1. **Background**

1.1 South Northamptonshire Council has created a scheme to assist retailers, town centre businesses and landlords who own or lease property within Towcester town centre as defined on the attached Plan\(^1\) to improve the external appearance of their premises.

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

1.3 The shop front improvement scheme aims to improve shop fronts in Towcester as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town for both local residents and visitors.

1.4 The scheme is administered by South Northamptonshire Council with funding identified through contributions from recent developments in the town.

2. **Scope**

2.1 The Council has a total allocation of £140,000 to enhance shop fronts, signage and the public realm. The fund is intended to benefit as many businesses in the town as possible. Therefore the grants allocated may depend on the number of appropriate applications that have been received.

2.2 The grants can offer up to 50% funding for qualifying works as long as they are match funded by the applicant. This means that 50% of finance still needs to be met by the applicant. ‘In-kind contributions such as DIY labouring are welcome but will not contribute towards the 50% match-funding.

2.3 Projects will not be considered retrospectively.

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\(^1\) The boundary of the area is set out in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)
3. **Who can apply**

3.1 The shop front improvement scheme is open to all freehold owners and leaseholders with property that has commercial frontage facing the street in Towcester Town Centre as defined in the attached map. Tenants must have the building or owners’ written prior approval.

3.2 Commercial premises include:

- Shops.
- Financial and professional services
- Restaurants and cafés
- Public houses and wine bars
- Hot food takeaways
- Hotels
- Betting Shops
- Charity Shops

4. **Responsibilities**

4.1 The Council’s Grants Officer updates, promotes and manages the grants scheme and provides general advice and assistance to applicants as necessary.

4.2 The Council’s Conservation Officer will provide technical advice to applicants when requested.

4.3 The Council’s Grants Officer will assess and make recommendations on applications to the Community Funding Panel for consideration and recommendation to the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy for approval following consultation with any other relevant Officers as appropriate.

4.4 Organisations in receipt of funding are required to comply with the terms and conditions set out in any offer letter.

5. **Process**

5.1 The grant application pack comprises comprehensive guidance notes and application forms and can be downloaded from the Council's website at [www.southnorthants.gov.uk/grantscommunity](http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/grantscommunity). Alternatively, electronic copies are available by contacting the Grants Officer (see details below). It is encouraged that applicants submit electronic copies, via email, to the Grants Officer. Only in exceptional circumstances will paper copies be accepted.
5.2 The Community Funding Panel will review all application received by the 30 November deadline at their meeting in January 2017. If funding remains after this panel meeting further rounds of applications will be invited, following the Community Funding Panel quarterly deadlines, until all funds have been committed.

6. CONTACT

Katie Arnold, Grants Officer
E-mail katie.arnold@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk, telephone 01327 322216.

Area covered by the Towcester Town Centre Shop Grant Policy
(Source: West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2104)
South Northamptonshire Council
Towcester Shop Front Improvement Grants
Application Form

South Northamptonshire Council offers grants for shop front improvements within Towcester Town Centre. This grant funds up to 50% towards any improvements. Please read through the guidance notes before completing this application. If you require any further help please email grants@southnorthants.gov.uk or call the Grants Officer on 01327 322216.

1. About your organisation

1a Organisations full address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact number</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of business</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1b Is your business VAT registered? Yes □ No □

1c Your interest in the property:

□ Owner
□ Tenant
□ Other (please specify)

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

1d Bank account details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Bank:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Account Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Account Number:</td>
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</table>
1e Have you made any previous applications for grants for improvements to the premises? If yes, please give details

1f Important Information

Under European “State Aid” rules your business should not obtain more than a total of 100,000 euros (approximately £65,000) for 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, □ (please tick)

2. About your project

2.1 Please give a summary of the proposed works to the shop frontage.

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 façade including details of features you wish to add or remove
- Changes to retail display units
- Details of colours and styles to be employed

2.2 What is the proposed start and finish date for your works?

Start:   Finish:

2.3 Please describe how the shop front will be maintained over the next five years
3. **Capital Works**

3a **Please detail the tenure for the project site, if you do not own the site please detail any lease or licence you hold and the extent of the remaining period.** Please note if you are not the owner of the property you will need to include writing permission from the owner with this application.

3b **Have you received any specialist advice** (e.g. structural engineers report)

3c **Are the premises accessible for people with disabilities?** If no, will the proposed works improve accessibility?

3d **Do you require any of the following approval?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Current status</th>
<th>Date granted</th>
<th>Reference number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning Approval</td>
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<td>Listed Building Consent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Regulations approval</td>
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<td>Conservation area consent</td>
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4. Financial Details

Grants awarded by South Northamptonshire Council will fund a maximum of 50% of the improvements. Applicants are expected to find match funding.

4a Please provide a breakdown of the estimated costs for the works.
(e.g. equipment, fees, labour)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of work</th>
<th>Estimated costs</th>
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Net Total

<table>
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<th>VAT</th>
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</table>

Total including VAT

4b Funding for improvement works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution from organisation</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>SNC grant (i.e. the amount you are requesting in this application)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In kind contribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total
5. Declaration

I hereby declare that I have read the terms and conditions and declare that the information given within the application form and any supporting materials is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorise South Northamptonshire Council to make any inquiries it considered necessary for the assessment of the application.

Signature
Position
Organisation
Date

6. Supporting Information

IMPORTANT

South Northamptonshire Council will only process your application if:

- All relevant questions have been completed
- The form has been signed in section 5 and sent electronically to grants@southnorthants.gov.uk
- All the necessary supporting documents, listed below is enclosed

Please check that you have enclosed the following before sending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please tick</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proof of ownership (if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of tenancy (if a tenant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the owner giving permission for the works to be carried out. (if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations recent accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAT declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of quotes for the works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs showing the current front and side elevations of the shop/businesses front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals on proposed alterations (if available)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **Terms and Conditions**

Please note that the Council reserves the right to impose additional Terms and Conditions if they are deemed necessary for a grant offer to be made. Any such conditions will be noted in any offer letter.

1. All works and activities covered by the grant will conform to all relevant statutory obligations, bylaws, licences and planning consents.

2. It is not the Council’s policy to fund retrospectively. If work has already commenced, this must be stated as it could prejudice your application.

3. The organisation has satisfied itself and the Council that it will be assured of a sufficient income to meet all costs associated with the improvement works.

4. Grant payments will be made by South Northamptonshire Council on production of official invoices receipts. The terms for payment will be set out in the offer letter.

5. The grant-aided facility will be adequately insured and the organisation will maintain adequate insurance covering public liability. Evidence of insurance cover will be produced for the Council upon requests.

6. The Council’s grant aid should be recognised by the use of Council logo or appropriate wording on any promotion literature.

7. The Council reserves the right to use photographs, videos or other promotional material to publicise the grant scheme.

8. The Council reserves the right to inspect the works for which funding has been sought before payment of the grant is made to ensure the works satisfactory meet any required permissions.

9. Except where expressly agreed in writing by the Council, the organisation has not committed itself by purchase, contract or other binding agreement to the project for which the grant is being sought.
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 both the occupier and visitors alike.

1.2 The shop front improvement scheme aims to improve shop fronts in Towcester Town as defined on the attached Plan as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town among local residents and visitors.

1.3 The Scheme is administered by South Northamptonshire Council. A total of £140,000 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 appropriate applications that have been received.

1.4 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.

1.5 If you would like to know more about the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme in Towcester please contact South Northamptonshire Council’s Grants Officer on 01327 322216 or email katie.arnold@southnorthants.gov.uk

2. **Who can apply?**

2.1 The shop front improvement scheme is open to all freehold owners and leaseholders with commercial shop-frontage facing the street within the defined area of Towcester town centre. Tenants must have the building owners’ prior approval.

2.2 Commercial premises include:
- Shops
- Financial and professional services
- Restaurants and cafes
• Public houses and wine bars
• Hot food takeaways
• Hotels
• Betting shops
• Charity

3. **What does the grant cover?**

3.1 Money is available to cover up to 50% of the total expenditure on the 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 The deadline for applications is 30th November 2016 and a decision made in January 2017. If funding remains after this round of grants there will be another chance to apply for funding.

3.3 You can claim against to following costs:

- pre-application planning advice
- planning fees
- professional fees or other information 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 - 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 Towcester Town centre boundary, see map. 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 Towcester 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 Much of Towcester town centre is within a conservation area and the town centre itself contains significant number of listed buildings. For further information and advice please visit [http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/3891.htm](http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/3891.htm)

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

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

4.7 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.

4.8 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.

4.9 South Northants Council also offers free town centre health checks. For further details please contact Business Support Advisor on 01327 322107 or email: economicgrowth@southnorthants.gov.uk.

5. **How do I apply?**

5.1 The deadline for applications is 30 November 2016 (see point 3.2)

5.2 Please email your completed application form to grants@southnorthants.gov.uk

5.3 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.

6. **How is the decision made?**

6.1 Applications will be considered by South Northamptonshire Council Community Funding Panel.

6.2 Applicants will be notified in writing if the grant application has been successful. An offer letter will detail the terms and conditions of the grant award.

6.3 All grants will be conditional on any required planning / conservation Area or Listed Building consent being granted. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and any offer of a grant does not imply in any way that these consents will or have been granted. If you are unsure about permissions
required for your proposed work, please do get in touch with us prior to making your application.

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

6.5 Grants will be paid on production of invoices from contractors showing detailed breakdown of costs. Payment will normally be made after all works are completed, for larger projects interim payments may be considered. Payment will be made to the applicant; the responsibility for paying contracts lay with the applicant.

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

6.7 The decision panel reserves the right not to make any grants if the applications received are not appropriate or compliant.

Area covered by the Towcester Town Centre Shop Grant Policy

(Source: West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2104)