Wallingford Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme - Guidance Notes

1 Background

1.1. The appearance of shop fronts has a considerable influence on the overall character of a place. They are an essential element not only of the buildings in which they are set but also of the wider streetscape. A shop front that has been designed with respect given to the architecture of the building and character of the surrounding area can add charm and vitality, making it attractive to shoppers and visitors alike.

1.2. The shop front improvement scheme aims to improve shop fronts in Wallingford as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town amongst locals and visitors.

1.3. The Scheme is administered by Wallingford Town Council in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council, both of which have submitted £5,000 to the fund.

1.4. A total of £10,000 is available. The fund is intended to benefit as many businesses in the town as possible. Therefore the grants allocated may depend on the number of applications that have been received.

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

1.6. If you would like to know more about the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme in Wallingford please contact Rachel Rae, Wallingford Market Town Coordinator on 01491 823144 or email rachel.rae@southandvale.gov.uk

2. Who can apply?

2.1. The shop front improvement scheme is open to all freehold owners and lease-holders with at least five years remaining on their lease and tenants of premises with commercial shop-frontage facing the street within the town of Wallingford. Tenants must have the building owners' prior approval.

2.2. Commercial premises include:

- shops - including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, launderettes, dry cleaners etc.
- financial and professional services (eg banks, building societies, estate agents)
- restaurants, public houses, cafes and food takeaways; and
- buildings that are being used to provide a community service.
3. What does the grant cover?

3.1. Money is available to cover up to 50% of the total expenditure on your project. This means that you will still need to finance the remaining 50%. 'In-kind' contributions such as DIY labouring/painting are welcome but will not contribute towards the 50% match-funding.

3.2. Since the scheme was originally launched in December 2013, we have extended the deadline for applications to March 2015. Once an application has been received we aim to contact applicants with a decision within two weeks of receipt.

3.3. You can claim against the following costs:

- planning pre-application advice
- planning fees
- photomontage, material samples or anything else required as part of the planning process; and
- physical work necessary to deliver the improvement (see 3.4 and 3.6).

3.4. The following work will be considered eligible for support:

- new shop fronts
- repair and reinstatement of any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street
- re-instatement of original architectural features e.g. ornamental masonry, stucco and other applied finishes or details, historically patterned woodwork, ornamental metalwork or other features of historic significance
- repainting of shop front in suitable colours
- repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes to match historic materials
- repainting or re-rendering prominent elevations in suitable heritage colours
- repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brick work
- re-pointing using traditional materials
- pedestrian access improvements including handrails and doorbells - these must be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act
- signage
- fixed window display equipment
- replacement of 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
- lighting

3.5. All work is subject to the relevant permissions being secured (see section 4)

3.6. The scheme will not support:

- improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises
- works which have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made
- structural repairs including re-roofing
- internal repairs and alterations
- external shutters and other security devices (e.g. CCTV)
- recoverable VAT

3.7. The scheme will only provide grants to commercial premises within the Wallingford town boundary. Please note that grants are discretionary and subject to availability of funds. The inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.

4. Do I Need Permission?

4.1. Most alterations to shop fronts within Wallingford will require permission under the Planning Acts, Advertisement regulations or both, and work carried out without consent may result in enforcement action or prosecution by the Council.

4.2. **Planning permission** is required for works that involve a material change to the external appearance of a shop. Such works include alterations to the fascia, the windows or the doorway, changes to the materials used or the installation of blinds or security shutters.

4.3. The complete or partial demolition of an unlisted building within a conservation area will require **conservation area consent**. This includes the removal of features which give the shop front character, such as stallrisers, fascias or window frames.

4.4. Any alteration which affects the special historic, artistic, or architectural interest of a listed building (including character and appearance) will require **listed building consent**. Such works include alterations to architectural details, alterations to the interior, the installation of shop front security measures, and in some cases the repainting of a shop front in a different colour.

4.5. **Advertisement consent** is required for the display of certain types of signs in particular locations.

4.6. Please note that it takes the District 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.

4.7. If you are unsure about permissions required for your proposed work, please do get in touch with us prior to making your application and we will enquire with the planning department on your behalf.

5. How do I apply?

5.1. In order to consider your application we require the following:

- Completed Application form including the full details of the work that you wish to carry out and any supporting evidence
- 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.
- Details of the permissions that will be needed to carry out the work and proof that the permissions have been granted. If you are submitting your grant application prior to receiving the permissions, please submit a copy of the decision as soon as
you get them. Please note that we will not make any payment until this has been provided.

- A current photo of your shop front and any available visuals of what it will look like
- If applicable, evidence that you cannot reclaim VAT.

6. How is the decision made?

6.1. Your application should be sent to Rachel Rae, Wallingford Market Town Coordinator at rachel.rae@southandvale.gov.uk. Alternatively you can post it to Rachel Rae, South Oxfordshire District Council Offices, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, OX10 8QX.

6.2. Applications will be considered by a small panel made-up of representatives from Wallingford Town Council and South Oxfordshire District Council

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

6.4. All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning 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. If you are unsure about permissions required for your proposed work, please do get in touch with us prior to making your application and we will enquire with the planning department on your behalf.

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

6.6. Grants will be paid on production of invoices from contractors showing a detailed breakdown of costs. Payments will normally be made after all works are completed, for larger projects interim payments may be considered.

6.7. The decision panel reserves the right to request that alternative competitive quotes are sourced for works that are estimated to cost over £1,000

6.8. The decision panel reserves the right not to make any grants if the applications received are not appropriate or compliant
Wallingford Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme - Application form

Details

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Is your business VAT registered? □ Yes          □ No

Your interest in the property:
□ Owner
□ Tenant
□ Other (please specify)

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

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

Important information
Under European “State Aid” rules your business should not obtain more than a total of 100,000 euros (approximately £65,000) from other Government Departments of local authorities over a 3 year period.
I have read the above and confirm that we have not received any recent state aid, as above □ (please tick)
**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 frontage facade including details of features you wish to add or remove
- Changes to retail display units
- Details of colours and styles to be employed

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<th>Estimated costs</th>
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Are the costs (please tick):

- Estimated   ☐
- Based on quote ☐

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):

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<th>Permission</th>
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<td>Planning Permission</td>
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**Declaration**

I / We hereby declare that I 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 Wallingford Town Council to make any inquiries it considers necessary for the assessment of the application.

Signature:

Position:

Date:

Please check that you have enclosed the following before sending:

- Copy of tenancy (if a tenant)
- Photographs showing the current front and side elevations of your shop/business front
- Visuals on proposed alterations (if available)
- Copy of permissions
- VAT declaration