



Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme

Guidance Notes

This is a scheme to promote the occupation of empty retail units in certain parts of Stafford Town Centre.

Through this scheme for a 12 month period eligible businesses can claim 100% discount on their business rates up to a maximum of £10,000 whichever is the lowest.

Eligibility Criteria

Businesses interested in applying for this scheme must meet the following criteria:

1. Be new to the area of Stafford as stipulated specifically in Appendix One.
2. Want to occupy a currently empty ground floor retail unit or business premises in one of the eligible streets:

• Crabbery Street	• Gaolgate Street
• Gaolgate Place	• Guildhall Shopping Centre
• Malt Mill Lane	• Market Street
• North Walls (part of.)	• Princes Street
• Salter Street	• Stafford Street

See Appendix Two showing a map of the eligible locations.

3. Must not be a business which is a charity shop, betting shop, off license, e-cigarette/vaping shop, pawnbroker, short-term high interest loan company or similar.
4. Must inform the Council of timescales in terms of moving into the vacant premises.

Priority Criteria

Should eligible businesses meet one or more of the points below, priority will be given in support of their application:

1. Be going into vacant units or business premises in a **prominent** ground floor location

2. Be an independent trader
3. Be able to source a level of financial contribution from the landlord e.g. rent free period

Subject to the eligibility criteria and the number of priority factors evidenced in the application, the Borough Council will provide 100% discount on business rates for up to a 12 month period OR a £10,000 contribution towards business rates, whichever is the lower.

Example

Where the annual business rates payable for a unit is £7,000 the Council Scheme will meet this in full for the first 12 months. Where the annual business rates for a unit are £17,000 the Council Scheme will meet £10,000 (the maximum available) of this amount through this scheme.

How to Apply

There is a dedicated application form which the applying business (or person authorised to sign on behalf of the ratepayer such as an accountant or agent) must complete.

In addition to the application form, applicants who are business start-ups are required to provide a 12 month cash flow forecast and a profit and loss forecast. Applicants who are existing businesses are required to provide two years of audited accounts.

Following receipt of an application, an assessment will be carried out, the results of which will be provided in writing. For successful applications an amended Non Domestic Rate demand will be issued from the Non Domestic Rates team at Stafford Borough Council reflecting the relief provided.

For an informal chat and to request an application form, please contact Mary Timmis, Economic Development Officer on 01785 619584 or email mtimmis@staffoordbc.gov.uk

Other information

Regarding the Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme, the relevant unit should remain empty and the offer letter received by the successful applicant before they move in, so as not to jeopardise their eligibility for the support.

An application for the Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme will not be considered if the ratepayer is in arrears in relation to any of its businesses with Stafford Borough Council.

The Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme is being operated on a strictly first come first served basis to businesses who meet the essential criteria by Stafford Borough Council.

The Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme can be used in conjunction with other business rates relief schemes e.g. Small Business Rate Relief, subject to eligibility and approval.

Applicants should have contacted the Business Rates Team at Stafford Borough Council, to ascertain other potential business rate relief schemes and receive approval for these, before completing the application form for the Stafford Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme.

Successful applicants of the Stafford Town Centre Business Rate Relief Scheme must provide a copy of their signed lease agreement to Stafford Borough Council before moving into the premises.

Successful applicants from the date of the Borough Council's offer letter will have 3 months in which to utilise the scheme.

Successful applicants must agree to any promotional activities to support the Stafford Town Centre Business Rate Relief Scheme e.g. Press releases, photography etc.

Support through the Stafford Town Centre Business Rate Relief Scheme applies to sustainable business growth. Should the awarded business cease trading or move out of the area within five years of the relief being applied, the amount of assistance granted may be required to be repaid to Stafford Borough Council.

The applicant must inform Stafford Borough Council of any change in circumstances that affects the award of relief in particular any further assistance given that impacts upon the financial standing of the company or eligibility for financial assistance including State Aid.

An applicant, who tries to fraudulently apply for Discretionary Rate Relief by falsely declaring their circumstances or providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Theft Act 1968. Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate and this may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

The Stafford Town Centre Business Rate Relief scheme falls under De Minimis State Aid. All De Minimis State Aid awards received by an applicant should not collectively exceed €200,000 (i.e. approximately £170,000) over the last three year period. Applicants will be asked to confirm such information on the application form.

The Council has final discretion on the acceptability of applications.

APPENDIX ONE

Definition of 'new to the area' for the purposes of this scheme:

For existing businesses:

Only businesses from outside of the red boundary wanting to re-locate into the eligible areas within the red boundary can apply.

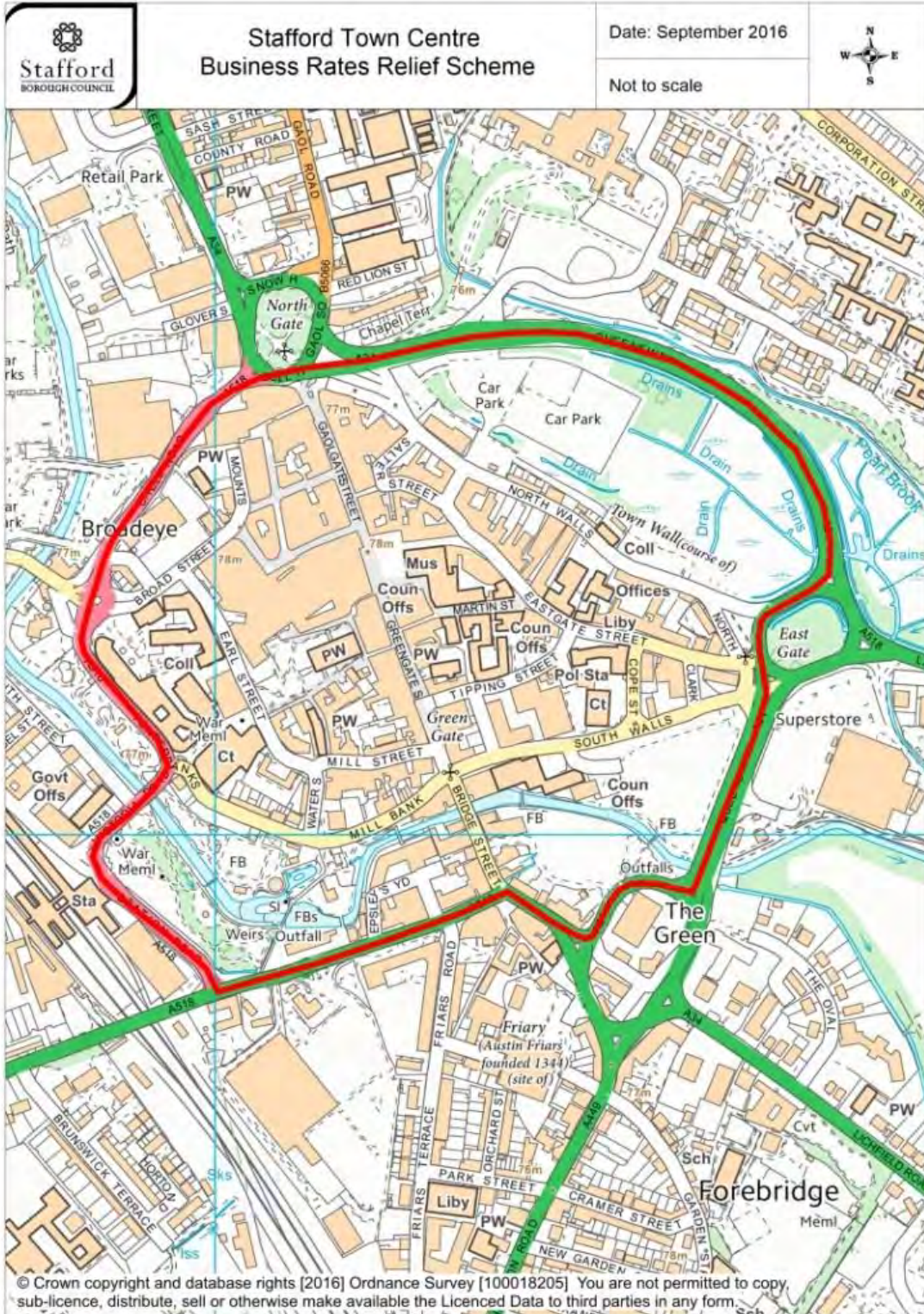
See Appendix Two for specific detail on eligible areas within the boundary.

For people wanting to set up in business:

People wishing to start up a business will automatically be classed as meeting this particular eligibility criterion 'new to the area'.

See map below.

APPENDIX ONE



Eligible Properties

APPENDIX TWO

