Cleaning of building facades, Malton

Vehicle exhaust fumes are a problem in Malton, not only for its inhabitants and visitors to the town centre, but to the fabric and appearance of its buildings. Fine soots from vehicle exhaust emissions settle upon the ledges and facades of all buildings within the town. This cumulative soiling contributes to a popular perception of the town centre as being drab and even run–down. Upon limestone and calcareous sandstone facades, it causes damage and decay to the masonry. It leaves brick facades looking dirty. There is a proven relationship between the considered cleaning of town centre facades and an increase in the value placed upon the town by local people and visitors and in the pride people take locally in their immediate environment. Dirty buildings diminish appreciation of the urban environment and create an impression of neglect. Inevitably, this impacts upon the overall economic performance of the town and reduces its desirability to visitors.

Momentum and action towards the creation of a variety of new visitor attractions in Malton is building progressively. The Castle Garden and York House projects, as well as the plans for a Dickens museum, the Art Explosion weekend and a growing consensus that Malton has much to offer the discerning visitor all contribute to this momentum.

The time is right, therefore, to apply a systematic and ongoing initiative to clean and enhance the facades of town centre buildings.

This will involve a brief summary of the buildings style and significance as well as a specification of essential works, including the undoing of more expedient or ill–advised repairs or ‘improvements’ of the past. It will include the removal of acrylic paint treatments that do not breathe and which begin to fail and peel away quite readily, adding to a perception of neglect and decay. These will be replaced with limewashes or mineral paints or not at all. Limewashes may be applied to stone buildings – as they were regularly in the past – to protect the stonework from further and on–going decay. Ordinary Portland Cement mortars will be removed (unless to do so at this stage will cause more serious damage than leaving them in situ) and replaced with lime mortars. Facades will be cleaned down with water and stiff brushes. It is important to stress that an appropriate level of clean can be achieved by this method;
that buildings should not be over-cleaned and that loss of historic patina is not the objective. Sand-blasting or chemical cleaning will not be used, nor should they be considered.

Over time, this strategy will lead to an enhancement not only of the buildings of the town, but of peoples’ appreciation and enjoyment of these buildings and of the town as a whole.
6 Wheelgate, mobile phone shop.

Four-storey brick building upon medieval burgage plot. Probably mid-C19. Windows, plate glass sashes later C19; shallow bow window, sashes of 12-lights to take in the curve. Recently re-roofed with clay pantiles. Sash boxes and cornice painted black, which diminishes the effect of light and shade, particularly to the dentilled cornice, the detail of which is currently illegible.

There is quite heavy soiling to the brickwork. Probably lime mortar pointing is generally sound, although lacking above flat brick arch of first floor window. The brick 'keystone' of this is loosened and has dropped slightly, causing slight downward deflection of the brickwork above, which has loosened pointing in this area.

This soiling of this facade would respond quite readily to water-washing.

The brick keystone of the first floor window should be stabilised and repointed and all defective joints should be repointed with lime mortar.

The reading and appearance of the building would be improved by a lighter shade being applied to the joinery.

Time estimate: 4 man days.
Woolworth building.

One of few 1930s buildings in Malton and the only one, perhaps, that reflects the innovative architectural style of this period. This increases its local significance. Purpose built as a shop-front, although the lower level has been since altered. This building retains its design intent for the most part but currently looks shabby and neglected.

A typical 30s cornice with stepped parapet wall is currently clothed in asphalt sheeting which diminishes its impact. Cornice and string-course, as well as entablature pilasters at first floor level survive. Pilasters below the entablature may have been lost in the more recent past, associated with the addition of first a granite cladding at street level and then the application of white tiles over this granite. The tiles, however, more in keeping with the period of the facade as a whole.

Original metal windows survive. Like the masonry, these have not been painted in a good while and paint is peeling and loose, particularly to the lower levels. The masonry is of pressed brick with tight joints. Details are of either stone or pre-cast concrete. If of stone, Portland stone would be typical. Currently painted and drab, it appears to be in a sound condition.
Action:

Remove asphalt and assess condition of parapet. Lead over the top of the cornice, tucking in beneath parapet wall, leaving parapet wall exposed. Relead parapet gutter as necessary. Clean down elevation with water and stiff brushes. Paint masonry details (parapet wall, cornice, string course and pilasters) with Beeckosil mineral paint in an appropriate colour. Prepare and paint metal windows. Repair white tile shop–front, replacing 5 number missing or damaged tiles. Speak to Woolworths about refurbishment of signage.

This building does not belong to the Fitzwilliam Estate.

Time estimate: 5–6 man days. Lead work extra.
**Sota, hairdressers**

Adjoining Woolworth’s on a very narrow burgage plot, the bricks and bond-pattern of this elevation are similar to those of the Woolworth building, but coursing does not align and its construction probably dates from the 1950s. It has cills hoodmould, as well as parapet drip formed of rosemary roof tiles. This is simple and effective. Blue Pearl granite cladding at street level. There is currently no undue soiling to this elevation, but the shallow cornice that surmounts the granite cladding is sealed with bitumen and this is breaking down. This might be improved.

Time estimate: 1 man day
Curry’s building

Facades to this side of the street do not often receive driven rainfall. Soot collects and is not subsequently rinsed off nor much diminished by rain, therefore. The Curry’s building reads as a 1930s ‘Georgian’ facade, of red – probably handmade – brick with relatively wide joints of lime mortar. The mortar and brickwork appear to be in a generally sound condition but the appearance of the building is marred by soot contamination. The stone cornice and string course are heavily soiled also. The entablature beneath the cornice has been painted in the past, which is somewhat anomalous, creating a distinct stripe across the upper facade that ought to read as one with the cornice.

Water washing of this facade would be straightforward and would greatly improve its appearance. Stone details should be cleaned with water and fine stainless steel brushes. Paint should be stripped from the entablature, visually reuniting it with the cornice above as well as with the architect’s intention.
Time estimate: 5–6 man days.