lessened.

## ● Priorities : in shutter type used

1. shutter type should carefully be considered against the factor of likelihood of attack and vulnerability of location of shop. See diagram above.
2. shutter type must be considered with regard to the architectural quality of the existing premises and allow for the minimum of intervention within the facade, allowing for the existing architectural quality to remain intact.
3. Architectural quality must be balanced with the need for good security measures and the ease with which these measures can be erected and taken down each day.

proposed re glazing in location



Proposed glazing of the window openings is depicted above. The timber mullions and transoms can be varied in depth of section to allow greater strength of window unit against attack. Smaller panes are needed if vulnerable.

proposed re glazing in section



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**shop front**  
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Bedlington Conservation Area

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facade study - options available.

architect: David E Morton  
scale: 1:20 @ A3  
color: November 1997  
telephone 0191 261 4436  
facsimile 0191 222 0201

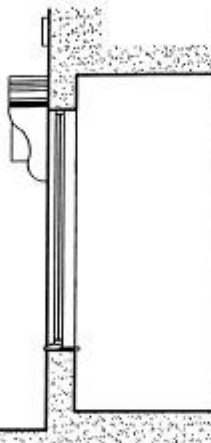
Collected Architects  
Urban Regeneration  
Project Managers  
Planning Supervisors  
7 Collingwood Street,  
Newcastle upon Tyne,  
NE1 1JE

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# existing section thru. shop

The shutter approach to shop front security allows for the introduction of variations in lath types. For example, certain laths within the shutter can be manufactured without perforations, to facilitate the masking or enclosure of a particular area of the shop front that may be particularly vulnerable to attack.



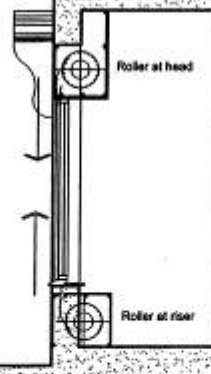
1

# proposed section thru. shop

The shutter type shown allows for the option of either a manual or electrically operated rolling shutter, giving the shop proprietors an option of operation and more importantly differing options on the maintenance costs required over the years following the installation of such a system.

**APPEARANCE:**  
The finish of the shutters should be in keeping with the street scene as a whole. This could allow for careful and considered variation in colour in keeping with the individual shop fronts.

The roller shutter can be positioned at the head of the window or riser below the window to allow minimal impact within shop front.



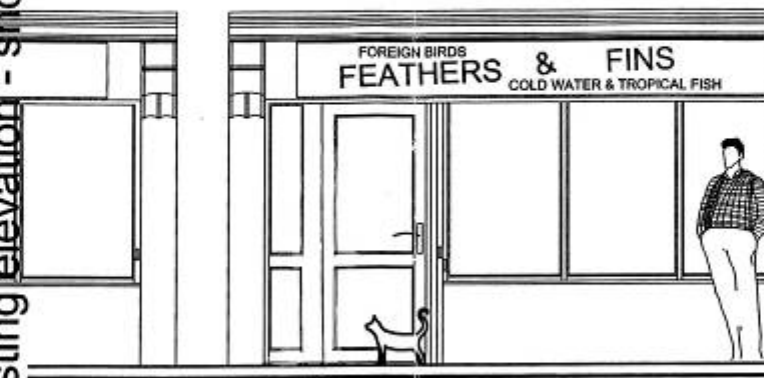
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Proposed shutter system shown in situ  
Continental type K75 'night view' steel roller shutters

The K75 Night View steel rolling shutter. Allowing for use on shops needing to display their products at night or allowing minimal visual intrusion of the facade during the hours when the premises are unoccupied.  
With sufficient backlighting the shutters give the effect of a transparent curtain.

# existing elevation - shop front

High security is important for Bedlington shop fronts. This must also be seen within the context of the conservation area. The percentage of transparency could be altered for the differing shop types, but with a minimum transparency of 75%. This minimum rating would then reduce the visual problem of blank looking shutters, akin to a garage door in appearance; which should be strongly discouraged.



3

## Shutter Specification:

### MANUAL:

Operation to be by hand, pushing up on counter-balanced spring rollers. The widths are to be carefully considered to avoid large areas of shuttering and, to facilitate shuttering around internal columns. Therefore, rollers can be sited either side of the columns where applicable. Maximum width to allow for inherent strength of construction should be 3 metres and no more than 9 square metres in area.

### ELECTRICAL:

The power supply should be a single phase type, intermittently rated tubular motor with optional manual override. The control of the shutter should be via a remote control or key switch. The maximum width for this type of powered shutter can be up to 6 metres in width with a maximum area of 20 square metres overall. This would be considered the absolute maximum for shutter area. Such shutters must have a very high surface transparency allowing for a good overall appearance to the streetscape.



# proposed elevation - shop front

### LOCKING:

Locking of the shutters can be carried out via integral locking mechanism, not padlocks. Alternative locking can be carried out utilising a centrally operated key handle espagnolette lock fitted to the bottom rail.

### GUIDES:

The guides for the shutters should be generally of mild steel, of approximately 32x50mm in section. Areas of shutters or shop front where guide posts are required can be accommodated within the shuttering system. The guide posts will usually be positioned between two shutters via a top locator and bottom or ground level drop bolt with socket, to secure the post in position.

### WEIGHT:

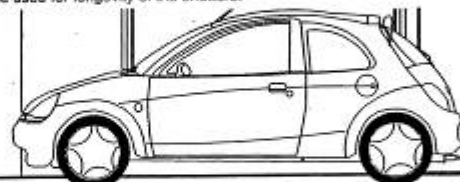
The weight of the shutters utilised should be within the region of 9 Kg/ sq.m. This equates to a shutter of approximately 20 gauge.

### INSTALLATION:

All installations should be carried out by preferred manufacturer to allow all guarantee's to be valid and allow for a good quality of finish.

### APPEARANCE:

The finish of the shutters should be galvanised steel curtain and bottom rail to BS. 2989: 1982 with primed guides and cheek plates. Polyester powder coating must be used for longevity of the shutters.



4

## General Notes:

The original glazing is shielded from attack via shutter system. The shutter once down can be locked via inbuilt key operated locks or padlocks. The former is preferred for better visual appearance. The roller enclosure can be altered to fit the four main shop front types. Ease and speed of use with this system can be balanced with overall cost of installation.

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Project Manager: Planning Supervisor  
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Architect: David E. Morton M.A.  
Scale: 1:20 @ A3  
Date: November 1997  
Telephone 0191 261 4436  
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OPTION 1. ROLLER SHUTTER

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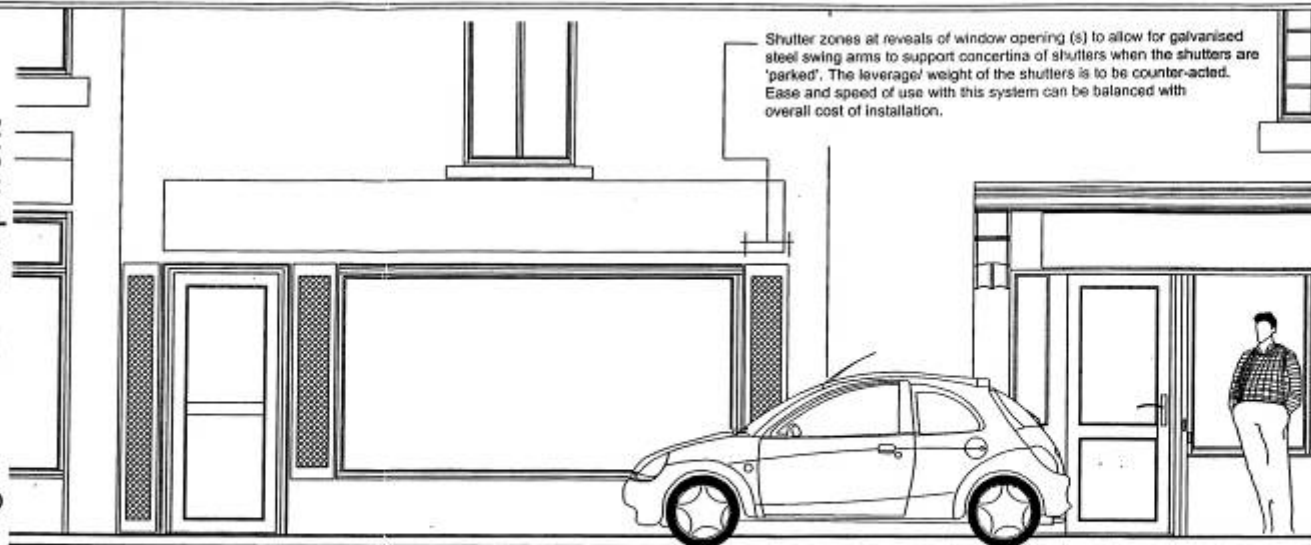


existing section thru. shop



1

existing elevation - shop front



3

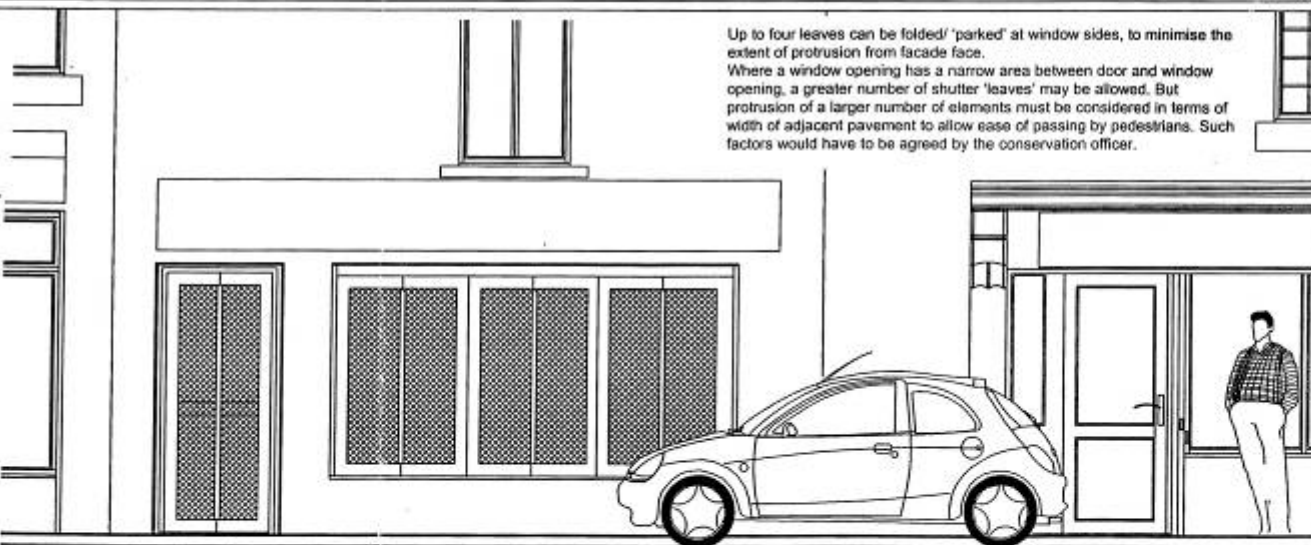
proposed section thru. shop

Subframe to be constructed within original opening. To carry swing/ supporting arms for shutter 'leaves'.



2

proposed elevation - shop front



4

#### General Notes:

The original glazing is shielded from attack via the shutter system. The shutter is divided into framed sections, the main frames to be constructed of either hardwood (treated) or galvanised steel. The hinged elements allow for 'folding' back of shutters. Ease and speed of use with this system can be balanced with overall cost of installation.

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OPTION 2.

FOLDING TIMBER SHUTTERS

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date: November 1997  
telephone 0191 261 4436  
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Conservation Architect  
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7 Collingwood Street,  
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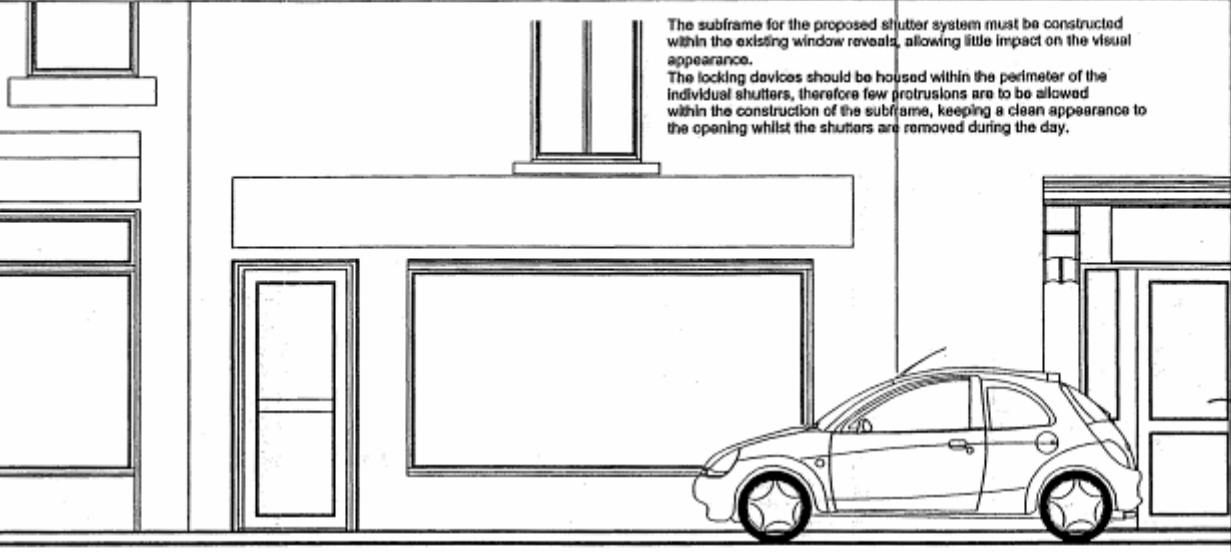
existing section thru. shop

The shutters once in place, must be of upright rectangle in appearance. Proportionally the shutters must allow for a minimum of four shutters in relation to the overall width of the opening. The locking devices should be housed within the perimeter of the individual shutters, therefore few protrusions are to be allowed.



1

existing elevation - shop front



The subframe for the proposed shutter system must be constructed within the existing window reveals, allowing little impact on the visual appearance. The locking devices should be housed within the perimeter of the individual shutters, therefore few protrusions are to be allowed within the construction of the subframe, keeping a clean appearance to the opening whilst the shutters are removed during the day.

3

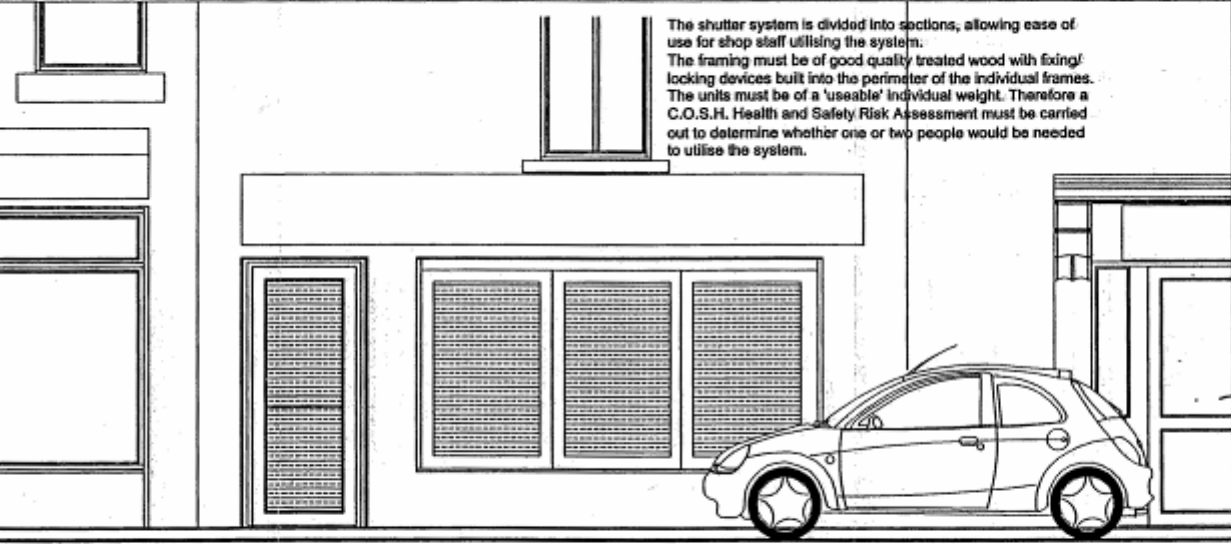
proposed section thru. shop

Where the door and window opening are sited close to one another the shutters must still remain separate in form and unit to avoid large areas of shutter. Exact proportions and details of shuttering must be approved by the conservation officer.



2

proposed elevation - shop front



The shutter system is divided into sections, allowing ease of use for shop staff utilising the system. The framing must be of good quality treated wood with fixing/locking devices built into the perimeter of the individual frames. The units must be of a 'useable' individual weight. Therefore a C.O.S.H. Health and Safety Risk Assessment must be carried out to determine whether one or two people would be needed to utilise the system.

4

#### General Notes:

The original glazing is shielded from attack by the shutter system. The shutter is divided into framed sections, the main frames to be constructed of either hardwood (treated) or painted galvanised steel. The shutters are made in panel sections that can easily be removed. The design and material to be used must be agreed between the premises owner and the conservation officer.



existing section thru. shop

proposed section thru. shop

The proposed glazing panes must be of upright rectangles in appearance. Approximately of five panes over the height of the window opening and, must allow for a vertical upright every 4/5 panes to allow for a visual break within the window itself.  
The glazing timbers and astragals must be of uniform appearance and agreed by the conservation officer. The larger verticals every 4/5 panes must be of similar appearance to pane framing.

existing elevation - shop front

proposed elevation - shop front

Option 'a'

Option 'b'

#### General Notes:

The original glazing once attacked requires complete removal and reinstatement. The option of changing the larger panes of glazing for the smaller panes simply allows for smaller more controlled areas of damage and therefore smaller areas of replacement glazing.  
The glazing timbers and astragals would require careful detailing to allow good resistance to attack. Also, this particular style of fenestration allows for a more sympathetic architectural appearance to the street scape.

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004

shop front

design guides

Bedlington Conservation Area

OPTION 4. REDESIGNED GLAZING

architect: David E. Morton A.S.A.  
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