

TOWN CENTRE Shopfront Improvement Programme

Guidance Notes



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SECTION 1 – APPLICATION GUIDANCE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to businesses wishing to apply for grant funding under the Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme ('the Programme').

1 INTRODUCTION

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, in partnership with the Department for Communities, has developed a 'Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme' which is designed to enhance the appearance of commercial areas in designated town centres across the Borough. The Programme aims to support local business growth, enhance the local environment and transform how residents and visitors perceive our town centres, with the aim of increasing footfall and trade.

The Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme will be implemented in phases over the next two financial years (2024-25/2025-26), subject to the availability of funds.

- Phase 1 - Ballyclare and Randalstown
- Phase 2 – Antrim, Crumlin and Glengormley

The programme is currently in Phase 2 and open to businesses in Antrim, Crumlin and Glengormley.

2. SCHEME OBJECTIVES

- To improve and enhance the visual streetscape of commercial areas within our town centres to improve overall visitor experience and footfall;
- To reduce physical decline across our town centres;
- To support local business owners in sustaining their physical shopfront within our town centres;
- To promote high-quality design improvements to the exterior of commercial properties;
- To encourage context-sensitive design, particularly across designated Conservation Areas (Antrim and Randalstown);
- To strengthen the working relationship between Council and the local business community, building capacity for future initiatives;
- To capitalise on previous regeneration efforts undertaken across our town centres.

3. FUNDING

Businesses/property owners can apply for a grant of up to £4,999 to carry out external physical improvements to their commercial property. **Please note that the grant will cover 80% of the eligible costs up to a maximum value of £4,999.**

Applicants **must** demonstrate a minimum contribution of 20% of the overall project costs.

Applicants who are VAT registered will have their grant assessed on the net cost of eligible works, non-registered on the gross cost. See examples below:

VAT registered applicant

Project Cost (ex VAT)	Grant Rate at 80%	Applicant Contribution*
£2,000	£1,600	£400
£5,000	£4,000	£1,000
£6,249.75	£4,999	£1,249.75
*VAT recoverable through HMRC.		

Non-VAT registered applicant

Project Cost (inc. VAT)	Grant Rate at 80%	Applicant Contribution*
£2,400	£1,920	£480
£6,000	£4,800	£1,200
£7,499.70	£4,999	£ 2,500.70

Applications will be considered at Assessment Panel and confirmed by a Project Board.

The Council will base any Letter of Offer on the cost of the lowest quotation or the quotation offering the best value for money. Successful applicants will be paid funding on 80% of the procurement submitted, or of the final price of the eligible work(s), whichever is the lowest amount, up to a maximum of £4,999.

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.

Note: For works where the estimated total project cost exceeds £10,000, applicants should contact the Regeneration Team to discuss.

4. WHAT WILL THE SCHEME FUND?

The appropriate works required will be unique to each individual property; however, the table below identifies examples of eligible and ineligible works.

Eligible	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstatement of traditionally styled shopfronts, sash windows and doors; New shopfronts; Internal security grilles/perforated roller shutter; Replacement rainwater goods (RWG); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stone or masonry repairs / re-pointing; New signage or replacement of existing signs; Replacement feature lighting to signs (new lighting will require planning permission);

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fascia, soffit, bargeboard repairs/replacement; • Window sill repairs; • Repairs to doors and windows; • Removal of redundant signage, shutters, wiring, alarms etc. • New windows and doors (with Building Control Consent); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exterior fixture and fittings e.g. hanging baskets; • Repairs of decorative features; • Repainting of external shopfront in a suitable colour; and, • Repair and reinstatement of all, or any part, of a ground floor shopfront fixture that is visible from the street.
Ineligible	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises; • Improvement works to banks and financial institutions; • Routine maintenance such as clearing of debris or gutters; • Internal alterations/improvements; • Professional fees (e.g. solicitor / surveyor); • Improvement works to vacant commercial properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrospective applications (for work already completed or underway); • Roof cleaning or replacement of tiles; • CCTV / security systems; • Chimney repairs; • Statutory fees; • Architect / consultant fees; • Pedestrian access improvements that purely aim to conform to requirements set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; • Interest; and, • Insurances.

Note: This list is not exhaustive and may include any other minor frontage enhancements that the applicant can demonstrate will improve the overall appearance of the streetscape.

5. WHO CAN APPLY?

The second phase of the programme is open to commercial property owners and tenants located in the designated town centres of **Antrim, Crumlin and Glengormley**, as set out by the Department for Communities. Businesses outside the eligible areas will **not** be eligible for the grant. Please consult the relevant map on the next pages (pg. 5-6) before submitting an application. **The inclusion of a building within the eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant.**

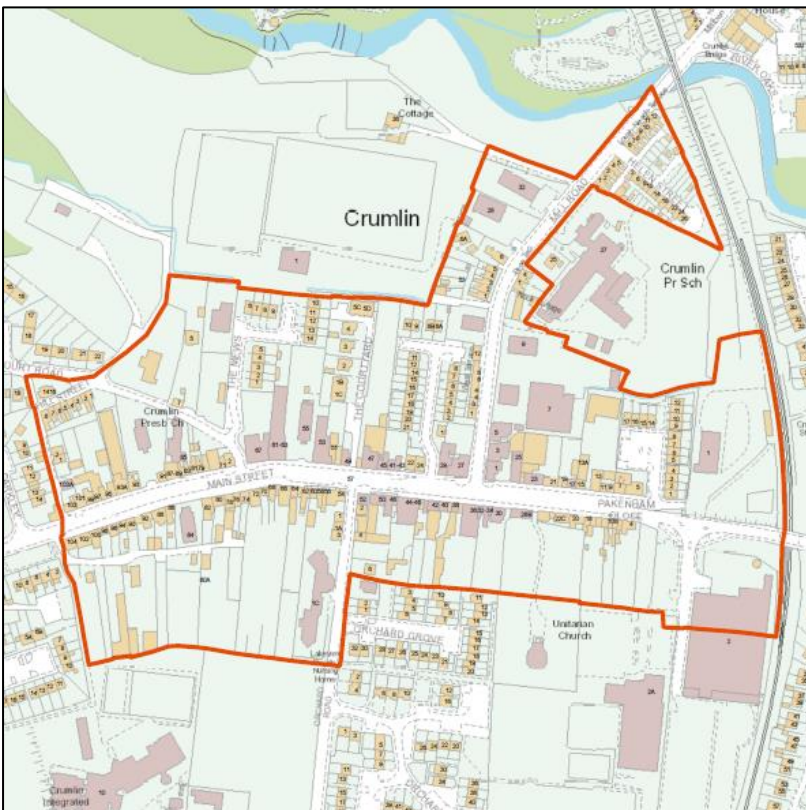
The Programme is open to premises with commercial shop-frontage facing the street within the project area. Commercial premises include:

- Retail shops;
- Hair and Beauty Salons;
- Hospitality e.g. restaurants, cafes and food takeaways;
- Financial and Professional Services e.g. estate agents, solicitors etc.;
- Buildings that are being used for a community service.

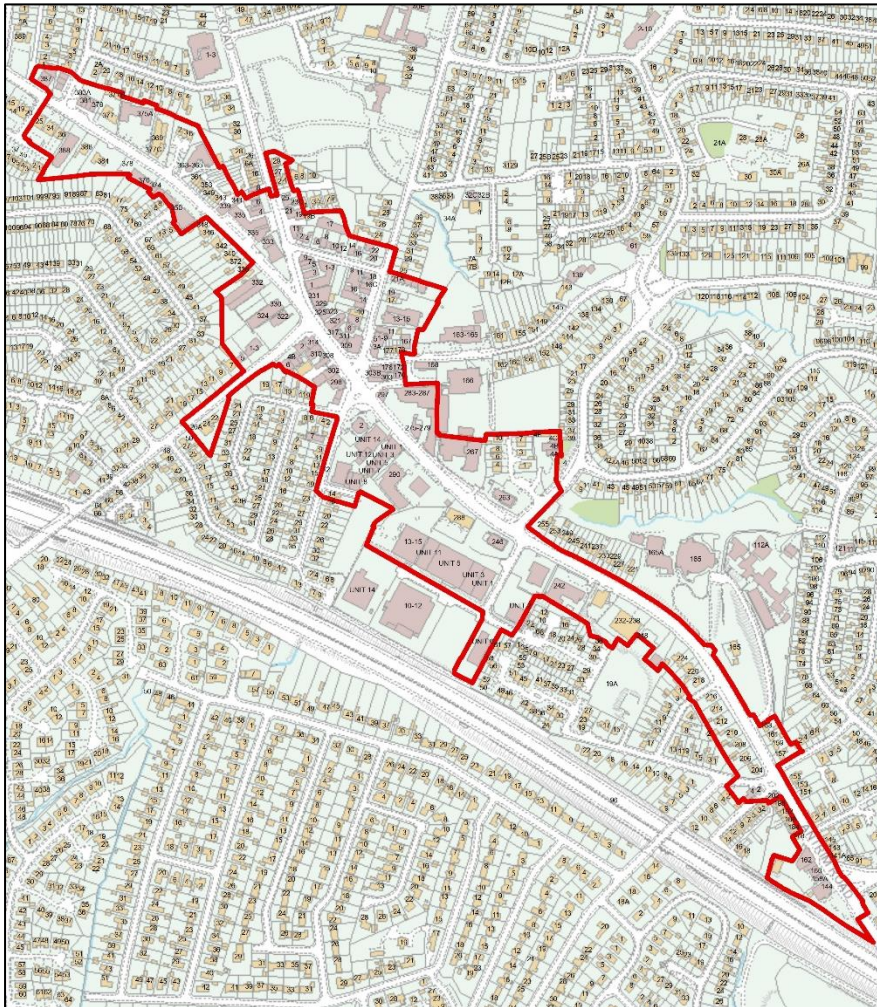
Antrim



Crumlin



Glengormley



6. WHO CANNOT APPLY?

The following will **not** be eligible to apply for funding:

- Businesses located outside of the eligible town centre areas;
- Sports clubs;
- Public buildings;
- Political organisations;
- National and International chain stores;
- A home-based business, operating and registered to a residential address.

7. PROPERTY OWNER CONSENT

Tenants **must** have the building owners' consent. If the application is made by someone other than the Landlord/Owner of the property, then the application must be counter-signed by the property owner to demonstrate the owner's consent.

8. STATUTORY CONSENT

It is likely that where alterations are proposed to the external appearance of the property, one or more of the following will be required:

- **Planning Permission** – will be required for new shopfronts or any other alterations which will materially affect the external appearance of a building;
- **Advertisement Consent** – to display a fascia, canopy or other sign on the exterior of a building. Shopfront signage **must** comply with The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015;
- **Building Regulation Approval** – where material alterations are to be carried out;
- **Listed Building Consent** – for any alterations that affect the character of a listed building;
- **Conservation Area Consent** – for alterations that affect the character or appearance of a building within a Conservation Area, including permissible styles and materials used. This is of particular importance for businesses located in Antrim.

It is the applicant's responsibility to make enquiries as to whether any of the above statutory consents are required. Where statutory permissions are required for the work, these must be obtained and funded by you before the commencement of works.

Please note that applications for Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent, Advertising Consent and Conservation Area Consent can take at least 10 weeks to be determined and this should be taken into consideration. Early engagement with Planning is recommended.

Please see below contact details for the relevant statutory departments:

Local Planning Office	Building Control Department
Tel. 0300 123 6677 planning@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk	Tel. 028 9034 0140 buildingcontrol@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

The Council is currently preparing its Local Development Plan which will guide all development across the Borough. A Draft Plan Strategy is in place which outlines the strategic objectives for the Borough, and promotes high quality shopfront design which relates to the architectural character of the building and surrounding area. All works should aim to comply with the guidance outlined in the draft Plan Strategy, a copy of which can be found at:

<https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/draftplanstrategy/> (pg. 190).

9. PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES

Applicants must demonstrate value for money through their application by submitting **2 original, written quotations** for the proposed work based on an itemised list. Quotations for works should be based on a clear specification, distributed to all contractors asked to quote (please use the template shown in Appendix 4).

Note: Quotations must be 'like for like'. Failure to comply with this condition may result in the application being reduced or rejected.

As part of our local sourcing ambitions, the Council encourages businesses to source services from suppliers based inside the ANBC Borough.

Conflict of Interest – Quotes from Family/Extended Family Members

If quotations are being sought, or provided from any member of an applicant's family or extended family, then the relationship must be flagged to the Council's Regeneration Department Team, prior to any procurement activity and declared in writing on the procurement documentation.

In addition, applicants must sign a Conflict of Interest Declaration, which is attached to the Application Form, to the effect that:

- (a) Competitors quotations will not be shared with quoting family member; and,
- (b) That applicants will strictly adhere to the programme procurement guidelines.

10.SOURCING QUOTATIONS

Applicants must demonstrate value for money. Competitive quotations from bona fide, reputable contractors will be required. Quotes received before the scheme has opened and retrospective quotes will not be eligible.

Each quotation should be itemised on letter headed paper, and include the following details:

- Name and contact details of the company providing the quote;
- Quote number;
- Quote prepared by;
- Quote date;
- Customer Details (Your business name and address);
- Itemised breakdown of costs for works, labour and materials etc.;
- Subtotal;
- VAT (if applicable);
- Total;
- Contractors VAT registration number (if applicable).

For assistance, Appendix 3 offers a sample specification/invitation to quote letter.

Grant funding will **not** be paid out for works that have been completed without following the above procurement process.

Please note: As part of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's audit and fraud prevention checks, Council Officers, Council's appointed independent Chartered Quantity Surveyor and Programme auditors may undertake supplier verification checks to verify quotation(s)/ invoice(s) at grant application and claim stage. Any quotation/invoice that cannot be verified by the supplier will be passed to the Council's Internal Audit Department and/or the funder for further investigation.

11.HOW TO APPLY

All applicants **must** submit the following essential information:

1. A completed application form;
2. Specification as detailed within Appendix 3;
3. 2 written quotations for the proposed works based on the specification issued;
4. A digital photograph(s) of the existing frontage of the commercial premises where the works will take place, which also shows adjacent property/units frontage

Note: This scheme permits one grant application per property. If an applicant wishes to apply for works to more than one property, a separate application form and a minimum of two quotes must be submitted for each property.

Applicants are encouraged to refer to the 'Guidance on Town Centre Shopfront Design' enclosed in Section 2 (pg. 12-14) before completing their application. This includes useful information when planning your project.

Council would encourage collaboration between businesses. In a shopping area, the special character is either derived from the consistency of design and style, such as a uniform row, or from the variety of styles that complement adjoining shopfronts and the overall streetscape.

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how their proposal will improve the look of the business and have a positive impact on the streetscape.

12.APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

The Council may procure the services of an independent Chartered Quantity Surveyor to assist Council Officers in the administration of the grant scheme to ensure compliance with Council policies and procedures, independent verification of need and value for money.

Assessment of applications and allocation of funding will be scored, and based on individual merit and the criteria below on a Pass/Fail basis:

- i. Value for Money (demonstrated through provisional procurement);
- ii. Need for the project (refer to Section 4 of Application Form); and,
- iii. Impact on streetscape.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Department for Communities

reserve the right to enhance assessment criteria in the event that the number of applications exceed the funds available.

The decision of the Panel is final and there is no right of appeal on the decision made.

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ASSESSED.

It is therefore critical that applicants complete **all** sections of the application form and submit the required supporting documentation by 12 noon on **Friday 13 December, 2024**.

13. SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS – YOUR ‘LETTER OF OFFER’

Successful applicants will be issued with a Letter of Offer. This agreement will set out the terms and conditions associated with the grant funding which must be adhered to:

- The amount of grant awarded / grant reserved for your scheme;
- The terms and conditions associated with the grant; and,
- Time-bound completion date.

All projects must be completed as soon as practically possible after receiving a Letter of Offer, and by the end date stated in your Letter of Offer.

Note: Do not commence any work or pay deposits until an offer letter has been signed and returned to the Council. The Council will not fund any works that have commenced prior to the signed Letter of Offer being returned.

14. PAYMENT OF GRANT

This grant funding scheme is retrospective and therefore costs will only be reimbursed once the following steps have been completed:

1. Inspection of property by the Council officer or appointed independent Chartered Quantity Surveyor to verify works have been completed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.
2. Completed Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme application form with supporting documents:
 - An invoice(s) for the eligible works;
 - Bank statement (hard copy or online banking) which shows payment transaction to your contractor clearing your account. The bank account used must be in the name of the applicant or the business and an account used for trading purposes;
 - Digital photograph(s) of completed works; and,
 - Copy of all Statutory Consents where applicable.

Payment of grant will be made to the applicant via direct BACS payment.

CASH OR CHEQUE EXPENDITURE WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR PURPOSES OF THIS FUND.

Applicants are responsible for paying their contractor(s) **and claiming back VAT where appropriate.**

15. APPLICATION CLOSING DATE

All applications and supporting documentation should be returned via email to shopfronts@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their full application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing, being **12pm (noon)** on **Friday 13 December, 2024.**

16. ASSISTANCE AND QUERIES

If you have any queries regarding your application, please contact the Regeneration Team:

Tel: 02890 340 000

Email: shopfronts@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

SECTION 2 – GUIDANCE ON SHOPFRONT DESIGN

PRINCIPLES TO ACHIEVE AN ATTRACTIVE SHOPFRONT

The upgrading of shopfronts in our commercial areas is essential for improving the overall appearance of a street and changing the way we view our local retail areas. This will ultimately attract more customers and stimulate trade. Developing high-quality shopfronts will play a crucial role in revitalising commercial areas outside of town centres.

Enhancing the appearance of your shopfront is something that most businesses can achieve at a very modest cost. If this improvement can be encouraged along the entire street, the effect would be transformative.

To facilitate good design for all shopfronts, it is important to consider the following factors:

Streetscape

When selecting or upgrading a shopfront, it is important to assess how the design will affect the character of the street and the surrounding area. Each proposal should blend in with, and enhance, the overall appearance of the street and its buildings.

A well-designed shopfront will contribute to a positive image for the business and the area. Conversely, a poorly designed or overly prominent shopfront can have a detrimental effect by detracting from the visual appearance and harmony of the street, potentially impacting the attractiveness of neighbouring businesses. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the proportions, materials and details of a shopfront complement the surrounding building(s).

It is good practice to collaborate with neighbouring businesses to gain inspiration when gathering evidence or looking for guidance for a new shopfront. The special character of a shopping area derives from either consistency in design and style, such as a uniform row, or a variety of styles, which enhances adjoining shopfronts and the overall streetscape.

The Building as a Whole

It is essential to consider the impact of the proposed shopfront design on the entire building and its character. If there is an existing shopfront which is sympathetic to the building, or is of historic interest but in a dilapidated state, it should be repaired and restored wherever possible. The design of a shopfront should be guided by the building, any remaining evidence, the style and proportion of the building, neighbouring or similar buildings and the location. It is good practice to carry out some research when dealing with historic buildings and areas by looking at old photographs or other buildings with sympathetic shopfronts in the vicinity.

Decoration

To enhance the overall appearance of the streetscape, it is important to carefully select decoration schemes. The choice of colour should be thoughtfully considered, taking into account the surroundings of the shop and how it complements neighbouring shopfronts, especially in Conservation Areas or if the building is listed.

The colours and tones should harmonise with the surrounding environment, as using clashing colours may detract from and undermine the overall character and coherence of the streetscape. In most cases, this will mean that the shopfront should be painted in a muted or subdued colour.

Schemes with two colours usually work best when one of the colours is a neutral, such as white or cream. It is generally best to avoid using two strongly contrasting colours or three or more colours together. To highlight certain architectural features, it is acceptable to choose two or more contrasting colours that blend well together.

Working in collaboration with neighbouring shops to choose a coordinated colour scheme is encouraged. This will promote cohesion in the streetscape, while still allowing for individual differences between each shop.

It is worth noting that unpainted natural stonework, as well as other high quality materials such as brickwork, marble and granite should not be painted.

For period properties, it is recommended to consult paint manufacturer's specialist colour charts in order to achieve satisfactory results.

Signs and Advertisements

Having quality signage is essential for creating a shopfront that reflects the unique character of a retail corridor and attracts potential customers. The illustration below shows how signage and advertising can impact the visual appeal of the building.

The design of signage should be simple, allowing the elegance of the colour, sign letters and other details to stand out. Avoiding clutter on the façade such as plastic, multiple projecting signs, overly dominant lighting fixtures, and overly complex designs, is important as they detract from the overall appearance.

Excessive signage on a shopfront, or signage that obstructs the view into the shop can deter potential customers from entering. Too many posters and notices can make the shopfront look cluttered and unattractive. It is recommended to keep shopfronts minimal, with simple signage that prominently displays the business name and street number.

For traditional shopfronts, handwritten letters or individual lettering applied to the fascia may be the most suitable option. The use of acrylic or fluorescent materials in signs is considered inappropriate and should be avoided. Shopfront fascia signs should be in proportion to the size of the building.



Security

The Council acknowledges the need for retailers to maintain a strong security presence in their establishments. Additionally, the Council is committed to enhancing the appeal and safety of the Borough's shopping districts during non-operational hours. Thus, it is crucial that shopping areas maintain a pleasant atmosphere even outside regular business hours, as this will create a positive image and promote evening window shopping and browsing.

An example of this is the use of roller grilles positioned behind glass, which effectively protect window displays without inhibiting evening window shopping.



Conclusion

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's objective is to improve the aesthetic appeal of local town centre areas and upgrade the standard of shopfronts and signage through the implementation of a Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme.

These guidelines provide advice on important aspects to consider when designing or altering a shopfront, with the aim of preserving and protecting the overall look of the surrounding streetscape. The purpose of the design principles is not to restrict businesses, but rather to promote effective design practices that will enhance the wider shopping environment and boost footfall. The Council will carefully consider all proposed shopfront designs to ensure they align with the specific retail area.

SECTION 3 – APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – ADDITIONAL DATA INFORMATION

1. Publication of Data

If your application is successful and your project is awarded funding, please note that the Council may publicise details of all financial support awarded/paid out to beneficiaries. This will include the name of the beneficiary, their postal town, their postcode and the total amount of financial support received by the beneficiary. Details of applications (successful and unsuccessful) will be submitted to Council and applicant details will be published as part of the Council report, which are accessible to the public.

2. Data Protection Act

We will use the information provided on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant awarded, to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.

We may use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

3. Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act, we will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information, please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk.

4. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

When you apply to the Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme, we will ask for some personal information because, for example, your personal email address or telephone number is used on the applicant organisation's behalf. When you provide this information, it is processed in compliance with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the scheme's Terms and Conditions to enable us to communicate with you about the application.

We take care to ensure that any personal information supplied is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed for the purpose for which it has been provided.

For further details on your privacy see the Privacy Notice attached.

Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme Privacy Notice

The Council is collecting information from you for the purposes of processing your application regarding the Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme. This is in accordance with Section 6(1)(e) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)- the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the Council. Information collected may be shared with the Department for Communities, the Council's appointed Quantity Surveyor and the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

We will ask for personal information about you or your organisation in order to process your grant application and any subsequent grant payments. When you provide this information, it is processed in compliance with the UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 to enable us to communicate with you about the application and vouch costs associated with the funding.

Your name and business address will be shared with the Department for Communities for the purposes of the administration of the grant. The Department for Communities will retain this information in line with its policy (see <http://communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/dfc-disposal-records-schedule>). The lawful basis the Department of Communities is relying on to process your personal data is Article 16(1)(e) of the UK GDPR, which allows the Department to process personal data when necessary for the performance of its public tasks in its capacity as a Government Department.

Information will not be transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area. All information collected and processed may be subject to audit. The Council may also process the information for research purposes carried out in the public interest.

All information will be held in accordance with the Council's retention and disposal schedule (see <http://www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/Council>) and will be disposed of securely when no longer required.

You have a number of rights with regard to data we hold on you – for further information see the Information Commissioner's website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/>

If at any point you believe the information we hold on you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and even have it corrected or deleted. If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.

Data Protection Officer

Antrim Civic Centre, 50 Stiles Way, Antrim, BT41 2UB

T: 028 94 463113

E: DPO@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response, or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

APPENDIX 3 – SAMPLE SPECIFICATION/INVITATION TO QUOTE LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find below a list of works that require quotation(s) for **(INSERT BUSINESS NAME)**, **(INSERT BUSINESS ADDRESS)**.

All quotes **must** include labour and materials.

[Provide a specific breakdown of works that you are seeking funding for. This is to ensure that all quotes submitted are identical – for example, see below]

1. External painting, including prepping of walls (include number of coats)
2. Supply and fit 1 fascia sign (include sign dimensions, illuminated/non-illuminated – if illuminated, provide details of electrical works)
3. Supply and fit 1 new PVC door and 3 windows (include colour, dimensions).

Please ensure your quote is on company letter headed paper, is valid for three months and includes the following details:

- Quote number;
- Quote prepared by;
- Quote issue date;
- Customer Details (Business name and address);
- Itemised breakdown of costs for works, labour and materials etc;
- Sub-total;
- VAT (if applicable);
- Total; and,
- VAT registration number (if applicable).

A photograph of the existing shopfront is attached for reference purposes.

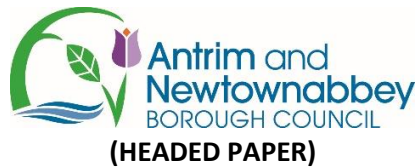
Please return your quote by **(INSERT DATE)** to **(INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS)**.

If you require any further information, please call me on **(INSERT TELEPHONE NUMBER)**

Kind regards

(INSERT NAME) (INSERT BUSINESS NAME)

APPENDIX 4 – SAMPLE CONSTRUCTION QUOTE



Works Quote

Quote Number: XXXXXX

Quote Date: DD/MM/YY

F.A.O. (YOUR NAME)

(YOUR BUSINESS NAME)

(YOUR BUSINESS ADDRESS)

Dear (YOUR NAME),

Please find your requested quotation attached for your approval. Prices below include supply of materials and labour, unless otherwise specified.

Description	Price
External painting, including prepping of walls	£1,750.00
Supply and fit 1 fascia sign	£550.00
Supply and fit 1 new PVC door and 3 windows (black)	£1,000.00
Subtotal	£4,500.00
VAT = 20%	£900.00
TOTAL (inc. VAT)	£5,400.00

The above quote is valid for 3 months.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

(NAME OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANY)

(CONSTRUCTION COMPANY ADDRESS)

(VAT REGISTRATION NUMBER)