



Nottingham
City Council

Nottingham City Council

Bulwell Shop Front Improvement and Vacant Premises Grant 2026-2028

Applicant Guidance Notes

May 2026

1. Introduction

The Bulwell Shop Front Improvement and Vacant Premises Grant is available to independent retail businesses and property owners in the Nottingham City Council wards of Bulwell and Bulwell Forest to improve their shop front or to bring vacant premises back into use.

The objective of the grant scheme is to support traders and the local Bulwell economy as well as improving the retail environment for shoppers, residents and visitors.

The grant scheme provides a maximum of 75% towards the total cost of the project in the form of grant up to a maximum of £5,000.

2. Aim of the grant

The Bulwell Shop Front Improvement and Vacant Premises Grant has been created using monies from the Levelling Up Fund with the aim of:

- improving the appearance of shop fronts and high streets to increase trade and footfall
- reducing the number of vacant shop units by assisting tenants and property owners to improve the function and appearance of empty shops in order to bring them back into commercial use.

The grant supports 2 separate activities:

Activity	Maximum grant available	Match funding required	Area available
Improving shop fronts	£5,000	75% of total project cost	Bulwell Bulwell Forest
Improving vacant shop premises	£5,000	75% of total project cost	Bulwell Bulwell Forest

In both cases works may include internal and external refurbishment.

NOTE: Businesses can apply for a shop front improvement grant or a vacant premises improvement grant. You cannot apply for both.

3. Who can apply for the grant?

The grant is available to independent retail businesses and property owners in the Nottingham City Council wards of Bulwell and Bulwell Forest (see the map at Appendix 1). Applicant businesses must have been trading for a minimum of 12 months.

To qualify for grant funding an applicant must satisfy the following criteria:

- **Shop front improvements**
 - Traders must have a lease agreement with a minimum of 2 years remaining to apply for the grant
 - Traders must have been trading for a minimum of 12 months
- **Vacant premises**

- The applicant must be the leaseholder or freeholder of the property. Leaseholders must have a lease agreement with a minimum of 2 years remaining.
 - Leaseholders must have been trading for a minimum of 12 months
 - The property must be vacant at the time of the application
- The property must have a ground floor and street facing frontage
 - The property must be located in the area highlighted on the map at Appendix 1
 - The applicant must be able to match fund the grant by a minimum of 25%
 - The applicant must have a business bank account
 - The applicant must be eligible for funding under the Subsidy Control Act 2022
 - Only one application will be accepted per property

The following types of retail business are ineligible to apply for the grant:

- Pawn brokers/money shops, adult/private shops, betting shops, vape shops, national chain stores.

The grant 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.

4. How much grant can be applied for?

The maximum grant for shop front improvements is £5,000. This covers up to 75% of the eligible project cost (excluding VAT) for eligible businesses

The maximum grant for vacant premises is £5,000. This covers up to 75% of the eligible project cost (excluding VAT) for eligible businesses

Grants are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds

5. Application process

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Completed application form - this contains contact details, justification for your project and a cost breakdown
- Quotes for the proposed works from supplier(s) - you need to provide a single quote from recognised suppliers/contractors for each item or service being purchased or for the whole works being undertaken
- Confirmation of approvals such as planning permission and building regulations, if required
- Proof of ownership/lease – You will need to provide proof of property ownership or a copy of the lease agreement
- If a leaseholder, A signed agreement by the property owner agreeing to the works if the property owner's consent is required
- A business bank account will be required as the grant payment will be made directly into the applicant's business bank account.
The business bank account must be the commercial trading account in the name of the applicant business. All purchases must be made via the business account

and all grant payments will be made to the same business account. Personal or current accounts are not eligible.

Grant applications will be assessed by Nottingham City Council which has the final decision for which there is no appeal process.

Successful applicants will need to enter into a contract agreement with Nottingham City Council before any work is undertaken or items or services purchased. It is not possible to claim the grant towards costs incurred before the date of the grant agreement.

The grant is paid in arrears, therefore successful applicants will need to pay the total project cost in full and provide payment evidence through business bank account statements before the grant is paid.

6. Do I require planning approval/consents?

Most alterations to shop fronts and vacant premises will require permission under the Planning Acts, Advertisement Regulations or both. Work carried out without consent may result in enforcement action or prosecution.

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

We suggest that you refer to Nottingham City Council's Design Quality Framework for guidance on design good practice. This can be found at www.dqfnottingham.org.uk

Advertisement consent is required for the display of certain types of signs in particular locations, notably illuminated signage.

Applicants will need to provide evidence that all required permissions have been obtained, where they are required.

Please note that it can take approximately eight weeks to determine a planning application, advertisement consent or other statutory consent. This consideration should be built into the project timescale.

If you are unsure what permissions are required a free of charge pre-planning application query can be made by contacting our Planning Team at planning@nottinghamcity.gov.uk or 0115 8764447.

If more in-depth advice on the details of a scheme and the likelihood of permission being granted is required a paid pre-application enquiry would be needed

7. Eligible grant uses

Not all the improvement works that you may want to undertake will be eligible for a grant.

There must be a clear difference between the existing shop front and the new shop front to demonstrate that the grant can make a noticeable/significant improvement to

the retail property and street scene. The grant will not support general maintenance work or rebranding.

As examples, the grant can contribute towards the following improvements:

- New shop front (subject to planning permission)
- Re-painting of shop front in a suitable colour
- Rendering and painting of building
- New signage (subject to planning permission)
- External lighting (subject to planning permission)
- Alterations to doors and level entry to improve access
- Replacement gutter and downpipes
- Awnings and canopies
- Internal security grilles

8. Ineligible grant uses

The grant scheme will not fund the following:

- Lighting within window displays
- Professional fees associated with the development and delivery of the project, including planning application fees, advertising consent fees and advisory services.
- Window display equipment
- Repointing, repair and cleansing of external stonework and brickwork above fascia level
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork
- General repairs and maintenance
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes
- Externally mounted security features (shutters and CCTV cameras)
- The purchase of machinery or equipment
- Improvements undertaken solely to allow compliance with legislation (e.g. Disability Discrimination Act requirements)
- Works to the upper floors or basement (i.e. works not at street level)
- Works to residential properties
- Works to industrial premises or offices.

9. Application and approval process

The grant scheme operates a rolling, two-stage application process, with applicants required to submit an Expression of Interest and then a Full Application before a final decision on funding is made.

i. Expression of Interest

The first stage of the application process involves the submission of an Expression of Interest. This is a 'light touch' form that asks for basic details about the property and the intended improvements.

NOTE - at the Expression of Interest stage you are asked to provide estimated costs for the work you want to undertake. Quotes from suppliers are only required at full application stage.

ii. Eligibility Assessment

Following the receipt of an Expression of Interest, an eligibility assessment is carried out to determine whether the proposal meets all of the essential criteria for the grant scheme.

It should be noted that the decision of Nottingham City Council on the eligibility of all Expressions of Interest is final.

iii. Full Application

If the proposal meets all of the eligibility criteria, the applicant is then asked to complete a full application. This asks for further details of the proposed improvement works, including evidence of obtaining competitive quotes and of obtaining necessary permissions, if applicable, for the works to be carried out. For vacant premises grants, at this stage, the applicant will also need to outline proposals for letting the vacant property.

The documents required at full application stage are:

- A completed application form – this contains basic contact details, justification for your project and a cost breakdown
- Schedule of works – details of the improvement works that you intend to carry out should be provided in the application form
- Proof of ownership/lease – You will need to provide proof of property ownership or a copy of the lease agreement.
- Details of your business bank account will be required as the grant payment will be made directly into the applicant's business bank account.
The business bank account must be the commercial trading account in the name of the applying business. All purchases must be made via the business account and all grant payments will be made to the same business account. Personal or current accounts are not eligible.
- Cost estimates including quotes and fees. You need to provide a single quote from recognised suppliers/contractors for each item being purchased or for the whole works being undertaken.

iv. Appraisal

Following the receipt of a full application, a comprehensive appraisal of the proposal is undertaken. This involves an assessment of how the proposals meet the aims of the grant.

Feedback will be provided on any unsuitable proposals, including potential ways to improve the applicant's case for funding. An offer of grant funding may be subject to specific terms and conditions in relation to the works to be carried out.

As with the Expression of Interest, the decision of Nottingham City Council on all full applications for funding is final.

A decision will usually be made within three weeks of receiving the completed application with all supporting information in place.

We reserve the right not to approve a grant if:

- The business has outstanding debts payable to Nottingham City Council
- The business has a poor food hygiene rating of 2 or below

- The business or its activities would bring the Council into disrepute or negatively impact on the Council's reputation in any way
- There are conflicts of interest resulting from the relationship between the business and the proposed supplier(s)

v. Grant offer

Following the approval of funding by Nottingham City Council we will issue a grant agreement to the successful applicant. This may include the attachment of specific conditions relating to the grant.

It should be noted that works must not commence until all necessary planning permission, advertisement consent or building regulations approvals are in place. The approval of a grant funding application does not guarantee the outcome of any other statutory processes that are required.

10. Grant payment

You will be expected to pay for all refurbishment works. We will reimburse you on submission of your grant claim, only on the agreed funding and suppliers, as outlined in your grant agreement and with all payment evidence. This includes:

1. Completed grant claim form
2. Supplier invoice(s) showing a detailed breakdown of costs
3. Business bank account statement clearly showing payment to the supplier(s)

Paying your supplier(s)

You must use a payment method that evidences the payment to your suppliers, i.e. **DO NOT MAKE CASH PAYMENTS**. If you pay by cheque you must take a photocopy of the cheque before you pass it on to the supplier, this will enable us to cross reference the cheque number to your bank account.

Payments by debit card and bank transfer, clearly stating the supplier name, are the preferred methods, as they provide us with the required evidence. No cash transactions will be accepted as evidence of payment.

IMPORTANT

- No claims will be paid for activity carried out and paid for prior to the issue of the grant agreement.
- Grant claims will only be paid to reimburse you of works carried out by the approved supplier(s). If you wish to change your supplier you will need to submit a new quote and get prior approval from us. We reserve the right to reject any claims for works carried out by non-approved suppliers
- No claims will be paid where supplier payments were made by cash, by a third party or by cheque (without photocopy evidence).

11. Contacts for further information and advice

For further information about the Bulwell Shop Front Improvements and Vacant Premises Grant please contact

Email: econdev.grants@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Telephone: 0115 876 4271

Other useful contacts within Nottingham City Council are:

Planning Services

Telephone: 0115 876 4447

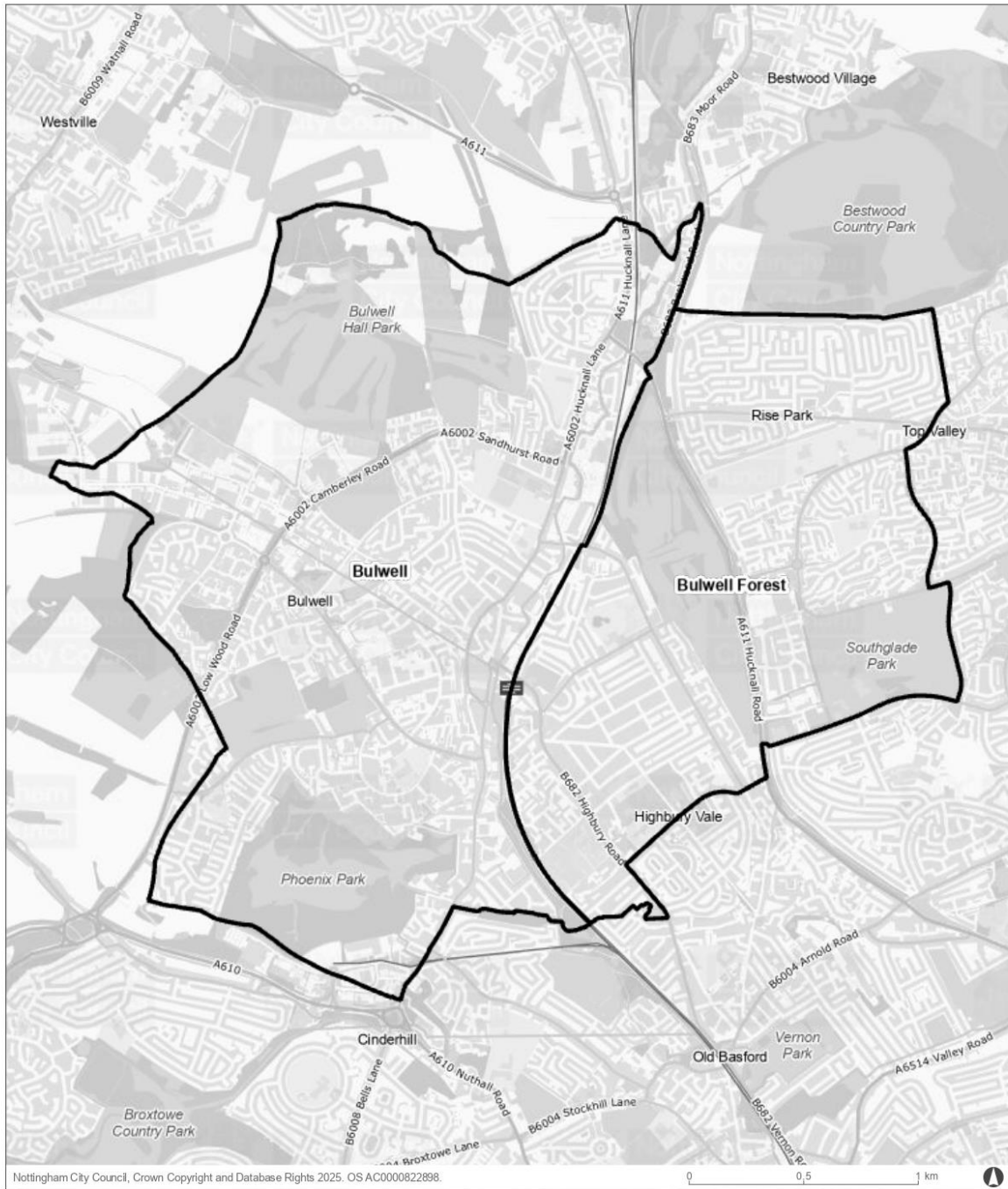
Email: planning@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Building Control

Telephone: 0115 876 4028

Email: building.control@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Eligible area



Nottingham City Council, Crown Copyright and Database Rights 2025. OS AC0000822898. Printed map generated by a Nomad user on a . This map is not suitable for publishing, for high quality maps please contact g@nottinghamcity.gov.uk.

Key

Wards (City)	Railway Stations 50k	National Roads 50k	Minor Roads 50k	Sites 50k
Watermark	NET Line 50k	Primary	Minor	MasterMap Greenspace 50k
Extent	Railway Lines 50k	Regional Roads 50k	Waterlines 50k	Zoomstack Greenspace 50k
Park Names 50k	Multi Track	A Road	Buildings 50k	General Surface 50k
Place Names 50k	Single Track	B Road	Woodland 50k	Background

Description
Eligible wards for the Bulwell Shop Front Improvement Grant



Appendix 2: Eligible Retail Property by Class Descriptor

- Commercial, Retail, Shop / Showroom
- Commercial, Retail, Restaurant / Cafeteria
- Commercial, Retail, Retail Service Agent
- Commercial, Retail, Other Licensed Premise / Vendor
- Commercial, Retail, Public House / Bar / Nightclub
- Commercial, Hotels, Boarding and Guest Houses, Hotel / Motel
- Commercial, Leisure, Amusements
- Commercial, Leisure, Bingo Hall / Cinema / Conference / Exhibition Centre / Theatre / Concert Hall
- Commercial, Leisure, Indoor / Outdoor Leisure / Sporting Activity/ Centre
- Commercial, Leisure, Library
- Commercial, Leisure, Museum / Gallery