

# GRANTHAM SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

## GUIDANCE



Historic England



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## 1. Introduction

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Shop Front Improvement Scheme and how you can make a grant application.

## 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. Consequently the identify improvement and replacement of shop fronts as a priority activity.

The priority for the Council is to support the development and growth of Grantham. This is demonstrated by a series of work being undertaken to explore the growth opportunities in core areas of the town:

Market Place and Westgate form part of the Grantham Conservation Area which has been identified by Historic England as an area at risk and requires a multi faceted approach to avoid further decline.

The District Council has an agreed Grantham Shop Front Design Guide but it is clear that elements have not been adhered to. The Grantham Shop Front Improvement Scheme aims to improve 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.

Funding for the Scheme is being provided by Historic England and South Kesteven District Council.

### **3. The Shop Front Improvement Scheme**

#### **3.1. Eligible Areas**

The scheme will initially concentrate in the areas of Market Place, Butchers Row, High Street and Westgate (see plan). The eligible areas in the town are within the Conservation Area. Consequently, the scheme will only make grants to projects which are consistent with the design principles applied in Conservation Areas.

#### **3.2. Availability of Support**

The scheme will only provide support to commercial 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

#### **3.3. What types of premises are eligible?**

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

- Shops - including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, laundrettes, dry cleaners
- Financial and professional services – e.g. banks, building societies, 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 of whether your business will qualify for a grant you should contact the scheme project officer.

#### **3.4. 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.

### **3.5. Do I need to appoint a professional agent?**

This will depend on the scale of your proposals. You may need expert advice from a suitably qualified professional agent to help identify potential options, prepare initial sketch designs, advise on costs, support the preparation of planning applications, prepare detailed designs and oversee the work. If you appoint a professional adviser their fees will be considered as an eligible cost. If you are unsure of whether you require help you should contact the scheme project officer who is there to support applicants.

### **3.6. Is funding available to help me develop my ideas before I apply?**

No but the project officer will provide advice and guidance to assist in the application.

### **3.7. What will the scheme fund?**

The following work will generally be considered as eligible for support:

- 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 where they are used for commercial activities.
- Repainting of shop fronts in suitable heritage colours. The major paint manufacturers produce appropriate colour palettes, which are usually branded as heritage or period ranges.
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes to match historic materials.
- Repainting and or re-rendering of prominent elevations in a suitable heritage colour.
- 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 improvements, these must be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and will only be supported as part of a wider scheme.
- Signage.
- Lighting, both external and within window displays.
- Professional fees associated with the development and delivery of the project, including planning application fees.

Further guidance on colour schemes can be obtained from Ian Wright the Principal Planning Officer.

### **3.8. New shop frontages**

Retention of original shop fronts and reinstatement of original features will be encouraged. New shop fronts in a traditional style should be based on the guidance below and nearby examples. Modern designs will also be supported; however, these must use high quality materials and be sympathetic to the immediate area.

### **3.9. Window display equipment**

Not eligible

### **3.10. 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
- Cleaning for cosmetic reasons will not be supported. Any cleaning which is approved must be undertaken to an agreed specification by specialist conservation contractors.

### **3.11. 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.

### **3.12. 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.

### 3.13. **Bird Proofing**

The presence of roosting birds, and the mess they create, has been identified as an issue in Grantham. 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](http://www.picasuk.com)) or reputable pest control companies.

### 3.14. **Ineligible Expenditure**

The scheme will not support:

- Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises
- 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
- CCTV systems
- Recoverable VAT

### 3.15. **Levels of funding**

The Shop Front Improvement Scheme recognises that in some cases significant improvements can be made through fairly minor and relatively inexpensive work, for example redecoration and in other cases more significant levels of work are required. A grant equivalent to 60% of the total costs, for repairs and 80% for reinstatement of original features up to a maximum of £25,000 will be available to support an agreed schedule of works. We will look at each application on a case by case basis. We also wish to encourage certain activities in particular the removal of external metal security shutters.

#### **4. What constitutes a good shop front design?**

4.1. 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.

#### **4.2. Is there guidance available?**

Yes, the Grantham Civic Society with the Council has produced a guide for shop front design. Projects should follow the design principles set out in this guide. A copy of the guide is available from the scheme project officer and will be included in the application pack.

#### **4.3. 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. A separate planning application and scale drawings prepared by a professional agent will be required to show the extent of all new work. If you are using a professional agent, they will be able to advise you about any statutory consent that is required. It takes the Council about two months 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.

If you are in any doubt or would like to discuss whether your proposals require planning approval please contact the scheme project officer on Ian Wright the Principal Planning Officer on 01476 406389.

#### **4.4. What is the process for applications?**

It is a two stage process, an in principle decision which identifies that the project is eligible and allocates an estimated sum to cover the intended works.

A full application is then required to include any planning permissions, full detailed designs and a tender for the construction costs. An offer letter will be issued following agreement by the Panel.

#### 4.5. Application form and advice

Application forms and advice regarding the scheme are available from the scheme project officer.

#### 4.6. What do I have to supply with my application?

In order to consider your outline application we require the following:

- **Completed Application form** - You must complete a grant application form. This contains basic information about your proposals.
- **Schedule of works** - full details of the improvement 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
- **Sketch drawings** - Depending on the extent of the proposed works, drawings of elevations will be required showing your proposals
- **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
- **Cost Estimates including quotes and fees** - An estimate of the costs of the works and professional fees. Evidence that you have obtained at least two quotes from contractors.

#### 4.7. Contractors

South Kesteven District Council is keen to support local contractors but for legal reasons it is not in a position to recommend individual contractors. Applicants are responsible for obtaining a minimum of three quotes for the proposed works and ensuring that all estimates provide a full break down of costs for the proposed works.



#### **4.8. How long will it take to make a decision on my application?**

We will make a decision on your application within three weeks of receiving a fully complete application. If your project requires planning permission and your grant is approved we will write to you making an in principle offer of funding, we will then issue a formal grant offer letter as soon as planning permission is granted.

#### **4.9. Who will decide whether my application is approved?**

Applications will be considered by a Panel made up of appropriate council officers and elected representative .The panel will assess the application in terms of design, cost estimates and programme of works.

#### **4.10. What conditions will apply to the grant?**

All grant offers will be made in writing with reference to the agreed schedule of works. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in a grant offer letter. All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning permission, building control notice and advertisement consent. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and any offer of a grant does not imply in any way that planning consent will be granted.

The applicant must accept the grant offer in writing within 21 days of receipt.

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

If there is any change to the original agreed specification or schedule of works after approval has been given in writing, the applicant must immediately contact the scheme project officer to agree to changes to the schedule of works before commencement of the works. Any changes must be approved in writing prior to work commencing.

The Council reserves the right to refuse or withdraw a grant offer if it is not satisfied with the proposed changes.

#### **4.11. When will the grant be paid?**

The applicant must inform South Kesteven District Council upon completion of the agreed works and submit evidence of planning permission, building control notice, Building Regulations Certificate of Completion and advertisement consent.

The applicant must submit receipted invoices within one month of the completion of the works. Payment will be subject to the applicant having complied with all the terms and conditions of the grant offer.

Grants will be paid on production of receipted invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs in accordance with the agreed schedule of works. Payments will normally be made after all works are completed and a formal inspection by the Council has taken place confirming that the works have been completed satisfactorily in accordance with the agreed schedule of works.

The Council will not pay more than the value agreed based on the lowest quote obtained as part of the application.

For larger projects interim payments may be considered.

Where actual costs for the schedule of works exceeds the original quotes and the Council have not been informed prior to work commencing the applicant will be responsible for paying the additional costs.

Where the actual costs are less than the costs agreed in the offer letter, the payment will be restricted to the amount equivalent to a recalculation based on the intervention rate stated in the offer letter.

Payment will be made direct to the applicant by BACS payment or cheque on completion of a new supplier form.

#### **4.12. 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 the grant.

#### **4.13. Breach of Conditions**

If an applicant fails to meet any of the above conditions the Council reserves the right to declare the grant offer void or vary the amount to be paid. If the grant has been paid the Council may require it to be paid in full or in part.

#### **4.14. VAT**

Applicants who are VAT registered will have their grant assessed on the net cost of eligible works, non-registered applicants on the gross cost.

All applications to be addressed to:

William Tse  
Regeneration Officer,  
InvestSK, 1st Floor,  
The Maltings,  
Wharf Road,  
Grantham  
NG31 6BH

Telephone; 01476 406376

E-mail; [w.tse@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:w.tse@southkesteven.gov.uk)

Website; [www.southkesteven.gov.uk](http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk)

<http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10642>