



High Street Heritage Action Zone Weston Shop Front Enhancement scheme

Guidance and frequently asked questions

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1. Introduction

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Weston High Street Heritage Action Zone Shop Front Enhancement Scheme and how you can make an application to benefit from the scheme.

2. Background

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.

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.

Weston is about to be granted High Street Heritage Action Zone status by Historic England and secured funding to deliver a Shop Front Enhancement grant scheme.

The Weston High Street Heritage Action Zone Shop Front Enhancement Scheme aims to part fund the enhancement of 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 centre amongst locals and visitors.

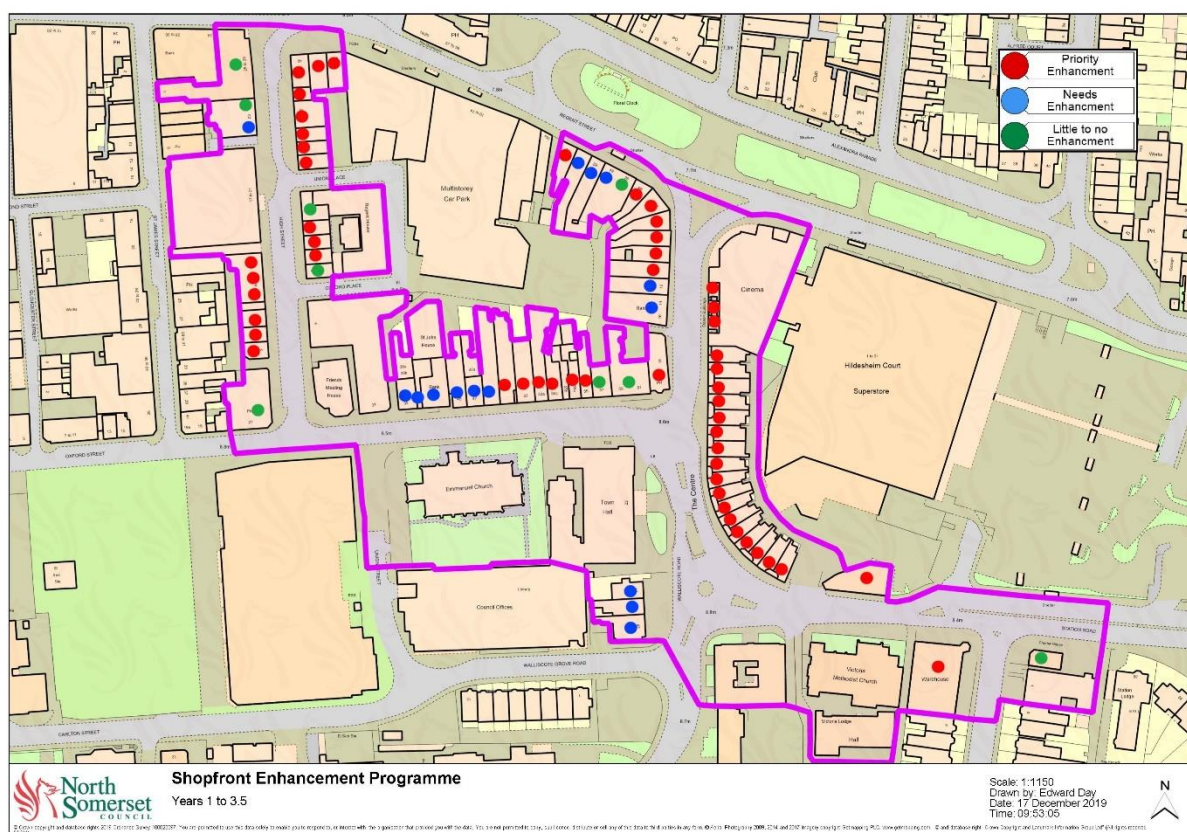
North Somerset Council has developed a Shopfront Design Guide (adopted as policy September 2019) to support quality shop front enhancement. Available at:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Shopfront-design-guide-Adopted-2019.pdf>

3. The Weston high Street Heritage Action Zone Shop Front Enhancement Scheme

3.1. Eligible Areas

The scheme concentrates on areas in parts of Station Road, Walliscote Road, Regent Street, Oxford Street and south High Street. The eligible areas in the town are within the Great Weston Conservation Area.



High priority properties automatically qualify to apply for the scheme.

Other properties in the identified areas that are less of a priority, will still be considered. For example, priority will also be given where several adjacent premises wish to develop proposals at the same time. This allows for a property identified as less of a priority to be considered alongside work on an adjacent high priority property.

3.2 How we decided on priority properties in Weston

Each unit has been ranked as either low, medium or high priority. The ranking is based on a number of factors and is intended to give a simple and clear indication of the degree of benefit improvements to the shop and building would make to the Conservation Area, to the streetscape and to local economy. These factors include whether the unit is on a high or low footfall street and whether the unit is part of set-piece of buildings that would benefit from improvement or whether the building is standalone. It takes into account the architectural quality and age of the host building

and whether improvements would benefit the wider CA. And it takes into account the quality and condition of the existing shopfront.

3.3. Availability of Support

The scheme will only provide support to retail premises in the eligible areas. Please note that support is discretionary and subject to availability of funds. The inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to support. The scheme will not support works which have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of support being made. Subject to availability of funding, the scheme will initially operate April 2020 to December 2023

3.4. What types of premises are eligible?

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

- Shops - including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, laundrettes, tattoo parlours, dry cleaners
- Financial and professional services – e.g. estate agencies, professional and financial services
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes night club and food take-aways
- Other - including taxi companies, charity shops

If you are unsure whether your business will qualify to apply for the scheme please contact the Heritage Action Zone project officer.

3.5. Who can apply?

Both tenants and building owners can apply. In the case of tenants, you must have the building owner's approval and provide evidence of a lease for the building.

We encourage schemes that entail two or more properties adjacent to each other to apply.

We have identified properties as High, Medium or Low priority.

- All properties identified as high priority will be considered
- Medium priority properties will be considered if they are adjacent to a High priority property and both properties wish to develop an application/s.
- A row of medium priority properties wishing to develop an application together will be considered if the impact of the scheme is deemed to be significant to the enhancement of the street.

3.6. Do I need to appoint a professional agent?

You can appoint your own design team/ professional agent.

If you appoint your own design team- your application will need to include details of planning consent , designs and costings. Please request an application form from the Heritage Action Zone project Officer if using your own design team.

Or use the scheme service. The Weston scheme includes the provision of an expert advice service: at **no cost to the applicant**.

The expert advice service is provided by a team of professional advisors (qualified architect, quantity survey) the service includes: identifying potential options, preparation of initial sketch designs, advising on costs, preparation of planning applications, preparation of detailed designs, identifying contractors for the works and overseeing the work.

3.7. What will the scheme fund?

The following work will generally be considered as eligible:

- New shop fronts
- 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.
- Repainting of shop fronts/ façade of the building
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes to match historic materials.
- Repainting and or re-rendering of prominent elevations.
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brickwork which forms part of the stall riser of the shop front.
- Re-pointing using traditional materials.
- Pedestrian access Enhancements, these must be compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and will only be supported as part of a wider scheme.
- Signage.
- Lighting, both external and within window displays.
- Replacing external shutters with internal security grilles and or security glazing (e.g. laminated or strengthened glass)
- Scaffolding costs
- Professional fees associated with the development and delivery of the project, including planning application fees.

New shop frontages

Retention of original shop fronts and reinstatement of original features will be encouraged. Modern designs will also be supported; however, these must use high quality materials and be sympathetic to the immediate area.

Cleaning of stonework and brickwork

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
- where the surface build-up is damaging the stone or brickwork through chemical reaction

Any cleaning which is approved must be undertaken to an agreed specification by specialist conservation contractors.

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.

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.

Bird Proofing

The presence of roosting birds, and the mess they create, has been identified as an issue in Weston-super-Mare. 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.

3.8. Ineligible Expenditure

The grant will not support:

- 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
- Window display equipment
- CCTV systems
- Recoverable VAT

3.9. How much funding is available?

The Shopfront Enhancement Scheme recognises that in some cases significant Enhancements can be made through fairly minor and relatively inexpensive work, and in other cases more significant levels of work are required.

Up to 75% of the total eligible costs, for repairs and / or reinstatement of original features will be available to support an agreed schedule of works. This means that property owners/ lease holders will be asked to pay between 25% and 50% of the cost of the works. The exact percentage will be determined as part of the application process.

4. 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.

4.1. Is there design guidance available?

Yes, the Council has adopted a shopfront design guide. Projects should follow the design principles set out in this guide. A copy of the guide is available from the Heritage Action Zone project officer and on North Somerset Council Web site. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Shopfront-design-guide-Adopted-2019.pdf>

In addition, should you wish to use it, the Weston scheme will include free access to the expert advice service. The expert advice service is provided by a team of professional advisors (qualified architect, quantity survey and building surveyor) the service includes: identifying potential options, preparation of initial sketch designs, advising on costs, preparation of planning applications, preparation of detailed designs, identifying contractors for the works and overseeing the work.

4.2. 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, or building regulations approval. A separate planning application and scale drawings will be required to show the extent of all new work they will also be able to advise you about any statutory consent that is required.

It will take about 6 weeks 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.

5 Making an application

5.1. What is the process for applications?

1. Step one: is to contact the HAZ project officer and arrange a visit to discuss the scheme and ascertain if your property is eligible
2. Step two: retain your own architects or meet the Council expert advisors (Architects) to discuss potential works
3. Step three: architects develop outline designs/ costings
4. Step four: property owners/ tenants confirm a wish to proceed.
5. Step five: architects develop designs and costing and planning consent application. Scheme application made to North Somerset Council
6. Step six: Decision made for funding. If successful- Formal agreement made with property owners.
7. Step seven: architects work with property owners/tenants to develop timeline for build and commence procurement of contractors through scoping and costing works and calling for contractors to tender. Contractors secured
8. Step eight: work starts on site.
9. Step nine: work completed and signed off by architects.
10. Step ten: North Somerset council pays contractors 100% of work costs and invoices property owner/ leaseholder for the agreed percentage. Owner pays the agreed percentage of the works cost .

5.2. What forms will I be required to complete?

1. Completed Scheme Application form
2. 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.
3. Planning consent

The **architects** to complete the following work:

4. Schedule of works - full details of the Enhancement 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.
5. Drawings - Depending on the extent of the proposed works, drawings of elevations will be required showing your proposals
6. Cost Estimates including quotes and fees - An estimate of the costs of the works and professional fees.

5.3. Who will decide whether my application is approved?

Each application will be checked by council officers to ensure all relevant documentation is submitted and that the designs are appropriate for the scheme. The decision to fund will be made by North Somerset Council and Historic England, through the High Street Heritage Action Zone steering group

5.4. What conditions will apply to the scheme?

The scheme is subject to the applicant signing an agreement that details the works to be carried out and requires consent for those works to be carried out on the premises. The agreement will require the applicant to pay an identified sum against the agreed works. The applicant must sign the agreement within 14 days.

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

5.6. When will payment be due

North Somerset council will pay contractors for the work. Once the works are completed North Somerset Council will inspect the completed work, check receipted invoices and, if satisfied, pay the contractors. Once the works are completed the applicant will be required to pay the agreed sum (percentage of works costs) within 30 days of receipt of an invoice. The council will reserve the right to issue legal proceedings against the applicant for any outstanding sum.

5.7. Repayment

If the applicant decides to sell their interest in the property within two years of the date of payment, the Council reserves the right to recover a percentage of works costs.

5.8. Breach of Conditions

If an applicant fails to meet any of the above conditions the Council reserves the right to declare the scheme void or vary the amount to be paid.

5.9.VAT

Applicants will pay the agreed sum inclusive of VAT

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