

Colour Scheme Guide

For use on historic shop fronts and listed buildings



Alnwick District Council

Design Guidance

January 2007

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formats including audio tape and large print. For further
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Status of this Design Guide

The purpose of this Design Guide is to inform designers, contractors and building owners of a range of British Standard paint colours that are likely to be considered suitable, in particular, for use on historic buildings, and to suggest a 'formula' for arriving at a colour scheme that will complement and enhance historic buildings.

The owner of a listed building is required under the existing legislation to obtain Listed Building Consent from Alnwick District Council before carrying out any alterations to the building that could affect its special architectural or historic character. In terms of exterior colour, the need for consent centres on the extent to which the painting or repainting affects the character of the building. For example, repainting white window frames in cream or off-white would probably not need consent, whereas painting white frames bright scarlet would need consent (and would probably not get it!). It is very unlikely that painting alone would ever need planning permission.

Under the terms of the current General Development Order, owners of non-listed buildings (including those within conservation areas) are exempt from the need to apply for permission to change the existing colour schemes of their properties. However, it is to be hoped that they too, will find this guide helpful in selecting colours that will be attractive and in harmony with their surroundings.

This guide has been prepared with the assistance of Alnwick Civic Society, and in consultation with interested parties and the wider community. It is the intention to republish the guidance as a supplementary planning document as part of the council's Local Development Framework in due course.

Introduction

An important element in the creation of a sensitive restoration is the authenticity of the colour scheme used. The Civic Society's Design Guide for shop fronts, adopted in 1995 by the District Council, stated only that "the colour scheme for a shop front should be dignified and harmonious", yet refrained from offering specific advice on colours that should be used or avoided.

Recent research on samples of original paintwork has led to a clearer understanding of the colours applied in the Georgian (including Regency) and Victorian periods, to which many of the buildings in Alnwick District belong. This makes it possible to now offer suggestions on colour; not only for shop fronts but also for paintwork on other types of building.

It is recognised that the choice of colour is a personal and, sometimes, difficult matter, but, without paying due regard to the architectural design and details it is possible to destroy the value of the underlying design with an insensitive colour scheme.

Basic Principles

Building Aspect

A north-facing building façade or feature presents the opportunity to use lively colours. A south-facing façade requires the use of more restrained colours.

Use of more than one colour in a scheme

The use of a single colour on the whole of a façade reduces and sometimes even eliminates the value of the design and detailing. Two or more sympathetic but contrasting colours should be used to highlight at least some of the architectural features.

Recommended procedure in obtaining consent for a change of colour scheme for the exterior of a listed building.

The owner or his advisers should use this Design Guide to select a colour scheme, or, alternatively, as the guide is not intended to cover all possible combinations, may use the principles laid out in the guide to select colours not specifically named here.

The initial proposals should then be discussed with the relevant officer at Alnwick District Council Development Control Department, who will take a view as to whether or not the proposal will require Listed Building Consent. It will be expected that the choice of colour scheme will correspond with the principles outlined in the Design Guide, and will complement the colour schemes of neighbouring properties.

If it is considered that the chosen colour scheme is inappropriate, the officer will be pleased to offer advice on alternatives. If the officer's opinion is favourable, the application for Listed Building Consent may then be made in the knowledge that the proposal is likely to be the subject of a positive recommendation to the Council by the officer concerned.

Column 1		Column 2	
Blue/grey (BS:18-C-35)		Dark blue (BS:18-C-39)	
Green/blue (BS:16-C-37)		Dark green (BS:16-D-45)	
Grey/green (BS:12-B-21)		Dark green (BS:12-C-39)	
Brown (BS:08-C-39)		Dark Brown (BS:08-B-29)	
Red (BS:04-D-44)		Darker red (BS:04-D-45)	

Note that; in the case of a comparatively recent building in modern materials and within a conservation area, a different approach to the style and colour of signage may be acceptable. This would be applicable where there was no traditional shop front, however it would be advisable to make sure signs meet the standards of the buildings in the surrounding area.

Once the fascia colours have been selected, the remaining shop front features – the cornice, architrave, pilasters, plinths, transoms, mullions and the stall-risers – should be painted in sympathy with them.

The table above shows, in column 1, a range of suitable 'main' colours with, in each case, in column 2, a corresponding colour suitable for the subsidiary part of the feature. For instance, in the case of pilasters, which usually have flat panels and moulded surrounding frames, the colour for the panels would be selected from column 1, while the moulded surrounds would be painted in the corresponding colour from column 2. The use of too many different pairs of colours should be avoided, and all pairs of colours in any one shop front should be selected from the same 'family' group (indicated by the first two digits in the BS number).

Choice of Colours

Windows and doors

Evidence from photographs taken in the mid to late 1880s shows that the Victorian's had no consistency in their choice of window frame colour, although there is an indication that from the 1880s onwards white became the favoured colour reflecting the Queen Anne style. It is possible that owners may have preferred white because this colour minimised the light loss caused by glazing bars.



Good Example of an Original Window

A wider range of colours was used in Georgian and Victorian times, particularly for windows. Pure white can look very stark against the natural stonework of many building walls. It is therefore suggested that warmer, more complementary colours should be considered, for example, off-white (BS:10-B-15) or stone (BS:10-B-17).



Off White & Stone

Doors, perform an important social function, and announce the entrance to a building. They may be painted with a colour such as dark purple (BS:02-C-40), dark brown (BS:08-B-29), dark green (BS:14-C-40) or dark blue (BS:20-C-40).



Dark Purple, Dark Brown, Dark Green and Dark Blue (L-R)

Rendered Wall Panels

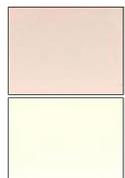
The council's design guide for stonework repair makes it clear that the rendering of a good stone wall is to be avoided. In most cases, the rendering cracks and peels and if cement has been

used in the render, the underlying stonework is damaged. The guide suggests that the best treatment for a rendered wall that has deteriorated is to strip off the render and expose and re-point the stonework.

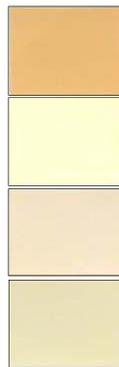
However, it has to be recognised that there are many rendered walls in the district, and that some owners would prefer to re-paint the render periodically. This should be done with traditional lime wash or mineral pigments where appropriate, or with a smooth, water-permeable paint system. Textured or impermeable sprayed coatings are not acceptable.

In a small number of very old buildings surviving in the district, the original stonework was never intended to be left exposed, and a lime plaster covering was used. This protected the surface while allowing it to 'breathe' through the continuous wetting/drying cycle to which it is exposed by nature. It is essential to obtain specialist advice before attempting to repair or redecorate such walls.

In general, warm colours such as cinnamon (BS:08-C-35), ivory (BS:10-C-31), vellum (BS:08-B-17), or mistletoe (BS:10-B-17) would be suitable for north-facing frontages. Cooler colours such as pale pink (BS:04-B-17), soft white (BS:10-B-15) and pale blue/white (BS:18-C-31) would suit south-facing façade.



Cold Colours for South facing façade



Warm tones for north facing frontages

These features should not be hidden by painting them to match the background colour. They should be painted in restrained, dark colours such as green (BS:14-C-40), brown (BS:08-B-29) or black (BS:00-E-53).



Dark Colours - Green, Brown and Black

Shop fronts

Shop fronts are important social and visual features of a town or village, seen by residents and visitors alike. Their impressions of the town are certainly affected by the visual quality (or lack of it) of the frontages.



The traditional shop front contains elements of classical building design, and the colour scheme should be designed to enable this to be recognised, either consciously or otherwise.

The fascia is the flat board, normally framed by the cornice above and the architrave below, that carried the essential display of the name and nature of the shop and its owner. The selection of fascia colours can influence the remainder of the shop front colour scheme. A sharp contrast is necessary between the lettering and the background. Black (BS:00-E-53) and white (BS:00-E-55) give the maximum contrast. Alternative pairings offering tonal variations of colours within the same 'family' include dark brown (BS:08-B-29) with magnolia (BS:08-B-15) or dark blue (BS:18-C-39) with pale blue/white (BS:8-B-31).



Rainwater Goods, Decorative Ironwork and Railings