SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE
EXTERIOR COLOUR SCHEMES FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL,
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND HOUSING
OCTOBER 2020

sir ddinbych denbighshire County Council

PURCELL

Mark Clifford
On behalf of Purcell ®
St James', 79 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FQ
mark.clifford@purcelluk.com
www.purcelluk.com

Issue 01
May 2020
Denbighshire County Council

Issue 02
October 2020
Denbighshire County Council

PURCELL

240228

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE: SHOPFRONTS IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	04
1.1	Background	04
1.2	Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in Denbighshire	05
2.0	DESIGN GUIDE	06
2.1	Should the Exterior be Painted?	06
2.2	What Paints to Use	06
2.3	Colour Schemes by Era	07
2.4	Contemporary Buildings and General Guidance	11
3.0	FURTHER READING	12

SECTION 1.0
INTRODUCTION

This document is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance notes supporting the Denbighshire Local Development Plan 2006–2021 in a format which aims to guide the process, design and quality of works to listed buildings and conservation areas.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and advice to assist members of the public and the Council in discussions prior to the submission of and, consequently, in the determination of future planning and listed building consent applications.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Colour schemes are often a defining characteristic of an area. When sensitively considered paint colours blend into the wider setting and can enliven buildings. But where ill-considered or garish colours are used it can also erode and degrade the quality of the urban environment. The use of a coherent and harmonious palette in sympathy with historic practice will help to preserve the consistency of the townscape to the ultimate benefit of residents, retailers and visitors alike.

This document is not exhaustive and the topic of historic colour schemes is one of continuing research. The schedules outlined are for guidance and in some instances justification may be given for an alternative approach, however, this should be based on historical local precedent or site-specific evidence.

1.2 LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS IN DENBIGHSHIRE

1.2.1 Listed Buildings

Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest, and also brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations.

A building is listed because of its special architectural and historic interest, they are a vital part of the diverse character and history of Denbighshire and are important to conserve for future generations. There are over 1800 listed buildings in Denbighshire.

Listed Building Consent is required for all work to a listed building that involves alterations, extensions or demolition that will affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. If unsure it is always best to check with the local authority as unauthorised works can lead to enforcement action and fines.

1.2.2 Conservation Areas

Conservation areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place - in other words, the features that make it unique. There are some extra planning controls and considerations in place to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special. They are most likely to affect owners who want to work on the outside of their building or any trees on their property.

1.2.3 What permissions are required?

For listed buildings, any works that affect the special architectural or historic interest will require Listed Building Consent. Repainting or decoration that goes beyond 'repairs' of an existing scheme or that changes the colour scheme will generally require Listed Building Consent.

For non-listed buildings in conservation areas, changes in paint schemes will generally not require planning permission, however, where a scheme is deemed to adversely affect the amenity of an area Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives local planning authorities powers to serve notices requiring owners or occupiers to remedy the condition of their property.

For residential properties in the Denbigh Conservation Area an Article 4(2) Direction removes certain permitted development rights and in this instance you should always check with the local authority if planning permission is required.

The 32 conservation areas in Denbighshire are listed below:

- Betws Gwerfil Goch
- Cynwyd
- Denbigh Town
- Llandrillo
- Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmeirch
- Llantysilio
- Ruthin Town & Llanfwrog
- Llangollen Town
- Corwen Town
- Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd
- Henllan
- Llanarmon-yn-Ial
- Nantglyn
- Llanelidan
- Efenechtyd
- Llanferres
- Bodelwyddan
- Bodfari
- Cwm
- Dyserth
- Rhuddlan
- St Asaph
- Tremeirchion
- Meliden - Central
- Meliden - Ffordd Penrhwylfa
- Prestatyn - High Street
- Prestatyn - Castle Mound & Nant Hill
- Prestatyn - Fforddlas
- Rhyl Town
- Rhyl - River Street
- Rhyl - Seabank
- Trefnant

2.1 SHOULD THE EXTERIOR BE PAINTED?

The first question to answer when considering painting an historic building should always be whether the exterior should be painted at all. Some buildings were never intended to have painted finishes, those of exposed brick and stone in particular are rarely painted and doing so can mask architectural features and considerably harm the character of the building. Where brick and stone have been painted the owners of historic buildings should give consideration to the removal of the paint scheme and this should be done with consultation with the local authority and a suitably trained professional.

2.2 WHAT PAINTS TO USE

Traditional buildings rely on the breathability of their materials to expel moisture. Generally all the materials used in their construction would have a degree of porosity allowing moisture to escape through the walls of the property. When modern paints are applied to historic buildings they can have the effect of trapping moisture behind the façade, this can lead to damp, spalling paint and damage to masonry. Traditional treatments such as distemper and limewash ensure this breathability, however, modern synthetic based paints do not. If in doubt it is always best to check with a suitably trained professional.

- If a building or feature is not currently painted, unless there is compelling justification it should be left unpainted.
- Synthetic paints should be avoided and any paints used should ensure the breathability of the building. A truly breathable paint should have an SD Value ranging from 0.01 to 0.5. Most conventional masonry paints will likely have an SD Value of 1 or above. If it does not state an SD value on the paint it is unlikely to be suitable.

2.3 COLOUR SCHEMES BY ERA

2.3.1 Medieval to Stuart (1066-1714)

This broad time period covers the earliest of Denbighshire's historic buildings. If a building is from within this date range and survives in anything close to its original condition then it is highly likely to be listed. Particularly for those properties dating from the medieval period the external colour scheme is likely to be significant as both a national record and contributing to the special interest of the building so further research is recommended through the use of paint analysis, to inform the scheme and also liaison with the local authority.

Generally brickwork and stonework would be left unpainted. Renders may either be the soft natural colour of a lime render (never cement) which was a yellowy stone colour or more likely lime-washed. Limewash in itself can come in a variety of different colour tones but would generally be a soft, pale, milky white.

Windows and doors in timber-framed buildings are often oak, these have often been painted black in recent history, however, the most likely colour scheme would be the unpainted wood itself. In this instance liaison with the local authority is recommended before undertaking any paint removal or renewal.

'Brilliant White' as a paint colour dates from post-1945 and its use on historic buildings is inappropriate. Where white tones were used they were paler, softer and milkier and not the 'brilliant white' that is most commonly used today.

In grander buildings of this period such as churches or stately homes, windows may have stone surrounds and again these should be left unpainted.

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Most buildings of this time period would warrant individual paint analysis
- Brickwork, stonework and some timber should be unpainted
- Lime renders should be limewashed in a milky white colour tone

2.3.2 Georgian and Regency Period (1714-1837)

Georgian buildings are often made of locally sourced brick or local stone, as it was difficult to transport building materials around the country before the railways. Lesser quality brickwork was often rendered in imitation of stonework in an approach known as stucco. Georgian buildings are carefully proportioned according to fashionable Classical design principles and this use of the Classical orders within architecture applied to both grand mansion houses and individual terraces.

Brickwork and stonework would never be painted as this in itself obscures the architectural quality of the building. The fact that materials were left uncovered was a deliberate show of grandeur. Cheaper or poorer quality constructed buildings, or side/rear elevations may have been rendered and this render may have been painted or limewashed.

Depending on the status of the building, renders may be limewashed as was the case for earlier buildings (see previous section). For grander, higher status buildings, such as those with stucco render, the paint colour would be used to help make the render appear to be of the local geology as the intention of stucco was to fool the viewer into believing the building is stone, therefore buff yellowy-browns are quite common. Where properties form a terrace of stuccoed buildings the uniform colour scheme is vital for a sense of unity.

Unlike today where white windows stand out from a façade, Georgian ideals were based around the premise of blending elements into the wider building. Painting window joinery pale stone colours such as soft yellow browns helped to harmonise their appearance within the building. Towards the end of this period colour tones became darker and the Victorian palette in the section below started to become more common.

Colour schemes for the Georgian and Regency Period (1714-1837)

Windows	Pale stone colours or off-white	
Doors	Dark green, red-brown, olive-brown	
Gutters and downpipes	Dark greys or sometimes stone coloured on stucco façades	
Rendered façades	Stone coloured	
Timber features e.g. shopfronts	pastel blues or green	
Brickwork	Unpainted	
Stonework	Unpainted	

2.3.3 Victorian and Edwardian (1837-1914)

By the early 1800s the soft colours of the Georgian era had largely been replaced by darker and bolder colour schemes, for example, analysis has recently confirmed the use of black for sashes at Sir John Soane's London home in the 1820s. Green was very commonly used for more rustic homes, but off-white was still held to be the most appropriate colour for grander dwellings. However, by the middle of the 19th century purple-brown paint (first recorded as early as 1803) was popular for window joinery. Brunswick green was widely used for external window frames and doors, while graining, usually to resemble oak, remained a popular internal and external finish.

Whist the darker colour tones for external joinery seems bold in comparison to today's fashion of almost universally white windows and the 'brilliant white' of uPVC, it is important to remember the local context of these buildings. Many would have been in dirty, heavily polluted towns and white windows would have become soot grained and discoloured very quickly.

Unpainted brickwork and stone should not now be painted for the first time.

Colour schemes for the Victorian and Edwardian period (1837-1914)

Windows	Purple-brown, dark green, dark brown or oak grained. Off-white for grander buildings	
Doors	Dark green, red-brown, olive-brown	
Gutters and downpipes	Lead grey	
Rendered façades	Stone coloured Off-white	
Brickwork	Unpainted	
Stonework	Unpainted	

IRONWORK AND RAILINGS

Today railings and ironwork are almost ubiquitously painted black, however, this is a product of the the 1950s and the prevailing fashion of the time. Historically ironwork was rarely black and was far more common to be dark red, green or even blue. The most commonly used colour for railings would be the colour known to Victorians as 'invisible green', its name derived from the colours ability to blend into local foliage, although the exact colour varies Brunswick Green, British Racing Green or other dark greens are appropriate.

Historic railings showing evidence of an earlier green colour scheme

Railings from c.1860 showing evidence of an earlier pale blue colour scheme

Green railings as seen in Denbigh

2.4 CONTEMPORARY BUILDINGS AND GENERAL GUIDANCE

Colour schemes can make a significance impact on how a building and streetscape is experienced and historic colour schemes where they are known or survive are important in how they present historic buildings.

Although the guide is intended for historic buildings the same principles can and should be applied to contemporary buildings when they are within conservation areas.

The focus should be on a muted palette. The current fashion for grey-based colours are not traditional but they may be acceptable in conservation areas in some instances as a neutral colour but are generally not acceptable on listed buildings.

Colour schemes for shop frontages are covered in further detail in the supplementary planning guidance note: Shopfronts in Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas. .

- Avoid bright or garish colours
- 'Brilliant White' is never appropriate on any pre-1945 building. Off-white is an alternative that is suitable for most buildings
- Exposed brick and stonework should never be painted unless previously painted

SECTION 3.0
FURTHER READING

https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/paint

https://georgiangroup.org.uk/advice-leaflets/

https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support

https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/planning-and-building-regulations/local-development-plan/ldp-spg/ldp-supplementary-planning-guidance.aspx

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/

https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/advice/paint-colours-and-finishes

APPENDIX A
KEY TOWNS CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL

DENBIGH

Denbigh is one of the most historic towns in Wales. Its Welsh name - Dinbych - means "little fortress" and the remains of historic Denbigh Castle still dominates the skyline.

It is thought to have been the location of a fortified settlement during the Roman occupation and is first mentioned in records following the Norman Conquest when Denbigh guarded the approach to the Hiraethog Hills and Snowdonia.

Throughout its history, Denbigh has been important as an agricultural market town, being ideally situated between the Hiraethog moors and the fertile Vale.

The town grew around the textile industry in the 1600s, hosting specialist glovers, weavers, smiths, shoemakers, saddlers, furriers and tanners. Denbigh has been an important location for the agricultural industry throughout.

Denbigh has a good survival of historic properties and shop frontages. The material palette is largely red brick although rendered facades are also common with the occasional stone ashlar. Despite the town's earlier medieval origins much of the high street comprises mid to late 19th century shop frontages with some earlier examples.

LLANGOLLEN

From the late 18th century, the town and the surrounding Vale of Llangollen gained a reputation as a destination for those in search of picturesque beauty. By coincidence, the development of the London– Holyhead road through the town in 1815 brought more visitors to the area.

The first major change to the town's transport connections arrived in the early 19th century with the construction of the Llangollen Canal (originally a branch of the Ellesmere Canal and later part of the Shropshire Union Canal). A little over thirty years later, the railway reached Llangollen as a branch line from Ruabon. Constructed as the Vale of Llangollen Railway, sponsored by the Great Western Railway (GWR) and with Henry Robertson as engineer, it was open to traffic at the end of 1861.

As the local industry declined in the 20th century, tourism, the other mainstay of the local economy, prospered.

Good examples of mixed commercial premises survive in the town. Bridge Street retains evidence of buildings adapted for commercial use both in the form of designed facades and the insertion of shopfronts into earlier Georgian facades. A number of buildings were constructed individually but with a uniform appearance and some retain particularly good elements, such as the butcher's shopfront.

The character of the area is dominated by the materials and layout of the 1860 development. The red brick buildings on broad streets laid out in a grid pattern are clearly different from the rendered and roughcast buildings in the winding and undulating streets of the old town and the areas north of the river and south of the Holyhead road.

The buildings today have some fine examples of historic shopfronts which are predominantly 19th century with some 18th century examples although many of these are likely inserted into buildings of an earlier date.

The colour scheme tends towards a darker palette with dark greens being an overriding colour scheme.

PRESTATYN

Although the town can trace its origins back to the Roman period the current town and its high street is predominantly a product of the 19th century. The Chester and Holyhead railway, opened in 1848 and with it the town prospered and boomed as a Victorian seaside resort.

The high street and historic core of the town is set around the railway station approximately 1km away from the promenade and seafront.

The high street has a relatively good survival of historic shopfronts predominantly from the mid to late 19th century with some art deco 20th century examples. The buildings are predominantly red brick with some rendered or with a mock medieval timber frame. Of particular note are a series of shops with a central island of curving glass for display with the entrance set behind and also examples of recessed shop frontages to maximise window display both worthy of retention. It may be expected for a seaside town to a have a paler colour palette, however, black and dark grey are common along with a lighter grey colour.

RHYL

The town grew around what is now the commercial core and retail centre. At the same time, the town expanded further east in the area now bounded by Russell Road, Brighton Road (formerly Shipley Street), Clwyd Street and Bath Street. This area was once the nucleus of the wealthier part of Rhyl and a number of important buildings were erected prior to and during the 1840s. Meanwhile, the area to the west developed as a seaside resort to serve the first tourists from Liverpool and other cities who arrived at the harbour.

The real tourist potential of Rhyl was exploited when the Chester to Holyhead railway line through Rhyl opened in 1848. The once exclusive resort became accessible for millions, resulting in large scale expansion into a popular seaside town between 1850 and 1890. The majority of Rhyl's town centre, as well as areas further to the south and west, developed rapidly to provide hotels and boarding houses.

In the centre of town, ground floors were converted into shops selling all manner of goods for not only holiday makers but also the local population, who were beginning to consider Rhyl to be the retail centre for the area.

The majority of shopfronts are 20th and 21st century replacements, but some retain traditional features and are positive contributors to the town. Traditional features include decorative plinths, fluted/plain pilasters, panelled stall risers, fascias and decorative/ plain cornices. In the absence of any current overriding theme the pale greys or dark greens of the 19th century are generally acceptable.

RUTHIN

Ruthin is a medieval town which can trace its origins to before the construction of Ruthin Castle which was started in 1277 by Dafydd, the brother of prince Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The third Baron de Grey's land dispute with Owain Glynd☒r triggered Glynd☒r's rebellion against King Henry IV, which began on 16 September 1400, when Glynd☒r burned Ruthin to the ground, reputedly leaving only the castle and a few other buildings standing.

The Lord de Grey established a Collegiate Church in 1310. Now the Collegiate and Parish Church of St Peter, it dominates the Ruthin skyline. In 1863 the Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen Railway, which linked in Denbigh with the Vale of Clwyd Railway reached the town. The railway and Ruthin railway station closed in 1963 under the Beeching Act.

The town today is built around the central St Peter's Square with the main high street running down hill on Clwyd Street. There are many fine examples of historic shopfronts mainly from the 18th or 19th century and although many of the buildings have a polite 19th century façade it is assumed that the buildings will be considerably older than this frontage. Although there are red brick examples the predominant building material is of render with many examples of exposed timber frames. Colour schemes tend to blend between black and white frontages and paler eclectic colours which appropriately references the 18th or early 19th century desire for lighter colours.