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OUR COLCHESTER  
*A BID to make new history*



Colchester  
City Council

## Our Colchester BID SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT GRANT SCHEME INFORMATION PACK



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.

## **ABOUT**

Shop fronts are the most conspicuous part of a building's façade. They make a big impact on the appearance of a city centre. They contribute to people's first impression of a city and their condition affects a city's image. High quality shop fronts make a town feel more welcoming to locals and visitors, improve its image, contribute towards a stronger sense of identity, and, importantly, encourage a greater number of shopping visits.

The shop front improvement grant scheme aims to improve shop fronts in selected areas as a means of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment, and raising the image of the city centres amongst locals and visitors.

The grant scheme is funded through the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). The total amount available for funding through this scheme is £39,000.

## **WHO CAN APPLY?**

All businesses with premises located within the Our Colchester BID area (see the map on page 3 for reference) who are looking to fix, upgrade and improve their shop frontage and shops that have been vacant for a minimum period of 6 months are eligible to apply to the fund. Leaseholders with a commercial shop-frontage in Colchester city centre have to have at least 3 years remaining on their lease.

Examples of eligible commercial premises include:

- Shops (including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, laundrettes, dry cleaners and post offices)
- Financial and professional services – e.g. banks, building societies, estate agencies, professional and financial services
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes and food takeaways
- Both tenants and building owners can apply.

If you are unsure whether your business will qualify for a grant, you should contact the scheme administrator via [projects@ourcolchester.co.uk](mailto:projects@ourcolchester.co.uk).

## **AVAILABLE FUNDING**

The scheme will provide funding up to a limit of £3,500 which must equate to 85% of the cost of delivery works. The other 15% must be covered by your business. Applicants will be asked to provide proof of this.

Grants are discretionary and subject to availability of funds. The inclusion of a building within the eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant. 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.

There are a limited number of grants available so where the scheme is oversubscribed, a system of prioritisation will be put in place. In such cases priority will be given to improvements that would be seen to have the most impact. Subject to availability of funding, applications for funding must be made by **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024**.

£39k available funding will be focused on the below streets:

- St Botolph's Street
- Arthur Street
- Vineyard Gate
- Stanwell Street
- Osborne Street
- St Botolph's Church Walk
- Vineyard Street
- St Botolph's Circus
- Short Wyre Street

#### **WHAT WILL THE SCHEME FUND?**

- Repair and reinstatement of all or any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street, including the first and second floors of premises where they are used for commercial activities.
- Repainting of shop fronts.
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes.
- Pedestrian access improvements compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Signage.

*“Like for like replacement is a repair (except in the case of listed buildings in some instances) but alteration is the introduction of new fabric or modification of existing fabric to a different design to that which existed previously. The comprehensive replacement of fabric even like for like may constitute an alteration in the case of a listed building where historic fabric may have intrinsic historic significance.”*

The scheme will not support:

- Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises.
- Retrospective applications i.e. for work already completed or underway  
Structural repairs including re-roofing.
- Internal repairs and alterations
- External security features
- CCTV systems Recoverable VAT

#### **IN ORDER TO CONSIDER YOUR APPLICATION, WE REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING:**

- Completed Application form.
- Schedule of works – giving full details of the improvement works that you intend to carry out.
- 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.

- Copies of any statutory consent notifications (e.g. planning permission)
  - You **MUST** consult with the Colchester City Council to establish a need for Planning Permission/ Listed Building Consent/ Conservation Area Consent and or Advertisement Consent.
  - (If consent is needed you will be required to obtain it before a final grant offer letter can be sent out to you).
  - Photographs showing your current shop front.
  - Sketches or design proposals showing the proposed improvement.
  - Your business will be located in a Conservation Area and it is important that any changes are appropriate and sympathetic to its character. The control over advertisements in these areas are stricter and we require that any signs are in line with the Advertising Regulations and Shopfront Design Guidance guidelines. You should consult your designs with the Colchester Council.
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- Quotations obtained.
  - Bank statement
  - Proof of up-to-date levy payments
  - Breakdown of costs

### **PROCESSING YOUR APPLICATION**

We will make a decision on your application within four to six weeks of receiving a complete application. Applications will be considered by a panel from Our Colchester BID's selected partners. All grant offers will be made in writing.

### **HOW WILL THE GRANT BE PAID**

The Grant will only be paid directly to the business on submission of receipted invoices and upon satisfactory completion of the outlined work.

Claims of eligible expenditure incurred must be supported by a fully transparent audit trail traceable through invoices and bank statements (the improvements are not to be paid in cash).

### **WHAT DOES THE PROCESS ENTAIL?**

- Submit the application form detailing proposed improvements, estimated costs and supporting evidence.
- Your application will then be processed and assessed by Our Colchester BID selected partners.
- Either a provisional grant offer will be made or alternatively the applicant will be advised that a grant will not be made available for their project. The reasons will be outlined for that decision.
- If you are eligible for a grant, you will need to receive consent for the necessary statutory permissions (where required and unless already provided).
- A final grant offer letter will be sent out once Our Colchester BID has received and approved the following:
  - Drawings / Schedule of Work
  - Planning Permission / Advertisement Consent / Listed Building Consent / Building Warrant (where required)
  - Satisfactory quotes for the works from independent contractors

- At the same time as accepting the final grant offer, you will be asked to enter into an agreement with Our Colchester BID setting out the terms and conditions of grant. A copy can be made available in advance.
- Physical works for the property are expected to be completed by July **31<sup>st</sup> 2025**. Our Colchester BID reserves the right to rescind the offer where these timescales are not met.
- **Grants will be paid direct to the contractor on production of invoices from the contractors showing a detailed breakdown of cost and following satisfactory inspection of the works.**
- Following completion, you will be required to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The agreement is between Our Colchester BID and the Applicant(s) as named in the offer letter.
- Businesses/Organisations accepting grant offers from the Shop Front Scheme will be required to abide by and agree to the following terms and conditions:
- The approval or refusal of a grant is at the absolute discretion of Our Colchester BID and there will be no rights to an appeal process.
- The applicant must inform Our Colchester BID of any changes to the business or changes of business address and telephone number.
- The grant must be used for the purpose intended as outlined in the Grant Offer letter.
- The grant may not be used to fund retrospective work.
- In the case of tenant's, payment of the grant requires the building owner's approval and proof of a minimum 3 year lease for the building.
- The grant must not be used for improvements to residential property, internal repairs and alterations, external security features, CCTV systems or recoverable VAT.
- The grant will only be paid to proposals which have been granted planning permission (if applicable)
- The grant will only be paid to businesses whose levy payments are up to date (where applicable).
- The grant is made on the condition that the property will be maintained to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of three years.
- Any grant must be taken up within the period stated in the Grant Offer Letter unless a prior arrangement is made.
- Our Colchester BID will pay the grant to the successful applicant in one sum when it receives evidence that the applicant has incurred the expenditure.
- Claims of eligible expenditure incurred must be supported by a fully transparent audit trail traceable through invoices and bank statements.
- Our Colchester BID reserves the right to publish illustrations, photographs or other details of your project in promotional literature, social media, website and other documents associated with Our Colchester BID initiatives.
- The results will be shared on social media tagging Our Colchester BID who provided financial support.

## HOW CAN I APPLY?

If you are interested in applying for a grant, please download and fill out the application form available at <https://ourcolchester.co.uk/shopfront-grants/>

Email: [projects@ourcolchester.co.uk](mailto:projects@ourcolchester.co.uk)

Postal address:

Our Colchester BID

4 Portal Precinct, Sir Isaacs Walk, Colchester, CO1 1JJ

## KEY DATES

### 2024

- Applications open Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July
- Applications close Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October
- Panel assessment November
- Applicants informed November

### 2025

- Interview/site visit/signing of paperwork- January
- You should schedule Shop Front Work between January- March
- Work should be completed between January and July
- **Shop Front Completion Deadline 31<sup>st</sup> July**
- Assessment of Work by the BID completed within two weeks of completion
- The Grants will be paid to you within 3 weeks of successful assessment of Work completed.
- No grants will be paid after December.