

# Rotherham Town Centre Shop front Improvement Grant Scheme

Guidance Notes

## What is the aim of the Scheme?

The aim of the scheme is to improve the overall vitality & viability of Rotherham Town Centre & support the wider Rotherham Renaissance investment programme by specifically:

- Improving the street scene by enhancing the quality of shop frontages.
- Preserving & enhancing the character of the conservation area and individual buildings.
- Improving access to buildings.
- Sustaining the local economy by providing support to existing businesses to improve their own competitiveness.

## What level of financial assistance is available?

The grants provide a one-off discretionary contribution to eligible businesses to cover:

- Up to 75% (to a maximum value of £7,500) towards the total cost of physical works to the shopfront for **Independent businesses**.\*
- Up to 50% (to a maximum value of £5,000) towards the total cost of physical works to the shopfront for **National/Regional operators**.

For the purposes of this scheme an independent business is defined as a business operating solely or as part of a chain, with less than 9 outlets. Franchise operators are also considered as independent businesses where they meet this criteria.

## Which properties are eligible?

Properties identified within the priority areas shown on the attached map are eligible to apply for a grant. The priority areas will be subject to regular review based on the level of take-up and changing needs & demands across the town centre.

Please note that the grants are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds; the inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

Both property owners and tenants are eligible to apply. Applications from tenants must be supported by written consent from the appropriate landlord.

## What type of works are covered by the grants?

The appropriate works required will be unique to each individual property; however, the table on page 3 identifies examples of eligible & ineligible works.

Please note, the scheme will not support works which have already been undertaken, or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made.

Grants cannot include contributions towards recoverable VAT.

Unless otherwise agreed, grant funding can only support ground floor works.

Example Eligible Activities	Example Ineligible Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-instatement of historical or traditional features to the shop front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general repair work and maintenance (where this is not coupled with other improvements)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repairs to rendering/stonework/brickwork where considered beneficial to shop front works (and excluding general property repair element)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• installation of external solid roller shutters (except where appropriate perforated shutters are proposed)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• installation of traditional retractable shop blinds/canopies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvements undertaken solely to allow compliance with legislation (e.g. DDA requirements)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• removal of inappropriate signage, installation of new appropriate signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any works which have already been undertaken</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restoration/repair/repainting of current acceptable shop front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• works to upper floors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• installation of internal security shutters</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pedestrian access improvements- where they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (as part of a larger scheme of works)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate lighting</li> </ul>	

\* Please note for all proposed works, 2 comparable quotations are required to supplement any application.

The cost of fees associated with planning or other permissions can also be claimed as part of the total project cost.

## Do I need to appoint a professional agent?

In all circumstances the proposed works and design **must** comply with the principles as detailed in the Shopfront Design Guide (July 2006); in addition the quality of design will be taken into consideration when assessing the application and considering the level of financial assistance to be awarded.

Applicants are therefore urged to use the services of an appropriately experienced and qualified professional to plan and oversee the works to completion. For applications relating to Listed Buildings or buildings of particular historic importance, it is highly recommended that applicants look to appoint professionals who are affiliated with the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Where professionals are appointed, fees incurred can form part of the eligible project costs (the total contribution towards any fees will not exceed 10% of the total project cost). In other circumstances the Council may recommend a specific agent or may directly appoint an agent to work on behalf of an individual or group of businesses and the level of contribution may therefore be increased or costs wholly met by the Council. This can be discussed with the Grants Officer at the pre-application meeting.

### Will I need to obtain any permissions prior to carrying out works?

It is likely that where alterations are proposed to the external appearance of the property, one or more of the following will be required:

- **Planning Permission** – will be required for new shop fronts or any other alterations which will materially affect the external appearance of a building.
- **Advertisement Consent** – to display a fascia, canopy or other sign on the exterior of a building
- **Building Regulation Approval** – where material alterations are to be carried out.
- **Listed Building Consent** – for any alterations that affect the character of a listed building.
- **Conservation Area Consent** – for alterations which affect the character or appearance of a building within a Conservation Area.

\* Please note that planning applications can take up to 8 weeks to be determined and this should be taken into consideration when planning works.

Planning application forms and guidance notes can be downloaded from the Council's website on [www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk) or obtained from the grants officer.

### How do I apply?

In all cases applicants are required to meet with the grants officer, telephone **01709 336854** for a pre-application meeting. The grant will be able to explain more detail about the scheme and application process. The grants officer can detail the options relating to professional assistance for the project and the most appropriate approach can be agreed.

### How do I submit an application for grant assistance?

In order for an application to be considered, the following must be submitted:

- A completed application form.
- A detailed specification of the works to be carried out or goods to be purchased including scale drawings and photographs (including product specification/ brochures where appropriate).
- A detailed breakdown of project costs- with copies of 2 comparable quotations for all proposed works-clearly identifying the VAT element on all items (grants cannot contribute towards recoverable VAT).

### How are applications considered?

In determining applications for financial assistance, there is no standard against which each proposal can be judged as what is appropriate or beneficial to one building or location may be totally inappropriate or unnecessary for another.

However, any planning application for new signage and alterations to shop fronts will be assessed against the Council's Planning Policies. Of particular relevance is the Shop Front Design Guide which sets out the standards in relation to what is and is not acceptable. All applications will be considered in light of their compliance with this document.

The Grants Officer will ensure all appropriate information has been submitted and where necessary will consult with relevant RMBC Officers (including Town Centre Management, Conservation Officer, and Planning Officer etc.).

Where the proposed works are deemed appropriate to the scheme, the Grant Officer will make a recommendation relating to the level of financial assistance that should be made (up to the maximum contribution of 75%) available based on a consideration of:

- The extent of the proposed works & the overall impact on the individual building.
- The potential overall impact on the wider street scene (particularly where a number of consecutive businesses are proposing to undertake improvements).
- The extent to which the application will enhance the historical character of a building- where appropriate (e.g. the restoration of original architectural features/ reinstatement of a more traditional shopfront).
- The extent to which the application will improve accessibility for customers.
- The extent to which the application will improve security for the premises.

This recommendation will then be considered by the Grants Panel (including representatives from RMBC, Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber, Federation of Small Businesses, Business Link Yorkshire and other bodies as appropriate). A recommendation from this group is then made to the RMBC Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Development Services for final approval.

A decision will then be communicated to the applicant, followed by a formal grant offer where appropriate.

### Conditions of grant

Contributions towards the cost of shop front improvements are subject to:

- Any necessary permissions being obtained (including permission from the property owner and any planning permissions etc.).
- The works being completed as described in any application form/schedule of works; any amendments to the scheme of works or project costs must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council prior to those amendments being implemented.
- The works being completed within an agreed timescale

The Council reserves the right to impose additional terms and conditions as appropriate. Failure to comply with any of the conditions may prejudice payment of the contribution/grant or may result in the withdrawal of the offer of financial assistance or withholdment of payment (either in part or in whole).

In addition the Council may take steps to recover grant money from the applicant up to 2 years after the grant is claimed where:

- Any of the works funded by the Shop front Improvement Grant are not properly maintained or are altered in any way.
- The applicant removes any part of the features that have been funded through the Shop front Improvement Grant.

### How do I make a claim?

A Shop front Improvement Grant will be paid upon completion of the project, and when the works have been completed in accordance with the agreed schedule of works, the conditions attached to the grant offer, and any conditions attached to other permissions or consents (determined by an inspection by the Grants Officer & other Officers where appropriate).

The Applicant will be required to submit:

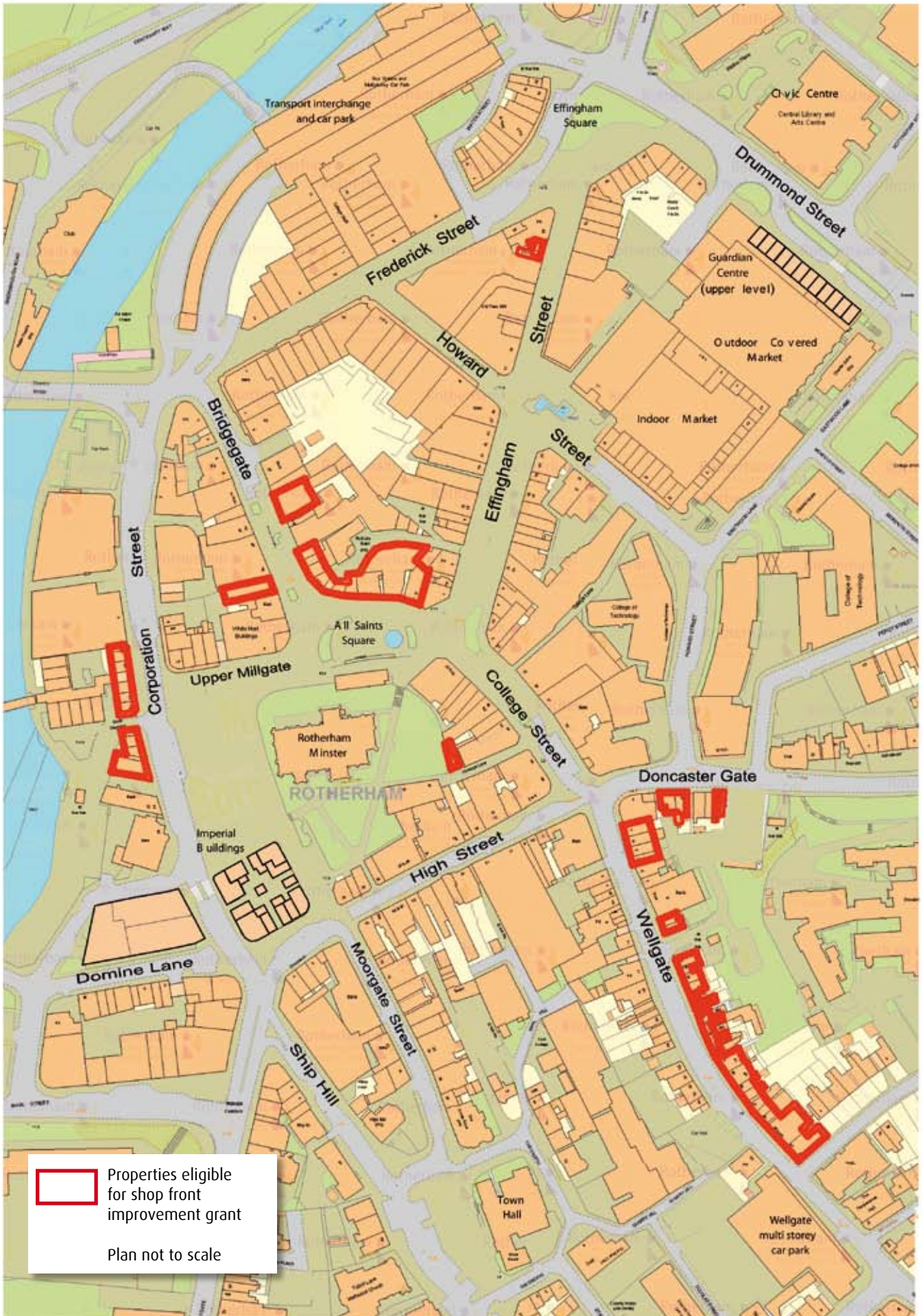
- A Shop front Improvement Grant Claim Form.
- Original invoices submitted by contractors and suppliers clearly stating the nature of works carried out or goods/services supplied, and an itemised breakdown of invoiced costs. The breakdown must clearly identify VAT element on all items.
- Proof that contractors and suppliers have been paid.
- Confirmation of bank account into which grant can be paid.

### Publicity

Rotherham Council may wish to carry out publicity based upon this grant scheme. Publicity relating to specific case studies will only be used with prior discussion with the business, but businesses participating in this scheme must be willing to participate in this publicity.



# Appendix 1 – Shop front Grant Scheme Eligible Properties



This document can be made available in your language and in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, electronic and audio-tape versions.

Contact us at:

minicom 01709 823 536

[www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk)

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