



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number CBP8652, 3 September 2019

# Future High Streets Fund

By Chris Rhodes

### Contents:

1. Future High Streets Fund
2. High Street Task Force
3. High Streets Heritage Action Zones



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Future High Streets Fund</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background	4
1.2 What can the Fund be used for?	4
1.3 Applications for the Fund	5
1.4 Phase Two shortlist	6
<b>2. High Street Task Force</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. High Streets Heritage Action Zones</b>	<b>10</b>

## Summary

The [Future High Street Fund](#) was announced in the 2018 Budget to support the development of high streets that are seeking to offer more than traditional retail space.

The Fund is worth £1 billion and will support 100 town centres in England.

### What can the Fund be used for?

The Fund will be used to develop the infrastructure of town centres so that they can adapt to the changing retail environment.

The Fund will *not* make awards to local areas seeking to expand traditional retail on their high streets.

The Fund will mostly be used to fund capital projects such as:

- Improving transport access to town centres
- Improving vehicle and pedestrian flow in town centres
- Congestion relieving infrastructure
- Infrastructure to facilitate new housing and office space
- Projects that seek to substitute under-used and persistently vacant retail units into residential units.

The remainder of the Fund will assist local areas to produce long-term strategies for their high streets, and will fund a new High Streets Taskforce that will provide expertise and practical support to the successful bids.

### Shortlisted towns

As of September 2019, 100 town centres have been shortlisted. These towns will receive up to £150,000 to develop detailed proposals. They will be assisted by the High Streets Task Force.

Eventually, depending on the scale of their plans, each town will be offered funding of up to £25 million. Successful bids will have to demonstrate that they have secured shared funding and support from the relevant local authority, local businesses or other organisations.

### High Street Task Force

The [High Streets Task Force](#) was launched on 2 July 2019. The group's role is to support the towns shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund through the process of drawing up their plans for redevelopment.

The Task Force is composed of experts who will provide tailored guidance to each of the shortlisted towns.

### High Streets Heritage Action Zones

Part of the Future High Streets Fund has been reserved to support high streets in conservation areas.

The [High Streets Heritage Action Zones Fund](#) is open to applications from high streets within conservation zones and is administered by Historic England. Successful applicants will demonstrate that the funds will be used to improve the physical realm around the high street, and support activities that encourage people to engage with heritage.

# 1. Future High Streets Fund

## 1.1 Background

In his 2018 Budget speech, the then Chancellor Philip Hammond said that<sup>1</sup>

... the High Street lies at the heart of many communities. And it is under pressure as never before as Britain adopts online shopping with greater alacrity than any other large economy. So, if Britain's High Streets are to remain at the centre of our community life, they will need to adapt.

This issue has been of interest to successive governments and the Department for Business Industry and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) published a brief history of government support for the high street since 2010 in 2016: [2010 to 2015 government policy: high streets and town centres](#).

The new policy to combat this issue announced in at the 2018 Budget was, the **Future High Streets Fund**, which was outlined in a [policy paper published alongside the Budget](#)<sup>2</sup>. (The Budget also announced a one-third reduction of business rates for retail premises up to a rateable value of £51,000 in 2019/20 and 2020/21. Business rates are covered in [a separate Library Briefing Paper](#).)

The Future High Streets Fund was originally worth £675 million and would provide support to 50 town centres. It was expanded in August 2019 and is now worth £1 billion and will support 100 town centres.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 What can the Fund be used for?

The Fund will only make awards in cases where local areas have shown how they expect high streets to adapt to the changing retail environment. **The Fund will *not* make awards to local areas seeking to “expand traditional retail on their high streets”.**

The majority of the Fund (around 90%) will be used to fund capital projects such as:

- Improving transport access to town centres
- Improving vehicle and pedestrian flow in town centres
- Congestion relieving infrastructure
- Infrastructure to facilitate new housing and office space
- Projects that seek to substitute under-used and persistently vacant retail units into residential units.

The remainder of the Fund will assist local areas to produce long-term strategies for their high streets, and will fund a new High Streets

---

<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury, [Budget documents: Philip Hammond's speech](#), 29 October 2018

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), [Future High Streets Fund](#), 29 October 2018

<sup>3</sup> MHCLG, [£1 billion Future High Streets Fund expanded to 50 more areas](#), 26 August 2019

Taskforce that will provide expertise and practical support to the successful bids.

### 1.3 Applications for the Fund

The fund is competitive, and local areas experiencing challenges were encouraged to submit bids setting out the “overall vision” of how they will transform their town centres and high streets, as set out in a [call for proposals](#) for the fund on 26 December 2018.

The [prospectus for the Fund](#) (published alongside the call for proposals) explains which places are eligible, the application process, and how decisions will be made.<sup>4</sup>

#### Eligible areas

The Fund is designed to support high streets of towns centres in England (this is a devolved policy area) that are facing “significant challenges” in attracting visitors and businesses.<sup>5</sup>

The following types of local authorities can apply for funding: unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, London boroughs, district councils (where there is a two-tier system).

It is expected that these all bids will include proof of engagement with and support from other stakeholders, such as mayoral and non-mayoral combined authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts, private sector organisations, community groups.<sup>6</sup>

#### Application process

A wide variety of types of organisation can apply for funding, including local authorities, Mayoral and non-Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts, Private sector organisations, Community groups.

There is a two-stage application process: **Phase 1** is based on the application form above and asked for applicants to set out their “challenges and strategic approach”; **Phase 2** will be based on a business cases submitted by those who are successful at phase 1.

Phase 1 closed on 22 March 2019. The 50 bids that were successful in Phase 1 were announced 5 July 2019.<sup>7</sup> On 26 August 2019, it was announced that the scheme would be broadened so that an additional 50 towns would also progress to stage two.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> MHCLG, [Prospectus: Future High Streets Fund](#), 26 December 2018

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p12

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> MHCLG, [Multi-million fund to revitalise country's high streets](#), 5 July 2019

<sup>8</sup> MHCLG, [£1 billion Future High Streets Fund expanded to 50 more areas](#), 26 August 2019

## Decision process

Applications that moved beyond Phase 1 were shortlisted for the final awards. All proposals at Phase 2 will require “fully worked up business cases”.

These will need to demonstrate an element of co-funding, including either some from the authorities’ own budget, or from the private sector or both.

Although the fund will offer a maximum of up to £25 million to a successful bid, it is anticipated that awards of £5-£10 million will be made to smaller towns.

Details of the criteria for shortlisting in Phase 1 and the awards in Phase 2 are on pages 14 and 15 of the [Supplementary guidance](#).

### 1.4 Phase Two shortlist

In July 2019, [the government announced](#) a shortlist of 50 town centres that have progressed to Phase Two of the competition.<sup>9</sup>

The Press Release explains what will happen in Phase Two:

Those successful towns will now receive up to £150,000 of new funding to work up detailed project proposals, based on their initial plans. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work closely with them, focussing on those places that have “shovel ready” projects where there might be opportunities to accelerate these.

A list of all 50 shortlisted towns are in a [PDF linked to from the Press Release](#). The list is reproduced below:

Towns shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund	
Birkenhead; New Ferry	Northampton
Bishop's Auckland	Nottingham City Centre, West End Point
Buxton	Old Kent Road
Chatham	Oldham
Chorley	Penzance
Coalville	Poole
Crewe	Rotherham
Darlington	Sheffield High Street
Dartford	South Shields
Derby City Centre, St Peters Cross	Stafford
Erdington	Stockport
Farnworth	Stockton

<sup>9</sup> MHCLG, [Press release: Multi-million fund to revitalise country's high streets](#), 5 July 2019

Fleetwood	Stretford
Great Yarmouth	Sunderland City Centre
Halifax	Sutton
Heanor	Swindon
Huddersfield	Taunton
Hull City Centre, Whitefriargate	Tottenham High Road
Kidderminster	Wakefield City Centre
King's Lynn	Walsall
Mansfield	Whitehaven
March High Street	Wigan
Morecambe	Winsford
Nelson	Wolverhampton City Centre (West)
Newhaven	Yeovil

On 26 August 2019, it was announced that an additional 50 town centres would be shortlisted.

<b>Additional towns shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund</b>	
Bacup Town Centre	Kingswood
Barnsley Town Centre	Kirkham Town Centre
Barnstaple	Leamington Town Centre
Barrow Town Centre	Loftus
Bideford	Maryport Town Centre
Blackfriars - Northern City Centre	Middlesbrough Centre
Blackpool Town Centre	Newcastle-Under-Lyme Town Centre
Blyth Town Centre	Newton Abbot
Bolton Town Centre	Northallerton
Brierley Hill High Town Centre	Nuneaton Town Centre
Carlisle City Centre	Paignton
Cinderford Town Centre	Plymouth City Centre
Clacton Town Centre	Putney Town Centre
Commercial Road	Ramsgate
Doncaster Waterdale	Rochdale Town Centre
Dover Town Centre and Waterfront	Runcorn Old Town
Elland Town Centre	Salisbury City Centre

## 8 Future High Streets Fund

Fratton	Scarborough Town Centre
Grantham	Scunthorpe
Grays Town Centre	St Neots
Grimsby Town Centre	Sutton
Harlow Town Centre	Tamworth Town Centre
Heart of the City Quarter	Trowbridge
High Wycombe	Wealdstone
Holbeach	Woolwich Town Centre

## 2. High Street Task Force

The High Streets Task Force was launched on 2 July 2019.<sup>10</sup> The group's role is to support the towns shortlisted in the Future High Streets Fund Competition through the process of drawing up plans for redevelopment, as explained on [page 10 of the Prospectus](#).

The [Press Release](#) launching the group gave further details of its role:

The High Streets Task Force will be comprised of experts who will provide tailored guidance and advice to local authorities seeking breathe new life into their local high streets and town centres as they battle against changing consumer habits.

The Task Force will be chaired by Sir John Timpson, a long-time proponent of innovative methods of high street rejuvenation, and Chairman of Timpson, the chain of shoe repair and key cutting shops.

The Task Force will be facilitated by the [Institute of Place Management \(IPM\)](#) of Manchester Metropolitan University, which "works with policy makers, practitioners and providers to identify the core skills and competences involved in the effective management, development and marketing of places."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> MHCLG, [Press release: New Task Force to help revitalise high streets and town centres](#), 2 July 2019

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

### 3. High Streets Heritage Action Zones

Part of the High Streets Fund has been reserved for high streets that are located within Conservations Zones. This will be a separately administered Fund, called the **High Streets Heritage Action Zones fund**. The High Streets Heritage Action Zones fund was [announced by the Jeremy Wright and James Brokenshire](#) on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

The [High Streets Heritage Action Zones fund](#) is administered by Historic England. The [Expressions of Interest Guidance Notes](#) for the fund explain the essential criteria for applications ([page 4](#)):

- 1 High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) must be in a Conservation Area
- 2 HSHAZs must be delivered through a partnership, and include the local authority as a partner (the local authority does not need to be the lead partner, but there needs to be evidence of their commitment to the initiative)
- 3 HSHAZs must be delivered with demonstrable support of the local community
- 4 HSHAZs must be capable of completion in four years (April 2020 to March 2024)

Awards will be made through a two-stage process similar to the process for the main Future High Streets Fund:

- 1 Stage One is a competitive expressions of interest (Historic England state that they “expect demand to exceed the available funding”). The deadline for this stage was midday on 12 July 2019. The [application form is on the Heritage England website](#), along with a [Sample Expression of Interest Form](#). Completed forms must be submitted to the following email address: [Highstreets@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Highstreets@HistoricEngland.org.uk)
- 2 Stage Two is a programme design phase in which experts will work with successful applicants to develop a plan for spending the award.

Awards must be used for improvements to the **physical realm** in Conservation Areas (such as building or façade improvements, conservation of old buildings to new uses, and new buildings in ‘gap sites’), and **activities to help people engage with heritage** (including community activities and training in conservation skills). It is anticipated that successful applications will demonstrate how funds will be used for physical improvements and community engagement activities.

### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).