

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Town & District Centre Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme

Guidance Notes and Application Form

September 2018

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PLEASE READ THESE GUIDANCE NOTES BEFORE COMMENCING THE APPLICATION FORM. AN INCOMPLETE SUBMISSION WILL CAUSE UNNECESSARY DELAYS IN DECIDING YOUR APPLICATION.

1. Introduction

The purpose of these guidance notes is to help steer you through the complete process – from the initial contact stage with the Council, through to the completion of the works and the final payment of the grant.

2. What is the scheme?

The condition of the town centre environment has a huge impact on its appearance and contributes to people's impressions of an area. Whilst public realm improvements can go some way to addressing this issue, high quality frontages also make an area feel more welcoming to local residents and visitors, improve its image, contribute towards a stronger sense of identity and encourage a greater number of visits.

This Town & District Centre Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme aims to improve frontages as a way of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the area amongst local residents and visitors.

3. Who can apply?

The Town & District Centre Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme is available to both existing independent businesses and owners of units that accommodate independent businesses and are located within the following areas:

- Tonbridge Town Centre
- Borough Green High Street
- Kings Hill Centre
- Martin Square/Larkfield
- Snodland
- West Malling

For further detail on the eligible areas, please refer to Appendix 1.

The scheme allows for tenants of properties to apply for a grant as well as property owners, as long as the terms of their current lease agreement on the property is appropriate and the lease has a minimum of 3 years remaining.

Applications from groups of businesses/individuals seeking to improve joint-frontage or a communal area are welcomed. However, a single applicant must be nominated that will bear overall responsibility for the grant, and act as the point of contact. Joint projects will be

evaluated on their ability to improve the appearance of commercial properties in the borough.

Please note that the grants are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds – once all the funding has been allocated, this programme will close. The inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

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

Businesses which are national chains, franchises or charity shops will not be eligible to apply.

Properties that do not face onto main roads (i.e. those that are in side streets off main roads) are less likely to be supported than properties that are more prominent.

If you are unsure of whether your business will qualify for a grant you should contact the scheme officer on 01732 876011.

4. How much is the grant for?

Businesses can apply for a grant of up to £5,000 towards the external renovation or improvement of ground floor and upper floor commercial premises. **Please note that the grant will cover up to 80% of the eligible costs; to a maximum value of £5,000.**

5. How do I apply?

In order to apply, you must complete and return the application form (provided below and also available on the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council website) and required supporting information.

Please note that the grant availability is subject to limited resources for a limited period of time only. Grant applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis.

6. What will the scheme fund?

Not all improvement works will be eligible for a grant through this scheme. The grant will only fund 'eligible works'.

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

- New commercial frontages (such as shop fronts or town centre offices)
- Repair, restoration and re-instatement of all or any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street, including the first and second floors or premises where they are used for commercial activities.
- Stonework repairs and rendering (using traditional materials as and when necessary)
- Repainting of frontages in suitable colours

- Signage and external lighting
- Replacement only of external shutters with internal security grilles and/or security glazing.

The scheme will generally not fund the following:

- Lighting within window displays
- Professional fees associated with the development and delivery of the project, including planning application fees, consultancy fees and advisory services.
- Window display products and equipment
- Installation of external shutters
- Pedestrian access improvements that purely aim to conform to requirements set out in the Equality Act

7. Will I require Planning and Building Regulations Approval?

Virtually all works that change the exterior of buildings will require planning permission, and there are additional requirements for Listed Buildings and buildings with Conservation Areas. 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.

If you would like to discuss whether your proposals require planning approval please contact the Council's Planning Department via email on planning.applications@tmbc.gov.uk. For more information, go to <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance>.

The purpose of the Building Regulations is to ensure that a shop satisfies its functional requirements and the building provides reasonable health and safety for shoppers and staff. While minor works to a shopfront often do not require the submission of an application for approval, one is required if the proposed changes are structural or involve moving or altering the width of an entrance. The existing standard of provision must not be made any worse. For more information, go to <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/building-control/consultancy-services>

The Equality Act requires that reasonable provision is made to enable access for all to services provided in a shop. If alterations are being carried out to the shopfront, the opportunity to improve the access should be fully considered. Enforcing compliance with the Equality Act is not the responsibility of the Council.

8. What does your application aim to achieve?

Because of the limited funding available, applications will be assessed by a Grants Panel that will consider whether the application:

- Will make a significant positive impact on the local area
- Offers value for money
- Is sympathetic to and in-keeping with the local built environment and will improve the look of the building in line with the look and feel of the area.
- Guarantees that work will be carried out to a high standard and by a registered contractor
- Is in a prominent location
- Is located within one of the Priority Areas (as demonstrated in Appendix 1)

9. What do I have to supply with my application?

In order to consider your application we require the following:

- Completed application form – this contains basic information about your proposals
- Schedule of Works – full details of the improvement works that you intend to carry out.
- Photographs showing current condition of the premises.
- Sketch drawings – depending on the extent of the proposed works, drawings will be required showing your proposals.
- Proof of ownership/lease – if you do not own the property, you will need to have permission from the owner to carry out the works. The building owner must provide a letter of consent to go with your application to show that they have given permission for the works to be carried out.
- Cost estimates including quotes and fees
- Evidence that you have obtained three quotes from contractors, you should state which of the three contractors you would like to employ and why.
- The following information must be obtained in each quote:
 - A breakdown of individual cost of each element of the scheme
 - Total price of the whole scheme (remember to also include project support costs and VAT as separate items as well as any ineligible works) for the purpose of grant calculation and monitoring.
 - A programme of works from the contractor.
 (Please note that any grant offer would usually be based on the lowest quotation received).
- VAT Declaration.
- Where applicable, confirmation that you are up to date with your Business Rates payments.

10. How long will it take to make a decision on my application?

We will try and make a decision on your application within three weeks of receiving a fully complete application. If your application is submitted without all of the necessary information, then it will take longer for a decision to be reached.

11. Who will decide whether my application is approved?

Applications will be considered by a panel made up of Council Officers (from Planning, Building Control, Finance and Economic Regeneration) and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration.

The grant scheme will be administered by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

12. What conditions will apply to the grant?

All grant offers will be made in writing. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in the grant offer letter.

All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning consent.

The scheme operates independently of the planning process and as such securing planning permission does not imply in any way that a grant application will be approved.

After the completion of any grant-funded works, you will be required to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years.

13. When will the grant be paid?

Grants will be paid on production of invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs. Payments will be made after all works are completed.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

What permission do I need?

1. Get early advice from the Planning Department on the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council website (<https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/planning/planning-advice-and-guidance/pre-application-advice>). A written response will be issued within 10 working days.
2. Prepare planning application for submission, including appropriate plans, application forms and relevant fees.
3. Submit planning application to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Planning Dept.
4. Please note duration of up to 8 weeks for determining the planning application.
5. Submit grant application (with 3 quotes), planning application and other consents to:

Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme
Economic Regeneration Team
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent ME19 4LZ

IF APPROVED:

1. Formal Grant Offer letter issued
2. Make building regulations application and other consents, if necessary.
3. Work starts on site
4. Works complete, submit grant claim form and invoices
5. Checks made to see if works have been completed and invoices verified. Council Officer approves the works.
6. Grant Paid.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

To be supplied.....

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS – to be finalised

Businesses/organisations accepting grant offers from the Town & District Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme will be required to abide by and agree to the following terms and conditions:

1. The approval or refusal of a grant is at the absolute discretion of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council ('the Council') and there will be no right to appeal process.
2. Grants will not be given for expenditure incurred prior to the grant offer being made and the contract signed.
3. The grant is not payable to an un-discharged bankrupt.
4. The grant must be used for the purpose intended as outlined in the Grant Offer Letter (this will be supported by producing original invoices for the grant claim).
5. In the case of tenants, payment of grant requires the building owner's approval and providing proof of a minimum of a three year lease for the building.
6. If the business/organisation ceases trading/operating within 12 months of the payment of the grant or the building is sold, the applicant must notify the Council within 14 days and in such circumstances The Council may require the applicant(s) to repay, in whole or part of, the grant paid.
7. The grant must not be used for improvements to residential property, internal repairs and alterations, external security features, CCTV systems or recoverable VAT.
8. If the applicant is registered for VAT this must be declared on the application form. If at any point the business/organisation becomes VAT registered, the applicant must inform The Council and discuss repayment of VAT expenses claimed.
9. The grant will only be paid to proposals which have been granted planning permission.
10. All works are to be undertaken strictly in accordance with the specification and schedule of works agreed with the Council.
11. The Council's written approval must be obtained in advance of any amendments to the approved specification and schedule of works. Amendments include the omission or variation of the agreed works and the execution of additional works. Failure to comply with this condition may invalidate the grant offer even if the additional work is not grant aided.
12. Representatives of the Council must be allowed access to the property to carry out interim inspections of the works in progress, by appointment at any reasonable time.
13. There is no obligation on the Council to increase the grant if the costs of works increases, or if any additional work is undertaken.
14. A proportional reduction will be made in the grant if the actual cost of the eligible work proves to be less than estimated. Payment will be made in arrears upon the production of the grant claim form along with supporting documentation (e.g. paid invoices)
15. The grant will only be paid against proposals which have been granted planning permission – if required. Nothing in the agreement or negotiation of the grant will affect the Council's decision over planning permission.
16. The applicant must inform the Council of any changes to the business/organisation or changes of business address and/or telephone number.
17. The grant is made on the condition that the property will be maintained to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years.
18. Any grant must be taken up within the period stated in the Grant Offer Letter.
19. Payments of grants to successful applicants will be made in arrears, in one sum on the receipt by the Council of evidence that the applicant has incurred the expenditure. A supporting statement should show how the expenditure relates to the individual items in the approved schedule of works.
20. Expenditure must be incurred using a debit/credit card or cheque and evidenced through a bank statement. Payments of grants will not be made towards expenditure incurred using the payment method of cash.
21. Grants are dependent on applicants being required to complete a short questionnaire evaluation 6 months after the receipt of the grant.

22. The Council reserves the right to publish illustrations, photographs or other details of your project in promotional literature and other documents associated with Council grant schemes
23. Applicants will need to sign the contract within 28 days from the date offered otherwise the offer will be withdrawn.
24. If the applicant undertakes any work that, in the opinion of the Council, significantly alters or removes any elements of the grant aided work, the Council shall have the right to recover such proportion of the grant as it sees fit. This condition shall apply for a period of five years starting on the day on which the final grant payment is made.
25. Under s58(4) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, if any grant condition is contravened or not complied with, the Council reserves the right to recover the grant, or such part of it as the Council sees fit.

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Appendix 1 – Eligible Areas

Tonbridge Town Centre

The main focus for Tonbridge Town Centre will be commercial properties that face onto the B2260 (**High Street and Quarry Hill Road/Parade**) from the junction with Bordyke in the north to the roundabout with Brook Street to the south.

Consideration will also be given to applications relating to commercial premises on the following streets:

- Angel Walk
- Avebury Avenue
- Bank Street
- Barden Road
- Botany
- Bradford Street
- Castle Street
- New Wharf Road
- Pavilion
- River Walk

Borough Green

The main focus for Borough Green will be the **High Street**. However, consideration will also be given to applications relating to commercial premises on the following streets:

- Quarry Hill Road
- Sevenoaks Road
- Western Road
- Wrotham Road

Kings Hill Centre

- Liberty Square
- Queen Street

Martin Square/Larkfield

The main focus in this area will be commercial premises in **Martin Square**. However, consideration will also be given to applications relating to commercial premises on the following streets:

- London Road

Snodland

The main focus in Snodland will be commercial premises on:

- Snodland High Street
- Constitution Hill
- Holborough Road
- Malling Road

West Malling

The main focus in West Malling will be commercial premises on:

- Swan Street
- West Malling High Street
- West Street

Consideration will also be given to commercial premises on:

- King Street

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Appendix 2

**COMMERCIAL FRONTAGES GRANT SCHEME
APPLICATION FORM**

DETAILS

Contact Name	
Contact Address	
Name of Business	
Business Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Type of Business	

Is your business VAT registered? (please tick one) Yes No

Your interest in the property (please tick one):

Owner

Tenant

Other (please specify)

If you are a tenant, please give number of years left on your lease:

Have you made any previous applications for grants for improvements to the property? If yes, please give details.

STATEMENT OF WORKS

Please describe the changes that you propose to make including:

- Reference to whether doors, windows or entrances are to change
- The nature of changes to the frontage including details of features you wish to add or remove
- Details of colours and styles to be employed

Description of Work	Quoted Costs
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 48px; opacity: 0.3; transform: rotate(-30deg);">DRAFT</p>	

What is your expected start date for the work?

When do you expect the work to be completed?

Do you require any of the following permissions? (please tick relevant box)

	Yes	No
Planning Permission		
Building Control Approval		
Listed Building Consent		
Advertising Consent		

DECLARATION*

I/We hereby declare that I/we have read the terms and conditions and declare that the information given within this application form and any supporting material is correct to the best of my/our knowledge. I authorise the Economic Regeneration Team at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to make any inquiries it considers necessary for the assessment of the application.

Name(s):

Signature(s):

Position(s):

Date:

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Please check that you have enclosed the following before sending:

		Please Tick
1	Full completed and signed application form	
2	Copy of tenancy agreement – if applicant is the tenant	
3	Letter of consent from the owner – if applicant is the tenant	
4	Proof of ownership – if applicant is the owner of the premises	
5	Schedule of works	
6	Photographs showing the current front and side elevations of the premises	
7	Visuals/Sketch drawings of the proposed alterations (if available)	
8	Copy of permissions if required	
9	Three detailed written quotes for the works	
10	VAT declaration	
11	Where applicable, confirmation that Business Rates payments for the premises are up to date.	