

Town Centre Shop Front Grants

Oldham Council has developed a Shop Front Improvement Grant scheme to enhance the visual appeal of key areas within Oldham Town Centre and support independent businesses using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The scheme's aim is to improve the character, vibrancy, and overall experience for visitors and shoppers by encouraging physical improvements to business frontages in key areas of the town centre.

If approved, the scheme will open for applications on Wednesday 18th June 2025 and close on Wednesday 6th August 2025. Applications will be assessed on a first-come-first served basis due to a limited budget and timescale as all improvement works must be completed by 16th February 2026.

The scheme is designed to:

- Enhance the appearance of Oldham town centre.
- Support the regeneration of commercial areas by improving street appeal.
- Contribute to increased footfall and economic activity.

Target Areas

The grant will be open to applications from independent businesses operating within the following areas: Union Street, George Street, Yorkshire Street and Henshaw Street. Priority will be given to applications from businesses located at or close to key town centre arrival points or regeneration sites such as the new outdoor market area on George Street, the Coliseum Theatre on Fairbottom Street, or where there is more than one business carrying out improvements (clustering effect).

The grant is aimed at premises in commercial/non-residential uses only, however, vacant properties can be considered subject to an end use agreed by the Council. Applicants must not have carried out significant shop front improvement works in the last 2 years and tenant applicants must have a lease with more than 12 months left as well as their landlords consent to do any improvements.

Eligible Works

The grant can be used towards:

- New or replacement signage (in line with design and planning guidance)
- External painting and decorative works
- Repair or replacement of doors and windows (subject to building regs/planning requirements)
- Restoration of original architectural features
- Installation of non-security lighting (e.g. ambient or decorative external lighting)
- Improvements to first-floor frontages (if forming part of the same commercial unit)
- Professional fees relating to project on a case-by-case basis (e.g. planning and building regs)

Ineligible Works

The grant cannot be used towards:

- Security measures (e.g. roller shutters, grilles, alarms, CCTV)
- Internal refurbishments
- Routine maintenance or repair work with no aesthetic improvement (this includes the upkeep of grant-funded items)
- Projects already started or completed prior to a formal offer

Grant amounts

Grants will cover up to 75% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of £10,000 for standard shop fronts and £20,000 for double-fronted premises (subject to assessment). The grant is match funded and the business or property owner must contribute at least 25% of the total project cost. All grants are subject to availability and are awarded at the Council's discretion.

Applications

All applications must be accompanied by at least 1 clear itemized quote for proposed works from a locally based contractor and they must be able to complete their project within the grant time frame i.e. by 16th February 2026. We will require before and after photographs as part of the evidence, and projects must comply with planning design guidelines and all necessary consents must be in place – planning, building regs etc. before any grant can be paid.

All grants are discretionary and subject to funding availability. Businesses with outstanding business rates are not eligible for this grant. Food and beverage businesses must have a food hygiene rating of 3 and above to be considered for this grant.

To apply for a grant, businesses must complete an application form. To help them with this guidance notes have been prepared and additional help can be sought from the Place Making Team. Applications must be submitted in writing with the relevant supporting documentation.

Decision Making Process

Applications will be assessed by Council officers and approval delegated to the Director of Economy/Growth or their nominated representative.

Following approval, all applicants will be expected to enter into a grant agreement detailing the grant offer and works to be undertaken. Grants will only be paid on completion of the approved works and submission of the required evidence.

Regular updates will be provided to Portfolio Holder for Business, Employment & Enterprise on the progress of the scheme.