

North Tyneside Design Code: Shopfronts



North
Tyneside
Council

North Tyneside contains a wide variety of shopfronts. Within older areas, traditional ornamented shopfronts can be found, which are typically constructed of painted timber, small in scale, with generally modest fascias and signage. Modern shopfronts generally use contemporary materials and simple detailing.

Attractive, well-constructed, and well-maintained shopfronts have a positive impact on the retail and visitor experience. They create more appealing streets with active frontages and help improve the overall quality of our town and local centres. Poorly designed or maintained shopfronts, or those built from unsuitable materials, can significantly harm the character and appearance of both individual buildings and the wider street scene.

Objectives

- a) Preserve or enhance the visual quality of the built environment.
- b) Retain and repair shopfronts of architectural or historic interest.
- c) Respect the period and style of the building and wider street scene.
- d) Contribute to street activity and support a sense of safety after dark.
- e) Be accessible to all users.

Shopfronts will be considered well designed when they follow these design codes. If you choose a different approach, you must provide clear evidence explaining why it is best for your specific situation. Precedent is not a valid reason. Planning applications are considered on their own merits with regard to current planning policy and adopted guidance, which may change over time.

Works to shopfronts may need planning permission and/or advertisement consent. Planning permission is required for any alteration that would materially affect the external appearance of a shopfront. Advertisement consent is often required for displaying signs, including those above

ground floor level, on walls not part of the shopfront, and for flags or banners. Works to listed buildings will also need listed building consent.

The Council does not provide free advice on whether planning permission is required. If you want a formal decision on whether your proposed works need planning permission, you must apply for a [Lawful Development Certificate](#).

SF 1

Historic shopfronts

Historic shopfronts should be retained and repaired. This includes features such as decorative ironwork, carved or moulded timber, decorative plasterwork, terracotta or glazed tiles, stonework, and coloured glass. Any missing elements should be based on the existing historic fabric and supported by documentary evidence, such as old photographs.

The Council will resist proposals to replace historic shopfronts or those of architectural merit unless the applicant can clearly show that all reasonable options for repair and preservation have been fully explored.



Example of a historic shopfront in Whitley Bay, where distinctive detailing and craftsmanship reflect the area's heritage and contribute to a strong sense of place and identity.

SF 2

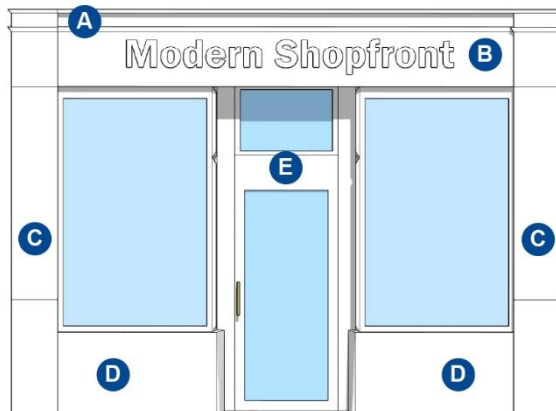
New shopfronts

New shopfronts should be designed to:

- a) Respect the period and style of the building they belong to.
- b) Incorporate signs, lighting, and security features as part of a coherent overall design.
- c) Use good-quality materials that suit the building and make a positive contribution to the street.
- d) Use a colour scheme that complements the rest of the building and the wider street scene.
- e) Provide a clearly defined and accessible entrance.

Design elements of a shopfront

The following components are typical features found on most shopfronts, both traditional and contemporary.



Modern shopfront



Traditional shopfront

A. **Cornice:** Marks the dividing line between the shopfront and the upper floors of the building.

B. **Fascia:** Provides space for the shop name.

C. **Pilaster:** Marks the vertical division between shopfronts. A corbel (a projecting stone or timber bracket) may sometimes sit at the top of a pilaster.

D. **Stallriser:** The solid base beneath the shop window.

E. **Recessed doorway:** Offers additional window space, shelter from the weather,

and a more inviting entrance. These are more common in historic shopfronts than modern ones.

SF 3

Signage

- a) Signage must be in proportion to the building and must not dominate it. Signage should take up no more than two-thirds of the fascia height. Phone numbers, web addresses, opening hours, and other additional information should be used sparingly to avoid a cluttered appearance.
- b) Any hanging signs must be designed as part of the shopfront. Brackets should be metal, simple, and robust. Hanging signs must not project more than 60 cm from the building and must be at least 2.4 metres above ground level to maintain safe headroom.
- c) Window signage must not significantly block glazing, so natural surveillance of the street is maintained and visual clutter is avoided.
- d) Free standing signs must not be placed on the pavement or anywhere within the adopted highway.
- e) In conservation areas and on listed buildings, signage should be painted or use individual metal or timber lettering that is proportionate to the building and fascia.



Signage that is well-proportioned, simply detailed, and integrated with the shopfront, maintaining a clear and uncluttered street presence.

SF 4

Security

- a) Where security shutters are required, they should be integrated into the design of the shopfront.
- b) Solid external roller shutters must not be used, as they harm the appearance of the building and can completely hide the shopfront. Shutters should be mesh or lattice style and colour-coated to match the shopfront. Unpainted galvanized shutters are not acceptable.
- c) Shutter boxes should be installed internally and, where possible, positioned behind the fascia, with side guides integrated into the shopfront.
- d) Shutters should only cover the glazed areas of the shopfront, not the whole frontage. For large shopfronts, several smaller shutters should be used for individual window openings instead of one large shutter.
- e) Any required security features, such as surveillance cameras, lighting, and alarms, must be designed as part of the shopfront and placed discreetly. They must not obstruct or visually compete with architectural details.



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.

SF 5

Illumination

- a) Illumination should only be used where it is genuinely needed and must be discreet and well-integrated into the shopfront design.
- b) Neon signs and internally illuminated box signs or fascias are generally inappropriate, as they are often overly bright and made from materials that do not suit the building. Carefully positioned trough lighting or small spotlights may be acceptable, but only for premises that normally operate after dark.
- c) Surface-mounted cable runs should be avoided because they can significantly harm the appearance of the building.
- d) In conservation areas and on listed buildings, illuminated signs are often not acceptable.



Sensitive lighting does not negatively impact the building or the street scene.

SF 6

Materials

- a) The choice of materials must be appropriate for the building and its surroundings.
- b) Where it is demonstrated that an existing historic shopfront cannot be retained, any replacement must be built using matching materials and finishes. Modern materials such as

acrylic, Perspex, and uPVC are not appropriate, as they often appear out of place alongside the traditional materials used on older buildings.

- c) Modern shopfronts should use a simple design and a limited palette of materials. Timber or powder-coated aluminum is recommended.



A modern shopfront with large glazed display windows, a minimalist fascia, and clean contemporary detailing that creates an open and uncluttered street presence.

SF 7

Colour schemes

Colour schemes for shopfronts and signage should complement the host building and contribute positively to the character of the surrounding street scene. Bold or contrasting colours may be appropriate where they form part of a high-quality design but should be used carefully to avoid dominating the frontage or detracting from the overall composition.

SF 8

Awnings

- a) Where awnings are proposed, they must be designed as a fully integrated part of the shopfront and must not obscure any architectural details.
- b) Awnings should be retractable and made from canvas.
- c) When extended, awnings must be at least 2.6 metres above the pavement and set back at least 60 centimetres from the kerb to ensure pedestrian and highway safety.



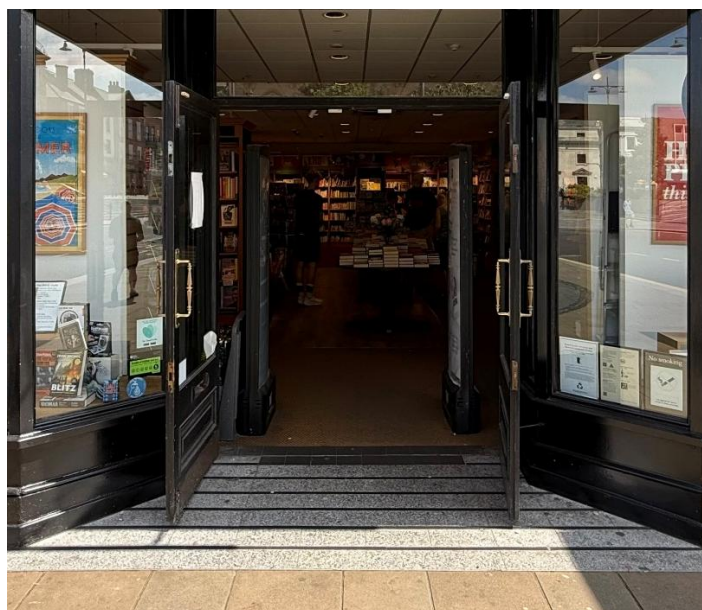
Well-designed retractable awnings that complements the historic character of the surrounding streetscape.

SF 9

Accessibility

- a) Every opportunity must be taken to ensure access to and within a shop is inclusive for all users. All new shops or shopfronts should provide:
 - 1. Level access.
 - 2. Non-slip, well-lit surfaces.
 - 3. Doors that are easy to operate and wide enough for wheelchair and pushchair access.
 - 4. Clearly identifiable entrances.
 - 5. A clear and unobstructed approach along the pavement.

- b) Alterations to existing shopfronts should aim to improve accessibility for all. It is recognised, however, that some older buildings may have specific constraints. Accessibility should be improved as far as is practically possible without harming the historic significance of the building. Applications should include information demonstrating how this has been considered.
- c) Any external seating must be positioned so that pedestrian routes remain clear, active frontages are not obstructed, and entrances and safety signage remain fully visible.



Entrance with level access, wide doors and a clear, unobstructed approach to support inclusive access for all users.

SF 10

Pavement use

Pavement space that is used for temporary or semi-permanent commercial activities, including outdoor seating, displays and signage, should be well-managed and not compromise pedestrian safety or accessibility. Proposals should:

- Maintain a clear, unobstructed and level route at all times, sufficient to accommodate wheelchair users, people with mobility aids, and families with prams or double buggies.
- Be arranged in an orderly and contained layout aligned with the building frontage, avoiding clutter or excessive encroachment into the public realm.
- A coordinated and coherent appearance that sits comfortably within the street scene and does not detract from the character or function of the area.
- Ensure good visibility and legibility for all users, including those with limited vision.

Arrangements that create obstruction, conflict between users, or detract from the character and function of the street should be avoided.



Well-managed pavement use maintains a clear pedestrian route while accommodating outdoor seating and planting in a coordinated, uncluttered layout aligned with the building frontage.

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
SF 1 – Historic shopfronts	Retain and repair historic shopfronts; replace only where repair is not possible and fully justified	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 2 – New shopfronts	Respect building style; integrate signage, lighting and security; use high-quality materials and accessible design	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 3 – Signage	Proportionate to building; avoid clutter; limit fascia size; control	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

	hanging and freestanding signs appropriately	
SF 4 – Security	Integrate shutters and security features; avoid solid shutters; use high-quality mesh or lattice designs	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 5 – Illumination	Use only where necessary; discreet lighting; avoid overly bright or inappropriate signage	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 6 – Materials	Use materials appropriate to building and context; avoid poor quality modern materials in historic settings	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 7 – Colours	Complement the building and street; avoid overly dominant or poorly integrated colours	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 8 – Awnings	Integrate into design; retractable; do not obscure details; maintain clear height and distance from kerb	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 9 – Accessibility	Provide inclusive access including level thresholds, clear entrances and unobstructed approach	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
SF 10 – Pavement use	Maintain clear routes; avoid clutter; ensure safe, accessible and coordinated use of public space	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
Further information in		

support of your answers	
-------------------------	--

North Tyneside Design Code

North Tyneside Council

The Quadrant

The Silverlink North

Cobalt Business Park

North Tyneside

NE27 0BY

Telephone: 0191 643 2310

Email: planning.policy@northtyneside.gov.uk

Website: www.northtyneside.gov.uk

Published: July 2026