



Lichfield
District Council

Shopfront Grant Scheme – Applicant Guidance Pack

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Contents

Section A – Introduction	3
1a. About the scheme	3
2a. Who can apply?	3
3a. What the grant can and cannot be used for	4
4a. Tiered grant structure and funding levels	5
5a. Permissions and compliance	5
6a. Approach to design costs	6
7a. VAT	6
8a. Subsidy control	6
Section B – The application process	6
1b. Making an application	6
2b. Stage one: Expression of interest	6
3b. Stage two: Full application	7
4b. How we assess your applications	7
5b. Application timetable	9
6b. If your application is successful	9
7b. Payments and delivery	10
8b. Changes to Approved Projects	10
9b. Key things to know	11

Section A – Introduction

1a. About the scheme

The Heritage Shopfront Grant Scheme has been established to support high-quality shopfront improvements that enhance the historic character, appearance, and vitality of the city centre. The Scheme provides discretionary grant funding to eligible businesses and property owners to support works that respect local heritage and contribute to a more attractive and sustainable high street.

You will need to contribute towards the cost of your project, with the level of contribution dependent on the type and scale of the proposed works. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate ownership or tenancy of the property and show a clear commitment to its ongoing occupation and use.

Before grant funding can be released, applicants will need to have secured all relevant permissions and consents. These may include, but are not limited to, landlord consent, planning permission, and listed building consent.

This guidance explains who can apply, what funding can be used for, how applications are assessed, and what successful applicants will be required to do. We know that improving a historic shopfront can involve planning, design and financial decisions. Our Regeneration Team can discuss your initial idea and help you understand the application process.

2a. Who can apply?

You may apply if you are:

- A freehold property owner
- A leaseholder with written landlord consent
- An independent business occupant
- A social enterprise or community-run business

Your property must:

Your property must be within the defined Lichfield City Centre Conservation Area and have a public-facing shopfront.

Applications will not be accepted from:

- National chains (unless in heritage-sensitive cases operating as a local franchise)
- Residential properties
- Long-term vacant premises without a clear occupation strategy
- Businesses with unresolved and ongoing enforcement issues (*each premise will be taken on a case-by-case basis*)
- Any business found to be selling illegal goods or operating outside the terms of its licence will not be eligible to apply for the grant scheme.

Lichfield City Centre Conservation Area boundary plan here - [View here](#)

3a. What can and cannot be funded?

The scheme supports works that reinstate historic features or align with the City Centre Shopfront Design Code. Eligible works include:

- Repair and reinstatement of traditional timber shopfronts
- Installation of period-appropriate glazing and detailing
- Reinstatement of features such as pilasters, cornices, stallrisers, and fascias
- Use of traditional paint colours in line with the Design Code
- Removal of inappropriate modern features (e.g. uPVC frames, external roller shutters, oversized fascias)
- Hand-painted fascia signage or individually applied lettering
- Heritage-appropriate projecting signs
- Discreet or heritage-style lighting that complements the building
- Repair of timber frames, stonework, and brick detailing
- Restoration of original shopfront proportions and features
- Accessibility improvements, including entrance and threshold works designed to improve access while preserving character
- High-quality external decoration, including painting and finishing works
- Professional design fees may only be funded where they relate directly to the approved project and have been agreed by the council in writing before the cost is incurred.

Works must align with the Shopfront Design Code SPD and any relevant Conservation Area guidance*. The grant cannot be used for:

- Internal works – including any improvements or alterations that are not visible from the public street frontage.
- Works started or completed before grant approval (funding cannot be awarded retrospectively.)
- Costs already paid or contractually committed to prior to receiving written approval.
- Inappropriate or ineligible materials – such as uPVC where traditional materials are required.
- Temporary or non-permanent works that do not provide lasting benefit.
- Ongoing revenue costs – including utilities, staffing, rent, or general business expenses.
- Internal fixtures, fittings, or equipment not related to the shopfront.
- Professional fees, unless agreed in advance as part of the application.
- Recoverable VAT, where this can be reclaimed by the applicant.
- Planning fees, statutory consents, and application costs.

In cases where it is unclear whether a cost is eligible, the Council will make a final decision based on the aims of the scheme and its discretion.

*Shopfront Design Code SPD can be found here – [City Centre Design Code](#)

*Conservation Area guidance can be found here - [Local conservation areas](#)

4a. Tiered grant structure and funding levels

Funding is available at different levels depending on the type and scale of work proposed. More extensive projects, such as full heritage reinstatement, may be eligible for higher levels of support, while smaller improvements can still receive funding at a lower level.

This approach is designed to support a range of projects, from minor enhancements through to more comprehensive restoration works, helping as many businesses as possible to take part.

We recognise that not all projects will fit neatly into one category. In these cases, the level of grant offered will be based on the overall scope and impact of the proposal.

Project Type	Examples	Grant Contribution	Maximum Grant
Full Heritage Reinstatement	Complete traditional shopfront rebuild, including full reinstatement of architectural features	Up to 75%	Up to £30,000
Partial Restoration	Fascia replacement, reinstatement of stall riser, and repainting in a heritage palette	Up to 50%	Up to £15,000
Minor Enhancements	Improvements such as signage and lighting	Up to 30%	Up to £7,500

You will need to fund the remaining project costs. The final grant offered will depend on the assessment of your application and the funding available.

5a. Permissions and compliance

All works are subject to the relevant planning and regulatory approvals. Please be aware that grant approval does not replace or confirm any statutory approvals. You will still need to obtain any necessary permissions, such as planning permission or listed building consent, before starting work.

All proposed works must follow the City Centre Shopfront Design Code and comply with relevant planning, licensing, and conservation requirements.

You may submit an Expression of Interest or application to understand potential funding, but grant funding will only be released once all required permissions are in place and evidence has been provided.

Please refer to the City Centre Shopfront Design Code for guidance, [here](#)

You can check if your building has Listed Building Status by checking [here](#)

6a. Approach to design costs

You do not need detailed drawings or designs at the Expression of Interest stage. A short description of your idea and photographs of the existing shopfront will be sufficient.

If your proposal is eligible, some professional design costs may be eligible, but only where the council has agreed this in writing before the cost is incurred.

Do not commission detailed designs or incur any project costs unless you have received written confirmation from the council that you can do so. If your application is unsuccessful, costs you have incurred will not be reimbursed.

7a. VAT

VAT can only be included in grant costs where it is not recoverable. If your business is able to reclaim VAT, this element of the project cost will not be funded. If you are unsure, you may wish to seek advice.

8a. Subsidy control

This grant scheme is subject to the Council's Subsidy Control obligations. Applicants will be required to complete a subsidy declaration as part of the application process and must ensure they comply with the relevant legislation, including providing full and accurate details of any previous public funding received. Failure to provide complete and accurate information may result in the withdrawal or recovery of grant funding.

Section B – The Application process

1b. Making an application

The application is made up of a two-part submission.

1. Expression of Interest
2. Full Application

2b. Stage one: Expression of interest

At Stage 1, you will be asked to submit a short Expression of Interest outlining your proposed project. This is a simple first step to help us confirm that your business, property, and project are eligible and broadly align with the aims of the scheme.

You do not need to provide detailed designs or full costings at this stage. Instead, you should give a brief overview of the proposed works, the property, and how the project will improve your shopfront.

Applications will be reviewed by council officers, and if your proposal meets the requirements, you will be invited to submit a full application.

If your Expression of Interest is incomplete, we will ask you to provide the missing information before it can be considered.

Expressions of Interest will be considered on a rolling basis until 31 March 2028, subject to funding remaining available.

3b. Stage two: Full application

To ensure public funds are awarded appropriately, successful applicants will be required to provide a small amount of supporting information before a grant can be paid. The level of information required will be proportionate to the value of the grant award.

Grants Under £5,000

Applicants will be asked to provide:

- Confirmation of their organisation's registration details, such as Charity Commission or Companies House information.
- Contact details for an authorised representative of the organisation or business.
- A recent bank statement for the account into which grant funding will be paid.

This information is intended to verify the applicant and payment details.

Grants Between £5,000 and £25,000

In addition to the above, applicants may be asked to provide:

- The organisation's most recent annual accounts.
- Relevant governance documents, where applicable.
- A project budget demonstrating how grant funding will be used.
- A brief project delivery plan outlining the proposed works and timescales.
- Further financial or credit checks where considered necessary as part of the assessment process.

Any checks undertaken will be proportionate to the level of funding being awarded and are intended to ensure that grant funding is managed responsibly and delivers the intended outcomes.

4b. How we assess your applications

Applications will be reviewed by an Officer Assessment Panel. With oversight by a member panel. All decisions will be recorded and minutes of each panel meeting will be documented.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria. Priority will be given to proposals from independent businesses, those located within identified priority areas (including key hotspots and gateway locations), and projects involving heritage-sensitive buildings particularly where there is a clear need for timely restoration or repair.

1. Quality of proposal

We will consider:

- How well the project addresses issues with the existing shopfront.
- The overall quality of the proposed improvements.
- The contribution the project makes to preserving or enhancing the historic character of the property and surrounding area.

2. Design and visual impact

We will consider:

- The extent to which the proposal improves the appearance of the shopfront and surrounding street scene.
- The suitability of materials, colours, signage, and detailing.
- Alignment with the City Centre Shopfront Design Code and conservation objectives.

3. Deliverability

We will consider:

- Whether the project is realistic and achievable.
- The status of any required permissions and consents.
- Proposed timescales for delivery.
- Any identified risks and how they will be managed.
- Compliance with relevant planning, conservation, licensing, and scheme requirements.

4. Value for money

We will consider:

- The overall cost of the project.
- The level of financial contribution being made by the applicant.
- Whether the investment will deliver a reasonable level of benefit relative to the grant requested.

5. Strategic and high street impact

We will consider:

- The contribution the project makes to the vitality and attractiveness of the city centre.
- Support for business sustainability, growth, and investment.

- The project's contribution to the wider area and overall visitor experience.

Additional considerations

Applications may receive additional consideration where they demonstrate:

- **Environmental benefits** – such as the use of sustainable materials or energy-efficient improvements.
- **Social value** – including support for local employment, local supply chains, or positive community outcomes.
- **Wider community benefit** – including improvements to accessibility, health, wellbeing, and the overall experience of the city centre.

Priority may be given to proposals from independent businesses, those located within identified priority areas, and projects involving heritage-sensitive buildings where there is a clear need for restoration or repair.

Please note: This is a competitive and discretionary grant scheme. Meeting the assessment criteria does not guarantee funding, and decisions are made based on the overall quality of applications, available budget, and the aims of the scheme.

Decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

5b. Application timetable

Expression of Interest submissions are open on a rolling basis, allowing applicants to come forward at any time. Eligible applicants will be invited to submit a full application, which will be considered alongside other submissions at regular decision points.

As a result, there may be a short period between submission of a full application and a funding decision being confirmed. Applicants are therefore encouraged to allow sufficient time within their project planning.

The Council may introduce application windows or prioritisation measures where necessary, depending on demand and available funding.

Expressions of Interest will be considered on a rolling basis until 31 March 2028, subject to funding remaining available. The council may close the scheme earlier if all available funding has been committed.

6b. If your application is successful

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Grant Agreement, which will set out:

- The approved scope of works
- Timescales for delivery
- Payment arrangements (normally paid in arrears of predetermined milestones)
- Monitoring and evidence requirements
- Conditions relating to compliance, clawback, and repayment

7b. Payments and delivery

Grant payments will be made in line with the terms of the grant agreement, typically on completion of works and subject to satisfactory evidence being provided, unless otherwise agreed. Grants will be paid via BACS to the business's commercial trading account. Payments to personal or current accounts are not permitted.

Grant funding will only be paid against eligible, defrayed expenditure (i.e. costs that have already been incurred and paid by the applicant). Evidence will be required to support any claim, including invoices, receipts, and photographic evidence of completed works.

You must begin the approved work within six months of the grant offer unless the council agrees otherwise in writing. Work must be completed within twelve months unless formally extended. Projects will be monitored during delivery, and a post-completion inspection will be required.

Any changes to the approved scope of works must be agreed in writing in advance. The Council reserves the right to withhold, reduce, or recover grant funding where the terms of the agreement are not met.

8b. Changes to your approved projects

If you need to make any changes to your approved project after grant funding has been awarded, you must contact the Council and obtain written approval before proceeding.

This includes changes to:

- The approved works or design.
- Project costs or quotations.
- Delivery timescales.
- The way grant funding will be used.

You will be asked to submit details of the proposed change and explain why it is necessary. The Council may request revised drawings, quotations, or other supporting information.

Minor changes may be approved by officers. More significant changes may require further assessment.

Please note that approval of a change under the Grant Scheme does not replace any planning permission, listed building consent, or other statutory approval that may be required.

Any approved changes will be confirmed in writing. You must not proceed with amended works until written approval has been received.

Failure to obtain approval for changes may result in grant payments being reduced, withheld, or recovered under the terms of the Grant Agreement.

9b. Key things to know

- This is a competitive and discretionary scheme, and funding is limited.
- Applications will be assessed against the published criteria and available budget.
- You will be required to make a financial contribution towards your project, as set out in the grant terms.
- You must not start work before receiving written grant approval. Funding cannot be awarded retrospectively for works already completed or underway.
- All required permissions and consents must be secured before starting work and before any grant funding is released.
- You must begin the approved work within six months of the grant offer unless the council agrees otherwise in writing.
- Work must be completed within twelve months unless formally extended.
- You will need to provide evidence to support your claim, including invoices, receipts, and photographs of completed works.
- Your project will be monitored during delivery, and a post-completion inspection will be required.
- Applications must be submitted directly by the business or property owner. Applications from agents or consultants will not be accepted.
- The Council reserves the right to withdraw, reduce, or reclaim grant funding if the terms of the agreement are not met or if funds are misused.
- Contractors must hold appropriate insurance.
- Any changes to the approved design must be agreed in advance.
- Providing false or misleading information may result in funding being withdrawn or recovered and could lead to further investigation.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your proposal, please get in touch with the team at shopfrontregeneration@lichfielddc.gov.uk.

Printed copies of the guidance are available at the Customer Services desk, and support with completing your application can be provided where needed upon request.