

Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme

Applicant Guide

INTRODUCTION

Attractive shopfronts can transform Ayr Town Centre's environment, improving livelihoods and civic pride by making it a more attractive and welcoming place to shop, work, visit and enjoy.

The Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme (GATCSIP) offers grants for eligible businesses, property owners, and tenants, with priority given to projects that enhance both the shopfront and surrounding streetscape. Eligible businesses must meet specific criteria and comply with any Conservation Area requirements.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Enhancing your shopfront can boost your business and make Ayr Town Centre a more appealing place to socialise, shop, work, and visit.

The Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme (GATCSIP) offers grants for improving, upgrading, or restoring shopfronts in eligible areas.

Full-scale shopfront renovations and creative signage – especially hand-painted – are encouraged, as these improvements can greatly enhance the area's character, civic pride, and community wellbeing.

The GATCSIP is a grant that you can apply for to improve, upgrade, or restore the front of your shop, business, or commercial premises within the eligible areas in Ayr Town Centre.

1. VALUE OF THE GRANT

The grant will cover 100% of the cost of improvements, depending on the size and scale of the work and the benefits of making the improvements.

The amount awarded will be a minimum of £1,000 up to a maximum of £12,000.

Applications cannot be made retrospectively. Applicants to apply as quickly as possible if they have been considering making improvements to their property. In the case of businesses registered for VAT who can therefore recover VAT, the funding award will be paid exclusive of VAT.

We will assess your application under a scoring system ([see below](#)) to determine if you will get the grant and how much you will get.

Grant is payable by premises so a business can apply for multiple grants.

This is a discretionary fund for which there is no right to appeal.

2. TIMESCALE

Applications open on **Monday 3 February 2025 at 10am** and close on **Monday 29 April 2025 at 11:59pm**.

3. ELIGIBLE WORKS

The quality and appearance of buildings in Ayr Town Centre are very important and have a considerable impact on the overall attractiveness of the area. The grant aims to improve the appearance of the town and make it more attractive to shoppers, visitors, and residents at any time of the day.

The grant will only fund what are called 'eligible works'. Whether the works are eligible will be at the discretion of the Council. The grant aims to achieve high quality results and some works will not be supported. If in doubt, businesses are encouraged to get in touch to discuss their proposal prior to applying.

3.1 Eligible Works:

- Retention or reinstatement of historic or traditional fascia (the horizontal boards that run around the edge of the building's roof) and in certain instances new fascia if sensitively designed.
- New signage (traditional hand painted signage is strongly encouraged), including projecting signs.
- Lighting, with a preference for overhanging lights over illuminated boxes.
- Retractable awnings and blinds - The Council will favour the use of traditional sunblind materials, such as woven materials or canvas, in neutral rather than bright colours.
- Repainting the outside of your premises.

- Refurbishment or replacement of the shop or building frontage.
- Fees for any necessary statutory consents.
- Cost of an architect, surveyor, structural engineer, or agent.

The shopfronts should respect the character of the street and the area in general and be harmonious with the overall style and appearance of the building. Any proposed colour scheme should be in keeping with the colour scheme of the building and the adjoining buildings.

For more information and guidance read the [Ayr Shopfront Design Guide](#).

3.2 Works that are **NOT** eligible:

- Works you have already started or finished.
- The amenity area of ground in front of your business unit
- Any ancillary or removeable items, such as planting, benches, trellises, and hanging baskets.
- Paining of stonework, where paint has never been applied before
- Any area above ground floor, and therefore not considered to be your shopfront.
- Any non-physical shopfront elements, such as photography or web/digital elements
- Any signage not attached to the building, such as A-frame boards.
- Solid security roller shutters, alarms, etc.
- Temporary signage
- Insurance
- Trade fittings like plumbing or utilities
- Repair/reinstatement/replacement of guttering and down pipes
- Demolition of historic fabrics
- Plastic windows, plastic doors, plastic signs, and plastic cladding
- Non-traditional canopies and awnings
- VAT (where the applicant is VAT registered, and VAT is therefore recoverable)

4. ELIGIBLE BUSINESSES

4.1 Eligible Businesses:

- You are the owner or leaseholder of business or commercial premises within one of the defined 'Gateways' to Ayr.
- You are the leaseholder of a business or commercial premises within one of the defined 'Gateways' to Ayr and have two or more years remaining on your lease. Please note, proof of permission to apply for a grant will be required from your landlord.

To find out if your business is within one of the defined 'Gateways' to Ayr (see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)).

Types of businesses or commercial premises include:

- Shops
- Hairdressers, Beauty Salons, and Tattoo Parlours
- Cafes, Restaurants, and Takeaways
- Public Houses
- Professional or Financial Services
- Tourism and Leisure Facilities

4.2 Businesses that are **NOT** eligible:

- Businesses or premises not located within the defined 'Gateways' to Ayr (see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#))
- Businesses within the defined 'Gateways' to Ayr who have less than two years remaining on their lease.
- Businesses that form part of a chain of five or more outlets.
- Businesses with a turnover of more than £1m in the previous tax year.
- Businesses that received a shopfront grant from South Ayrshire Council for the same property in the last 3 years.
- Properties that cannot be accessed directly from public roads or streets.
- Businesses with an unpaid or outstanding debt with the Council.

We will consider each application on an individual basis and there is no guarantee that all applicants will be successful in securing funding. Funding will support those businesses looking to invest in the town centre by making it a more attractive place.

5. APPLYING FOR THE GRANT & GRANT OFFER

5.1 Application Process

Step 1: Submit Application

Application Opens: Monday 3 February 2025, 10:00am
Application Closes: Wednesday 30 April 2025, 11:59pm

1. Complete Application Form

- Find the form – will be available Feb 3 2025

2. Include Required Documents

- **Photos:** Clear images of your current shopfront
- **Scaled Drawings:**
 - Show current and proposed shopfront
 - Include elevation frontage, cross-section, and work specifications
- **Ownership or Lease Documents:**
 - Owners: Provide Title deeds
 - Tenants/Leaseholders: Provide a written lease with at least 2 years remaining, written owner's consent, and owner's Title deeds.
- **VAT Status Confirmation**

It is recommended that applicants hire an architect to assist with the application, including having them provide scaled drawings. To find an architect visit [The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland](#).

While Planning Permission and other Statutory Consents are not required to apply, they will be required before work can begin and for any grant funds to be paid. If you don't require any permissions, you will need to provide proof they are not required.

Depending on the number of applicants, Planning Permission and other Statutory Consents can take up to, or upwards of, 8 weeks. Applicants are encouraged to begin the process in Stage 1 of the application process.

Application Review: South Ayrshire Council will check for completeness and alignment with programme goals.

Notification: Applicants will be informed within 8 weeks whether they proceed to Stage 2 (Conditional Offer).

Step 2: Conditional Offer

Applicants should be notified by Monday 30 June 2025

- Successful applicants receive a conditional offer letter with funding details and conditions.
- **Sign and Return Offer:** Must be completed within 4 weeks of receipt.

Step 3: Permissions, Consents, and Contractor Quotes

1. **Secure Necessary Permissions:** Obtain all required planning and building consents or evidence they are not required.
2. **Gather Contractor Quotes:**
 - Obtain 3 quotes per project element (preferably from local contractors).
 - If unable to find local contractors, provide evidence of attempts.
3. **Tips for Hiring Contractors:**
 - Get written quotes from contractors on headed paper or emails that include quality standards. Be clear about your project goals and send the same specifications to each contractor to ensure fair comparison.
 - Request a price breakdown and an outline of how they'd approach the work, including timelines. You may choose a higher bid if the timing is better suited to your needs.
 - **If you are not using the lowest quote, please explain why.**
 - For different project elements, obtain three separate quotes per element. Ensure all quotes are from legitimate contractors, preferably local to South Ayrshire, and consider using the [South Ayrshire Trusted Trader Scheme](#).
 - Preparing a scope of work can help clarify expectations—[see an example here](#).

4. Submit Final application:

- Submit all required documentation for final approval

Step 4: Final Approval and Implementation of Works

- Once all permissions and consents are verified, applicants will receive a 'Permission to Start' letter.
- **Approved works must be completed within 6 months of receiving permission to start.**
- Extensions may be granted under exceptional circumstances.

Step 5: Grant Payment

Grant funds will be disbursed upon completion and inspection of the works to ensure compliance with the approved proposal.

5.2 – Questions

If you have any questions or please feel free to contact us to discuss your ideas or proposals for the property, before applying for the grant. We will give you guidance on eligibility, what supporting information you need, and how long it will take to process your application. Before contacting us, you should have a clear idea of the extent of works to be undertaken and the likely cost, either from estimates or professional advice.

Email us with your ideas and questions at ayrshopfronts@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

We will visit your premises to discuss your proposal for the grant.

6. STATUTORY CONSENTS

There are several statutory permissions that may be required to alter a shopfront and South Ayrshire Council's Planning and Building Standards Service will be able to advise on the procedures to be followed.

The grant application process is independent of any application for statutory consents and vice versa, therefore if you are approved for planning permission or building warrant, this does not imply you are approved for this grant.

Planning permission and other consents are not required to apply but must be obtained—or proof obtained that they aren't needed (for example in the form of an email from the Planning Service)—before work begins if your application is approved.

Planning consent or building warrants can take several months to process, so we recommend applying for them when you start your application.

6.1. Planning Permission

What might need planning permission:

- Altering fascias
- Adding blinds, awnings, or shutters
- Changing doors or display windows

[Click here for more information.](#)

6.2 Building Warrants

A Building Warrant may be required to ensure that any alterations are structurally sound and in accordance with the Scottish Building Standards in respect of safety, accessibility, and sustainability.

[Click here for more information.](#)

6.3 Advertising Consent

Advertising consent is required for the erection or replacement of all advertisements and signs in the Town Centre LDP2 Retail Core and Conservation Areas.

[Click here for more information.](#)

6.4 Listed Building Consent

There are several 'listed' buildings in the Town Centre LDP2 Retail Core and Conservation Area and any external or internal changes to a shopfront on a listed building will require Listed Building Consent.

To find out if your property is a listed building visit [Search for a Listed Building | Historic Environment Scotland](#).

You can find more guidance on:

- [Planning - South Ayrshire Council](#)
- [Historic Environment Scotland | Search for a Listed Building](#)
- [Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Shopfronts and Signs](#)

7. APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

We will consider your application based equally on the impact it will have and the quality of the proposed works.

The impact includes:

- The streetscape – the shopfront should respect the character of the area in general and be harmonious with the overall style and appearance of the building.
- The status of the building – if the property is occupied or vacant and how long it's been vacant.
- How prominent it is – if it is visible from a civic space, if it's a corner unit, or if it's of historical importance.
- If you have asked local contractors for quotes

The quality is based on:

- The quality and standards of the design, with preference given to designs that reference or evoke Ayr Town Centre's historic shopfronts.
- The scale – if the proportions are appropriate to the building and surroundings townscape.
- Any features of interest or character that will be retained, restored, or included.
- The appearance, choice of materials, and colours, with a preference for design that reinstate the original scale, proportion, and details of Ayr Town Centre's historic shopfronts.

Eligibility:

- Location – is the shopfront in a 'gateway' area?
- Are you the owner or leaseholder of the property?
- Owner consent, if you are the leaseholder
- 2 or more years remaining on your lease

The evaluation process will take approximately 2 months, and we will aim to let all applicants know whether they have been successful **by 30 June 2025**.

Please read the [Ayr Shopfront Design Guide](#) for more guidance regarding guidelines surrounding impact and quality.

8. PAYMENT

8.1 When will we pay the grant?

Payment of the grant will be made by a single payment once the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard, following an inspection by us, and you have sent us:

- Proof of payment to the contractor(s) by bank of building society transfer (BACS)
- The receipted invoice from the contractor(s) doing the work.

We can't award the grant for cash payments to suppliers or contractors.

All works should be completed 6 months after receiving a 'Permission to Start' letter.

We will make the payments to your nominated bank or building society account.

You must have enough money to be able to pay contractors in full before they start any work.

8.2 How will we pay the grant?

If you are using internet banking, make sure this information from your online bank statement is clearly identifiable on each page:

- Name of your bank
- Your name
- Your bank account number and sort code
- The debit, credit, and balance columns

- Name of the supplier, or suppliers, and the amounts paid
- The footer showing the web page

We can only accept proof of original receipts or statements. We can't accept screenshots.

You can scan and send us:

- Original receipts
- Print outs of your bank statements

If we have all the relevant information with your completed application for payment, we aim to pay you within 28 days of receiving your application.

9. SUBSIDY CONTROL

Subsidy Control – Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA)

The GATCSIP grant is classified as Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the [Subsidy Control Act 2022](#). To be eligible for the support, you must not have already exceeded receipt of £315,000 cumulated over this and the previous two financial years, as specified in section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022).

Note: Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) is a relatively new term which you may have previously seen referred to as “De Minimis” or “Special Drawing Rights” (SDR).

Before making any payment, written confirmation that receipt of the payment will not exceed your company's MFA threshold of £315,000 cumulated over this and the previous two financial years, as specified in section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022), is required.

This means you must confirm that you have not received more than £315,000 minus the value of this grant in MFA subsidies or comparable types of subsidies (see section 42(8) of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 in the current or previous two financial years. Please note that the MFA financial threshold applies at company group level.

We take this opportunity to remind you that you are required to keep a written record of the amount of MFA you have received and the date/s when it was received. The written record must be kept for at least three years beginning with the date on which the MFA was given. If your application is successful at the point of claiming the grant, we will issue you with an email which you can use as your written confirmation. This will enable you to respond to future requests from public authorities on how much MFA you have received and whether you have reached the cumulative threshold.

Scottish Enterprise have produced guidance on MFA for companies which you may find helpful, at the following link- [Minimal Financial Assistance guidance for companies - Scottish Enterprise \(scottish-enterprise.com\)](#).

10. CONDITIONS OF THE GRANT

A copy of the full Terms and Conditions of the Grant can be made available on request and will include the following:

- You must confirm acceptance of the terms and conditions of the grant in writing within 4 weeks of receiving the grant offer;
- All works should be completed by the date specified in the grant offer;
- The grant must be fully claimed within 6 months of acceptance of the grant offer;
- All works must be agreed in advance with the South Ayrshire Council;
- Any works carried out before your acceptance of the grant offer are not eligible for grant;
- The grant must be used for the purposes outlined in the offer of grant;
- All necessary consents must be in place before works commence e.g. planning, building warrant, listed building and/or advertising consent;
- All works must be carried out to a satisfactory standard, using appropriate methods and materials and in accordance with current health and safety requirements;
- Three competitive quotes should be obtained for all works;
- You must either be (i) the owner of the property (ii) the leaseholder under a formal written lease, with at least 2 years remaining on the lease, and in the case of the leaseholder, they leaseholder must obtain the written consent of the owner;
- The building must be insured during the works and thereafter and you must ensure that your contractors have appropriate public liability insurance in place during the period of the works;
- If you wish to make changes to the proposals after acceptance of the offer of grant, you must notify the Council in writing prior to making any changes and the Council will inform you if the changes are approved;
- The grant will be paid retrospectively by a single payment once the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard and you have provided proof of payment traceable through bank statements and invoices, and evidence of all necessary statutory consents;
- You must provide written confirmation that the award of the grant will not exceed the Subsidy Control Statutory Guidance 96 Minimum Financial Assistance threshold of £315,000, cumulated over the current and the previous two financial years;
- You must notify the Council in writing immediately if you intend to sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of your interest in the property -
 - (i) before the works are completed or
 - (ii) within 2 years of the payment of the grant.
- The Council shall have the right to recover or withhold payment of the grant -
 - (i) If you fail to comply with or breach of the grant Terms and Conditions.
 - (ii) If you fail to comply with or breach any legislation
 - (iii) If you provide any information in connection with the grant application that is fraudulent, misleading or incorrect
 - (iv) If deemed necessary to ensure compliance with the requirement of the Subsidy Control Act 2022
 - (v) If the Council is required to do so by any regulatory body
 - (vi) If you confirm to the Council in writing that you no longer wish to proceed with the project
 - (vii) If you sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of your interest in the property.
 - (i) Before the works are completed or

(ii) Within 2 years of the date of payment of the grant

- The Council reserves the right to publish photos, illustrations, or other details of your project in promotional literature, social media, website, and other documents associated with the grant scheme;
- A signboard acknowledging the grant funding should be displayed on site during the works.

11. DATA PROTECTION

We need to collect certain information to process your grant application and to contact you about it.

See our [Data Protection Policy](#) on how we use your data and your rights.

12. CONTACT US

If you have any questions, please contact us at ayrshopfronts@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Planning Department:

planning.development@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 0900

Building Standards:

building.standards@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01292 616253

13. APPENDICES

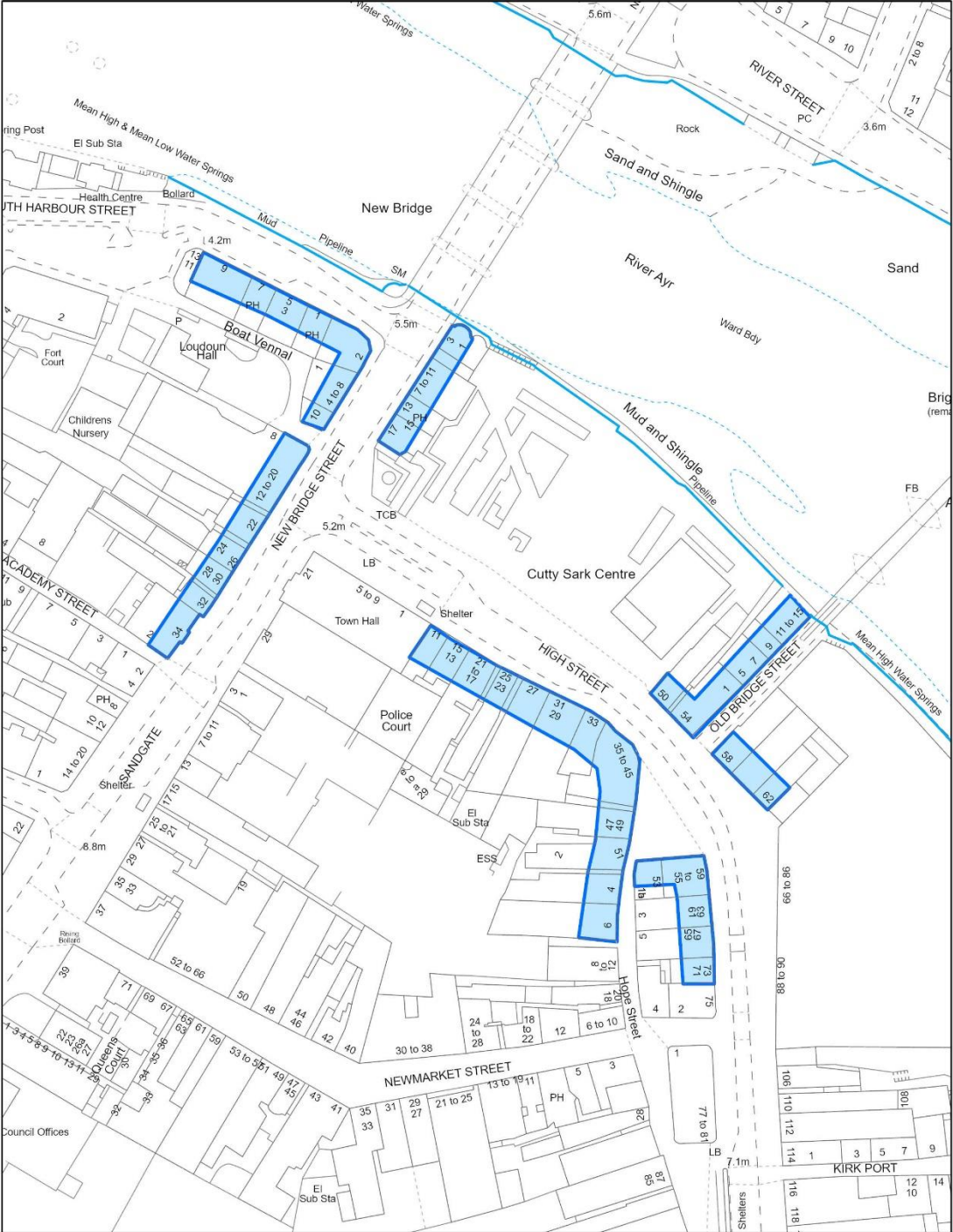
[Appendix 1: New Bridge & High Street Gateway Map](#)

[Appendix 2: Burns Statue Square Gateway Map](#)

[Appendix 3: Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Design Guide](#)

[Appendix 4: Example Letter to Contractor](#)

Appendix 1: New Bridge & High Street Gateway Map

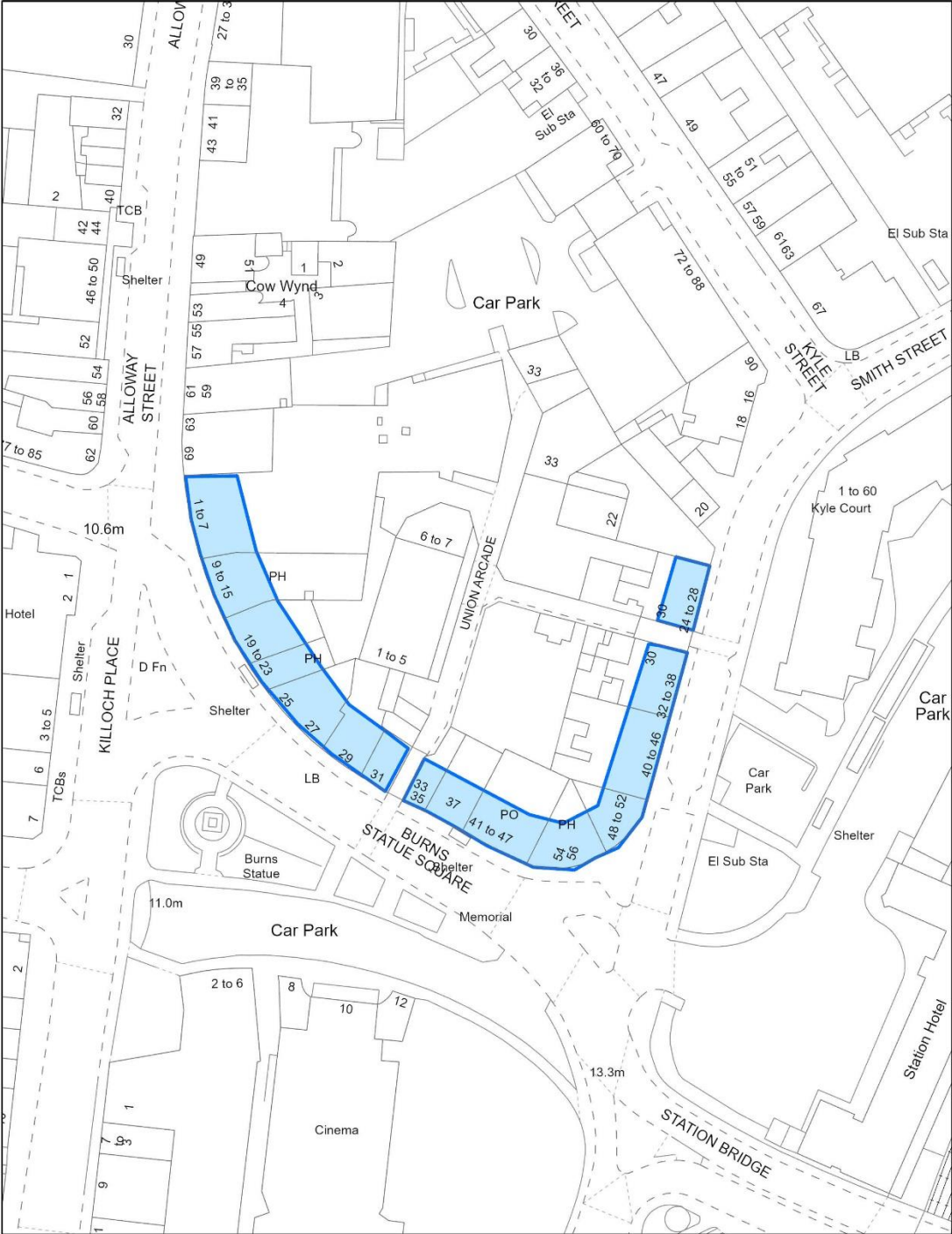


Shopfront Improvement Programme in Ayr

Scale 1:1,250



Appendix 2: Burns Statue Square Gateway Map



Shopfront Improvement Programme in Ayr

Scale 1:1,000



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Appendix 3: Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Design Guide

[Download the Design Guide here](#)

Appendix 4: Example Letter to Contractor

Invitation to quote – to be returned to:

[address] by [date]

[business by address]

We have read the specification of work and the associated drawings (where required) referred to therein, and by returning this quotation confirm that we are willing to execute the whole of the said works described for the tender sum of:

[£value excluding VAT]

Broken down as follows:

[cost breakdown of all items]

Please provide any trade/quality marks