

North Tyneside Design Code: Commercial Buildings in Town and Local Centres



North
Tyneside
Council

Commercial development within town and local centres plays a key role in supporting vibrant, attractive and economically successful places. These areas are often characterised by higher densities, a mix of uses and active street frontages. They provide opportunities for employment, access to services and facilities, and support social interaction by creating lively and well-used public spaces. Concentrating development in accessible locations also helps to promote sustainable travel patterns, reduce reliance on the private car, and make efficient use of existing infrastructure and land.

Objectives

- a) High-quality commercial spaces that are well-designed and reflect local character.
- b) Ensure commercial buildings are safe, functional, and accessible.
- c) Consider future needs and design trends to ensure that commercial spaces remain relevant and adaptable.

Commercial buildings will be considered well designed when these design codes are followed. Any deviation must be supported by clear evidence showing why an alternative approach is appropriate and represents best practice for the specific proposal. Precedent is not a valid justification. Planning applications are assessed on their own merits against current planning policy and adopted guidance, which may change over time.

TC 1

Local character

Buildings should draw on local character, including the use of materials, window styles, roof forms, elevational details, proportions, and other architectural features.

TC 2 Building line and height

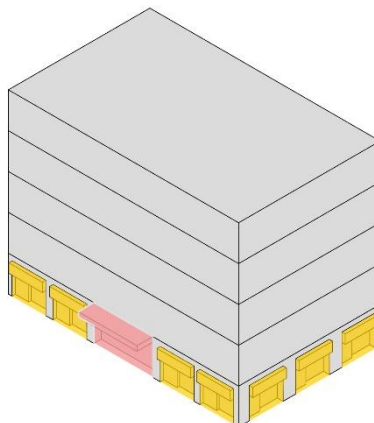
Proposals should respect existing building lines, eaves heights and ridge heights of surrounding buildings.



Contemporary infill aligns with the surrounding building line and heights and creates an active frontage, although greater reference to traditional proportions and materials would improve its integration with the historic streetscape.

TC 3 Active frontages and entrances

Buildings must provide an active frontage with clearly identifiable and accessible entrances located in a safe and secure position. In mixed-use buildings, residential and commercial entrances should be clearly distinguished from one another.

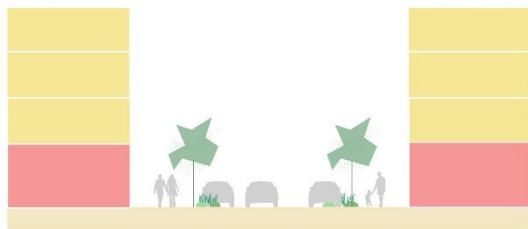


Active ground floor uses with generous glazing and clearly defined entrances animate the street, support natural surveillance and create an attractive, engaging frontage.

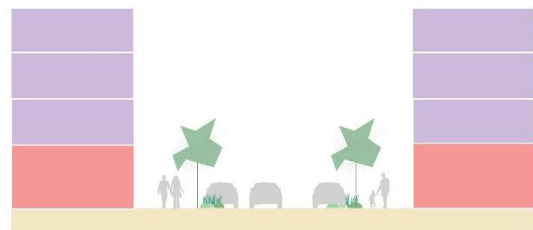
TC 4

Mixed use

Developments should consider providing retail uses at ground floor level, with office and/or residential uses on the upper floors. This mix helps keep centres active throughout the day and into the evening, supporting their overall viability and vitality.



Residential above active ground floor retail supports vitality and activity throughout the day.



Office uses above ground floor retail contribute to an active and well-used street environment.

TC 5

Elevation design

Mixed-use buildings should include a clearly defined visual break between ground-floor retail units and the upper floors, which may be used for offices or homes. This distinction is typically created through architectural elements that mark the transition from the public, active ground floor to the more private upper levels.



A clear visual distinction between ground and upper floors, achieved through changes in materials and façade treatment, reinforces the active public ground floor.

TC 6

Windows

Window size, placement, materials, and style should contribute to defining a building's architectural character and overall appearance.



Well-proportioned and carefully detailed windows, including recessed openings, add depth, articulation and visual interest.

TC 7

Townscape and heritage

Townscape views of larger or highly visible developments must be considered from the earliest stage of the design process. This includes

assessing how the development will appear from surrounding streets, how it relates to nearby buildings, and how it fits within longer distance views, skylines and key townscape relationships.

Development must also be carefully designed to avoid harm to the significance and setting of heritage assets, including impacts on important views towards and from them (further guidance: Historic England's GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets). Where appropriate, proposals must be supported by visual material proportionate to the scale and visibility of the development and may require a Heritage Impact Assessment to assess effects on heritage significance, setting and townscape.

TC 8

Waste and recycling

A suitable area for waste and recycling storage must be shown on the site plan. Where these facilities are integrated into a building, they must be accessed externally. Where they are located outside the building, they should be screened from public view and, where appropriate, supported by landscaping. Waste stores should be designed as an integral part of the development and constructed using materials that are consistent with the wider scheme. Waste and recycling stores must be separate from cycle storage.

TC 9

Pedestrian and wheeling routes

Pedestrian and wheeling routes should be accessible and direct, with safe and convenient crossing points. Dropped kerbs must be provided at every street-crossing point to ensure step-free movement for wheelchair users, people pushing buggies, mobility-impaired users, and others who rely on level access. Pedestrian crossing points at key junctions, including both controlled and uncontrolled crossings, should incorporate tactile paving in accordance with national guidance.

TC 10 External equipment

External equipment (including heating, ventilation and air conditioning) must be screened from public view or located at the rear of a building. In appropriate locations, equipment could be located on the roof.

TC 11 Signage

Signage must be appropriate in scale and dimensions to the host building and its surroundings. Phone numbers, web addresses, opening hours, and other additional information should be used sparingly to avoid a cluttered appearance.



Shopfront signage proportionate to the fascia, with restrained lettering and limited additional information to maintain a clear and uncluttered appearance

TC 12 Security

Security measures should be designed and integrated so that they do not detract from the appearance or character of the building or the wider street scene. Where security features such as shutters or grilles are required, they should be carefully designed and of a high quality. Solid external roller shutters will generally be discouraged. Open or perforated designs, or

security measures incorporated within shopfronts or behind glazing, will be preferred.



Toughened glass can provide security while maintaining transparency and an active frontage.



Lattice shutters maintain visibility into the unit and preserve the character of the street.



Permeable or transparent external shutters, colour-matched to the shopfront, provide security while minimising visual impact on the street scene.

TC 13

Car parking

Large areas of surface car parking can weaken the appearance of town and local centres. Parking should usually be placed to the rear of buildings or integrated beneath new development. Where surface parking is necessary, it must be supported by appropriate landscaping.



Surface parking areas are softened through landscaping, tree planting and permeable materials, ensuring they integrate with their surroundings and do not dominate the street environment.

TC 14 **Cycle parking**

Cycle parking should be provided in a convenient and secure location close to the main entrance. Cycle stores must be kept separate from waste storage areas.



Covered cycle storage provides weather protection and encourages regular use, with simple, functional design that integrates with the building and surrounding environment.

TC 15 **Public realm**

Proposals should enhance the public realm by using consistent surface materials and, where appropriate, providing well-designed street furniture that fits with the wider area.

TC 16 **Noise**

Development should be designed to minimise noise impacts on surrounding uses through layout, orientation, and building design. This may

include locating noise-generating activities away from sensitive uses, using buildings as buffers, and carefully positioning plant, servicing areas, and entrances. Where required, additional noise mitigation measures should be incorporated into the design in a way that does not detract from the quality or appearance of the development.

TC 17**Biodiversity**

Commercial developments must meet mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements unless they fall below the threshold. Development must demonstrate a minimum of 10% net increase in biodiversity compared to the baseline prior to development, in accordance with statutory biodiversity net gain legislation. Measures should be designed to deliver a range of good quality and well-connected habitats for wildlife whilst also providing attractive, resilient and healthy environments for residents.

Checklist

The Design Code is a key consideration when planning applications are assessed. The Design Code Compliance Checklist is a simple tool to help applicants explain how their proposals respond to these requirements. While completing the checklist is not mandatory, submitting it with your application can make the process clearer, quicker and more robust.

Why complete the checklist?

- It clearly shows how your proposal meets the Design Code.
- It reduces the likelihood of follow-up questions from the Council.
- It helps avoid delays in the determination of your application.
- It strengthens your case if an application is refused and appealed.

Submitting a completed checklist at the point of application is the simplest way to demonstrate compliance with the Design Code and support a timely decision.

Code number and title	Key points to address	Applicant Response
TC 1 – Local character	Reflect materials, proportions and architectural features	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 2 – Building line and height	Respect surrounding building lines and heights	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 3 – Active frontages and entrances	Provide active frontage and clear entrances	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 4 – Mixed use	Encourage retail ground floor with other uses above	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

TC 5 – Elevation design	Provide clear visual break between ground and upper floors	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
TC 6 – Windows	Use windows to define character and appearance	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 7 – Townscape and heritage	Protect views, consider heritage impact	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
TC 8 – Waste and recycling	Provide integrated and screened waste areas	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 9 – Pedestrian and wheeling routes	Provide safe, accessible and direct routes	☐ Yes ☐ No
CTC 10 – External equipment	Screen or locate away from public view	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 11 – Signage	Appropriate scale and avoid clutter	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 12 – Security	Integrate high-quality, non-intrusive measures	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
TC 13 – Car parking	Locate to rear or integrate, landscape if surface	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
TC 14 – Cycle parking	Provide secure, convenient cycle storage	☐ Yes ☐ No
TC 15 – Public realm	Enhance with consistent materials and furniture	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

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TC 16 – Noise	Mitigate impacts through layout and design	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
TC 17 – Biodiversity	Deliver minimum 10% net gain	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
Further information in support of your answers		

North Tyneside Design Code

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