

Subject:	AYLESHAM VILLAGE EXPANSION/DEVELOPMENT SHOPFRONT GRANT SCHEME
Date:	11 January 2024
Decision to be taken by:	Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
Report of:	Christopher Townend, Head of Place and Growth
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Kevin Mills, Leader of the Council
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Delegated Authority:	Cabinet Decision CAB 57(c) of 7 November 2022 as follows: ‘That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (Place and Environment), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree and approve a Shopfront Scheme’.
Classification:	Unrestricted
Purpose of the report:	To seek approval to agree and approve the Shopfront Grant Scheme.
Recommendation:	That the Strategic Director (Place and Environment) approves the Shopfront Grant Scheme, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The developers, BDW Homes and Persimmon, have allocated a budget of £100,000 to restore existing shopfronts in Aylesham. Properties located in Market Place, Dorman Avenue South, Attlee Avenue and Cornwallis Avenue would be eligible for the scheme, provided they also meet the criteria set out below.
- 1.2 The scheme proposal was considered by Cabinet on 7 November 2022 (CAB 57). It was approved that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (Place and Environment), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree and approve a shopfront grant scheme.

2. Developer Specification for the Shopfront Grant Scheme

- 2.1 The following specification information is outlined in the Aylesham Village Expansion Strategic Infrastructure Works Description Sheets (June 2020). This document is an agreed summary of works, produced by the developers, which details the strategic infrastructure for the project.

Clause 2B.10 (2.11) Restoration of existing shopfronts

Upgrading of shop frontages indicated on drawing no's 18082A/10,11,12 (available on request)

- New fascias
- New windows
- New perforated security shutters
- New retractable canopies
- New external lighting

3. **Proposed Criteria for the Shopfront Grant Scheme**

3.1 Established businesses located in Market Place, Dorman Avenue South, Cornwallis Avenue and Attlee Avenue will be eligible to apply for a shopfront grant of 100% of costs up to £5,000 if the property is at ground level and they can answer YES to the following questions:

1. Is the property on Market Place, Dorman Avenue South, Cornwallis Avenue and Attlee Avenue?
2. Can the property be seen clearly from the street?
3. Will the renovation make a positive difference to the surrounding area?

The shopfront grant is for properties that are occupied or have been empty for less than 6 months.

3.2 External renovations or improvements to front elevations of buildings (areas visible from the street), including, but not limited to:

- Repairs
- Repainting of shopfronts in suitable colours
- Signage
- External lighting
- Security grilles and/or security glazing
- Repairs of external stonework and brickwork
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes
- Internal repairs to the ground floor of the property

3.3 To apply, business owners need to provide:

- A completed application form.
- Confirmation they are the registered proprietor and director of the company.
- Evidence that they are the freeholder or leaseholder or written consent from their landlord to carry out the work, including Land Registry Title information.
- If the property is a lease, then evidence that there is at least 5 years remaining on the term.
- They have obtained planning permission, building control consent and landlord's consent if necessary.
- Two comparable quotes for the work.

3.4 Submitted applications that meet the developers' specification and proposed criteria are reviewed by a Dover District Council (DDC) panel made up of representatives from Legal, Financial Services and Design Services. The panel is also attended by the Project Manager and Community Development Officer.

3.5 Once an application is recommended for approval or rejected by the panel, delegated authority to proceed or otherwise will be sought from the Strategic Director (Place and Environment) with Portfolio Holder engagement. Once delegated authority has been

received the applicant will be notified of the outcome. Successful applicants will be required to complete the works within 8 months of their application being approved.

4. Finance

4.1 The budget of £100,000 is held by the developers and available for the duration of the wider housing development project (expected completion date is March 2026).

4.2 The development partners have agreed that DDC manages the application process. Details of successful applicants will be confirmed to the developer.

4.3 DDC will invoice the developers for the approved funds.

4.4 Once the shopfront improvement works have been completed and inspected by DDC officers, DDC will pay the business owner the agreed amount as outlined in their application and on receipt of associated invoices.

4.5 Finance will set up a special revenue project code to track and monitor the income and expenditure.

5. Identification of Options

5.1 Option 1: To approve the Shopfront Grant Scheme.

This is the recommended option. The budget of £100,000 could facilitate visible improvements to Aylesham and is likely to have a more positive impact on dwell time and spend for local businesses.

5.2 Option 2: Not to approve the Shopfront Grant Scheme.

This is not recommended. If the funding is not used for this purpose, local shops will lose the opportunity to make their shopfronts more attractive to help with business growth. The funding will be absorbed into the development partner's strategic infrastructure fund.

6. Resource Implications

6.1 Funding is to be provided by the developers to fund shopfront grant claims; DDC will only pay out the grants to shop front owners once the funding has been received from the developer.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

This report does highlight the opportunity to support local businesses to repair or replace items such as shopfronts with improved energy efficient windows and doors, energy efficient LED exterior lighting. These grants will support businesses to reduce energy costs and reduce their emissions which supports the Council's climate change strategy to be net zero as a district by 2050 and reduce the environmental implications to the district.

8. Corporate Implications

8.1 Comment from Finance: Accountancy have been consulted and have no further comments to add.

8.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.

8.3 Comment from the Equality Officer: This report seeking approval for the Shopfront Grant Scheme does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

9. **Background Papers**

Aylesham Development Update (07 November 2022) – Report to update Cabinet on project progress, including a request to amend the Programme to accommodate a delay caused by Natural England’s concerns over possible nitrate contaminations at Stodmarsh Nature Reserve and to seek agreement from Cabinet for a proposed Shopfront Grant Scheme funded through the project.

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