

Alnwick and Amble Retail Distinctiveness Programmes: Shop Front Improvement Scheme

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Retail Distinctiveness Shop Front Improvement Scheme and how you can make a grant application.

If you would like to know more about the Retail Distinctiveness programmes, in Alnwick and Amble, or want to get involved in helping to take the Action Plans forward, please contact Alnwick Community Development Trust (01665 606093) or Amble Development Trust (01665 712929).

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the scheme please contact the scheme administrator on 01665 511326

1. Background

1.1 Shop fronts are the most conspicuous part of a building's façade. They make a big impact on the appearance of a town centre. They contribute to people's first impression of a town and their condition affects a town's image. High quality shop fronts make a town feel more welcoming to locals and visitors, improve its image, contribute towards a stronger sense of identity, and, importantly, encourage a greater number of shopping visits.

1.2 Unfortunately, the appearance of some buildings has been spoiled by inappropriate shop fronts, which are unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the buildings and their wider surroundings. Consequently the Alnwick and Amble Retail Distinctiveness Action Plans identify improvement and replacement of shop fronts as a priority activity.

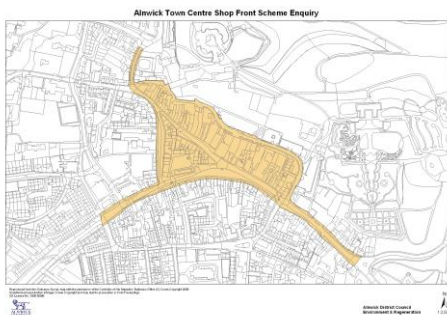
1.3 The shop front improvement scheme aims to improve shop fronts in selected areas as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town centres amongst locals and visitors.

1.4 Funding for the Scheme is being provided by the Regional Development Agency (ONE NorthEast) through Northumberland Strategic Partnership.

2. What will the scheme fund?

2.1 Eligible Areas

The scheme will operate in the main shopping areas of Alnwick and Amble as set out in fig 1 and fig 2



Alnwick: Bondgate without, Bondgate within Narrowgate, Bow Alley, Greenwell Road, Market Street, Clayport Street, Fenkle Street, Market Place, Paikes Street.

Amble: Albert Street, High Street, Bede Street, Queen Street, Church Street Bridge Street, Leazes Street.

The eligible areas in both towns are within a Conservation Area. Consequently, the scheme will only make grants to projects which are consistent with the design principles applied in Conservation Areas.

2.2 Grant Availability.

The scheme will only provide grants to commercial premises in the eligible areas. Please note that grants are discretionary and subject to availability of funds. The inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

The scheme will not support works which have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made.

Subject to availability of funding, the scheme will operate for between October 2007 and December 2009.

2.3 What types of premises are eligible?

The grant is available to most commercial premises within the eligible area for example:

- Shops - including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, laundrettes, dry cleaners and post offices.
- Financial and professional services – e.g. banks, building societies, estate agencies, professional and financial services
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes and food take-aways

If you are unsure of whether your business will qualify for a grant you should contact the scheme administrator.

2.4 Who can apply?

Both tenants and building owners can apply. In the case of tenants you must have the building owner's approval and hold at least a 5 year lease for the building.

2.5 Do I need to appoint a professional agent?

This will depend on the scale of your proposals. You may need expert advice from a suitably qualified professional agent to help identify potential options, prepare initial sketch designs, advise on costs, support the preparation of planning applications, prepare detailed designs and oversee the work. If you appoint a professional adviser their fees will be considered as an eligible cost.

2.6 Is funding available to help me develop my ideas before I apply?

In the case of large projects (those with an estimated cost of more than £10,000) an initial grant of up to £500 may be made available to support the costs of appointing a suitably qualified professional to provide help with developing and designing your project. This should be discussed with the scheme administrator.

The scheme is also working in partnership with Business Link North East to provide support from expert retail consultants on window display design and general business development. The scheme will provide up to £500 towards the costs of engaging an approved consultant via Business Link North East. To access this support please contact the Business Advice Centre in Alnwick on 01665 605706. Costs of engaging a retail consultant will be reimbursed on receipt of a completed application to the shop front improvement scheme.

2.7 What will the scheme fund?

2.7.1 The following work will generally be considered as eligible for support:

- New shop fronts (see below)
- Repair and reinstatement of all or any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street, including the first and second floors of premises where they are used for commercial activities.
- Repainting of shop fronts in suitable heritage colours. The major paint manufacturers produce appropriate colour palettes, which are usually branded as heritage or period ranges. Further guidance on colour schemes can be obtained from the Council's Planning Department on 01665 510505.
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes to match historic materials.
- Repainting and or re-rendering of prominent elevations in a suitable heritage colour.
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brickwork which forms part of the stall riser of the shop front.
- Repointing using traditional materials.
- Pedestrian access improvements, these must be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and will only be supported as part of a wider scheme.
- Signage.
- Window display equipment (see below).
- Lighting, both external and within window displays.
- Professional fees associated with the development and delivery of the project, including planning application fees.

2.7.2 New shop frontages. Retention of original shop fronts and reinstatement of original features will be encouraged. New shop fronts in a traditional style should be based on the guidance below and nearby examples. Modern designs will also be supported; however, these must use high quality materials and be sympathetic to the immediate area.

2.7.3 Window display equipment. High quality window displays are an effective way of attracting business into your premises. They also contribute to the overall quality of a town's shopping experience. To help you maximise the benefit from your improvements to the outside of your premises, the scheme will also support the purchase of new window display equipment.

2.7.4 Cleaning of stonework and brickwork. Will generally be considered ineligible, except in the following circumstances:

- where there is a build-up of dirt that must be removed to assess the need for repairs, or
- where the surface build-up is damaging the stone or brickwork through chemical reaction.

Cleaning for cosmetic reasons will not be supported. Any cleaning which is approved must be undertaken to an agreed specification by specialist conservation contractors.

2.7.5 Reinstatement of original architectural features. We wish to encourage the reinstatement of architectural or historic features that have formed part of the buildings design and character but may have been lost or damaged over time. These might include ornamental masonry, stucco and other applied finishes or details, historically patterned woodwork,

ornamental metalwork or other features of historic significance. These details must be known to have been part of the building, for example through documentary sources, clues remaining on the building itself or the pattern of features on neighbouring properties.

Projects which involve the replacement or remodelling of shop fronts should begin with an initial investigation to identify any valuable features concealed within the current structure. Reinstatement must never involve the removal of later features of interest.

2.7.6 Security. This scheme is intended to improve the appearance of town centres and make them more inviting. Externally mounted security shutters detract from the appearance and image of an area, especially at night when they contribute towards a feeling of insecurity and dereliction.

The scheme will not support externally mounted security features. The scheme will support the costs of replacing external shutters with internal security grilles and or security glazing (e.g. laminated or strengthened glass), which allows window-shopping to take place in the evening.

2.7.7 Bird Proofing. The presence of roosting birds, and the mess they create, has been identified as an issue in both Alnwick and Amble town centres. The scheme will support humane measures designed to deter birds. The scheme will not generally support the use of netting, as it can degrade over a relatively short time scale and once damaged can be extremely unattractive. Further independent guidance on humane methods of bird control can be obtained from the Pigeon Control Advisory Service (www.picasuk.com) or reputable pest control companies.

2.8 Ineligible Expenditure

The scheme will not support:

- Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises
- Retrospective applications i.e. for work already completed or underway
- Cleaning of buildings for purely cosmetic purposes
- Structural repairs including re-roofing
- Internal repairs and alterations
- External security features
- CCTV systems
- Recoverable VAT

2.9 Levels of funding

We recognise that in some cases significant improvements can be made through fairly minor and relatively inexpensive work, for example redecoration. And that in other cases more significant levels of work are required. To reflect this we have not set a minimum or maximum level of grant, as a general guide we envisage that most grants would fall into a range of £1,000 to £10,000. We will look at each application on a case by case basis.

We also wish to encourage certain activities in particular the removal of external shutters.

The scheme will provide:

- Grants of 50% of towards expenditure on works included within sections 2. 71 to 2.7.4.
- Grants of up to 75% to support the reinstatement of architectural features (2.7.5).
- Grants of 80% towards: the cost of replacing external shutters with security glazing and or internal grilles; the provision of bird proofing measures.

- Up to £500 towards the cost of engaging a retail consultant through Business Link NorthEast.

3. What constitutes a good shop front design?

The scheme is not intended to create a uniform style to shop front design, as this would result in an uninteresting townscape. Within the scheme we wish to encourage diversity and distinctiveness in terms of designs, details and colours whilst retaining the principles of good design associated with historic town centres.

In the case of Listed Buildings, through the planning process, the council will insist that new or replacement shop fronts are made of wood and are hand painted.

Projects need not be historically focussed. We recognise that some buildings may require more modern shop fronts and that high quality modern design can add significant value to the townscape.

As a general principle projects should seek to balance imaginative design with the historic context of the building and the wider area.

3.1 Is there guidance available?

Yes. Alnwick Civic Society has produced a guide for shop front design which has been adopted by the Council. Projects should follow the design principles set out in this guide. A copy of the guide is available from the scheme administrator and will be included in the application pack.

3.2 Will I require planning approval?

Virtually all works that change the exterior of buildings will require Planning Permission. They may also require Listed Building Consent or Advertisement Consent. A separate planning application and scale drawings prepared by a professional agent will be required to show the extent of all new work. If you are using a professional agent, they will be able to advise you about any statutory consents that are required.

It takes the Council about two months to decide on a planning application, advertisement consent or other statutory consent. You need to build this into your timetable for carrying out your project.

If you would like to discuss whether your proposals require planning approval please contact the scheme administrator on 01665 511326 or the Council's Planning Department on 01665 510505.

4. What is the process for applications?

An outline of the process for applications is attached as appendix1.

4.1 Application form and advice

Application forms and advice regarding the scheme are available from the scheme administrator on 01665 511326.

4.2 What do I have to supply with my application?

In order to consider your application we require the following:

- **Completed Application form** - You must complete a grant application form. This contains basic information about your proposals.
- **Schedule of works** - full details of the improvement works that you intend to carry out. You should submit a 'schedule of works' which gives a description of any work to be carried out. The schedule should include details of the methods of work, techniques to be employed and details of the materials to be used.
- **Sketch drawings** - Depending on the extent of the proposed works, drawings of elevations will be required showing your proposals.
- **Proof of ownership/lease** - If you do not own the property, you will need to provide proof that you have permission from the owner to carry out the works. The building owner must countersign your application to show that they have given permission for the works to be carried out.
- **Cost Estimates including quotes and fees** - An estimate of the costs of the works and professional fees. Evidence that you have obtained at least two quotes from contractors.

4.3 How long will it take to make a decision on my application?

We will make a decision on your application within three weeks of receiving a fully complete application.

If your project requires planning permission and your grant is approved we will write to you making an in principle offer of funding, we will then issue a formal grant offer letter as soon as planning permission is granted.

4.4 Who will decide whether my application is approved?

Applications will be considered by a panel made up of council officers and representatives from the Amble Development Trust and Alnwick Community Development Trust.

4.5 What conditions will apply to the grant?

All grant offers will be made in writing. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in a grant offer letter.

All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning consent. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and any offer of a grant does not imply in any way that planning consent will be granted.

You will be required to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years

4.6 When will the grant be paid?

Grants will be paid on production of invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs. Payments will normally be made after all works are completed, for larger projects interim payments may be considered.

Rural Distinctiveness

Shop Front Scheme

Application form



Contact Name:	
Contact Address:	
Name of Business	
Business Address (If different from above)	
Telephone Number:	
Email Address:	
Website:	
Type of business	
Is your business VAT registered?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Applicant's interest in the property	Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/>
If you are a tenant please give number of years left on lease? (please enclose a copy of tenancy)	
Have you made any previous applications for grants for improvements to the premises? (If yes please give details)	
Please attach photographs showing the current front elevations of your shop/business front	Attached <input type="checkbox"/>

Statement of Works

Please describe the changes that you propose to make including:

- Reference to whether doors, windows or entrances are to change
- The nature of changes to frontage façade including details of features you wish to add or remove
- Changes to retail display units.
- Details of colours and styles to be employed.

(Please attach a architectural sketch plan showing proposed new front elevation and detail any specific areas of change)

Works	Estimated Costs

Application must be signed in the case of a limited company by a director, otherwise by a proprietor or partner.

If you are not the property owner - the application must be signed in support by the property owner.

I confirm that I am the property owner of and I agree to the current tenant using a Retail Distinctiveness Shop Front Improvement Grant to improve the frontage of the property.

Signature _____

Name (in block capitals) : _____ Date: _____

Please tell us where you heard about this scheme:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Application Received.....

Application Complete yes no

Further Information required.....

Date Further Information requested.....

Date further information received.....

Date of appraisal.....

Panel Recommendation yes no

Grant offered yes no

Planning permission received yes no

Grant accepted yes no

Terms and Conditions

The agreement is between Alnwick District Council and the Applicant(s) as named in the offer letter.

Businesses/Organisations accepting grant offers from the Shop Front Scheme will be required to abide by and agree to the following terms and conditions:

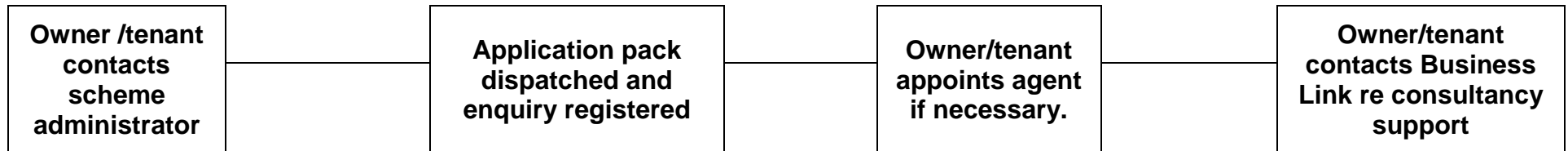
General Terms and Conditions

- The grant is not payable to an undischarged bankrupt.
- The grant must be used for the purpose intended as outlined in the Grant Offer letter.
[NB: This will be vouched by the production of original invoices in respect of the grant claim.]
- The grant may not be used to fund retrospective work.
- In the case of tenants payment of the grant requires the building owner's approval and furnishing proof of a minimum 5 year lease for the building.
- If the business/organisation ceases trading/operating within 12 months of the payment of the grant or the building is sold, the applicant must notify the District Council within 14 days and in such circumstances Alnwick District Council may require the applicant(s) to repay, in whole or part, the grant paid.
- The grant must not be using the grant for improvements to residential property, cleaning of buildings for purely cosmetic purposes, structural repairs including re-roofing, internal repairs and alterations, external security features, CCTV systems or recoverable VAT.
- If at any point the organisation/business becomes VAT registered, the applicant must inform Alnwick District Council and discuss repayment of VAT expenses claimed.
- The grant will only be paid to proposals which have been granted planning permission. Nothing in the agreement or negotiation of the grant will affect the District Council's decision over planning permission. An offer of agreement in principle will be made until planning permission has been granted. Only then may a Grant Offer letter be issued and works commence.
- The applicant must inform Alnwick District Council of any changes to the business or changes of business address and telephone number.
- The grant is made on the condition that the property will be maintained to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years.
- Any grant must be taken up within the period stated in the Grant Offer Letter unless a prior arrangement is made.
- Payment will be made in arrears upon production of the grant claim form along with supporting documentation (e.g. copy invoices).
- All claims to be address to the Regeneration Unit, Alnwick District Council, Allerburn House, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1YY.

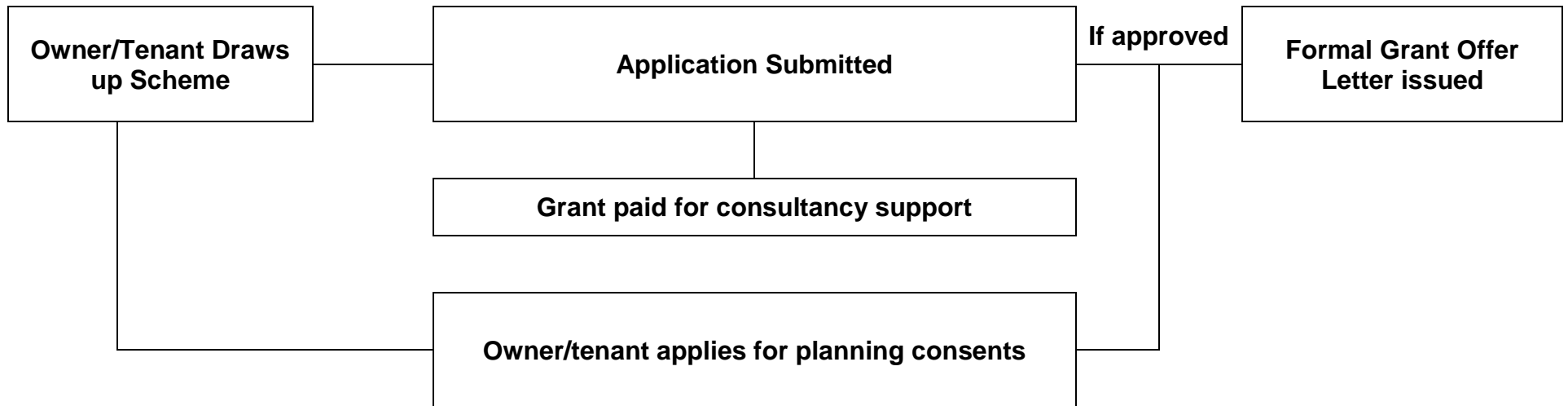
Alnwick and Amble Retail Distinctiveness Programme: Shop Front Improvement Scheme
A Step by Step Guide

The following diagram outlines the main stages in the process of applying for a grant.

Stage 1 - Initial Enquiry



Stage 2 – Making an Application to Receipt of Grant Offer



Stage 3 – Building Works to Grant Payment

