



Ashford Borough Council Policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

Version Control

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1	December 2023	LM/DA	New policy for 2024, including all reliefs and changes due to the Non Domestic Rating Act 2023
2	January 2025	LM/DA	Policy fully updated for all changes from 2025 including new legislation.

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1.0 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to determine the level of discretionary relief and related areas to be granted to certain defined ratepayers within the Council's area. The policy includes all changes effective from 1st April 2025.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 and subsequent legislation requires the Council to grant mandatory relief for premises occupied by Charities and similar organisations that own or occupy them wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. Likewise, certain premises situated within a rural settlement area will be eligible for mandatory relief. Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of discretionary rate relief to any premises where the Council feels the granting of such relief would be of benefit to the local community.
- 1.3 In addition to the above, Central Government is keen that in certain cases, assistance should be provided to businesses who have had increases in their rate liability due to the revaluation of premises in April 2023. In these cases, and where the Council meets Central Government guidelines, grants are available under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 1.4 Whilst the Council is obliged to grant relief to premises, which fall within the mandatory category, the Council also has powers to grant discretionary relief and reductions to ratepayers, subject to certain criteria being met. In the case of the new reliefs, some guidance has been issued by Central Government outlining actions expected to be taken by local authorities. This policy includes Government guidance where appropriate but also looks to target discretionary relief in line with the Council's priorities.
- 1.5 This document outlines the following areas:
- Details of the criteria for receiving Discretionary Reliefs for all relevant areas;
 - The Council's policy for the granting of all types of Discretionary Reliefs;
 - Guidance on granting and administering the reliefs and awards; and
 - The Council's Scheme of Delegation.
- 1.6 Where organisations apply for relief they will be granted (or not granted) relief or reductions in line with the following policy.

2.0 Mandatory Relief - Legislative Background

Charity Relief

- 2.1 The powers relating to the granting of mandatory¹ and discretionary relief are given to the Council under the Local Government Finance Act 1988². Charities and Trustees for Charities are only liable to pay one fifth of the Non-Domestic Rates that would otherwise be payable where property is occupied and used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. This amounts to mandatory relief of 80%. For the purposes of the Act, a charity is an organisation or trust established for charitable purposes, whether or not it is registered with the Charity Commission. The provision has been extended under the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs). Full details of the mandatory provisions are given later within this policy.
- 2.2 In the case of charity shops, the premises must meet the criteria laid down by section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which states that the premises are to be treated as used for charitable purposes at any time it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to the charity and the proceeds of goods (after any deductions for expenses) are applied for the purpose of the charity.
- 2.3 The Council has discretion to grant relief of up to a further 20% for these mandatory cases under its discretionary provisions.
- 2.4 From 1st April 2025, Central Government have determined that all Private Schools which would have previously been entitled to mandatory relief (either as a charity or charitable organisation), will **no longer be entitled to mandatory relief**. For the purposes of this change the definition of 'Private School' is an educational establishment that provides compulsory full time education where a fee is payable.
- 2.5 The Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools Act 2025) will end relief eligibility for private schools. This change is intended to take effect from April 2025, subject to Parliamentary process. Private schools which are 'wholly or mainly' concerned with providing full time education to pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan will remain eligible for relief.

Rural Rate Relief

- 2.4 From 1st April 1998, under powers originally granted to the Council by the Local Government and Rating Act 1997³, certain types of business in rural settlements, with a population below 3000 may qualify for mandatory rate relief of 100 per cent⁴ Businesses that qualify for this relief are the sole general store and the sole post office in the settlement, provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £8500; any food shop with a Rateable

¹ S43 & S45 Local Government Finance Act 1988

² S47 & S48 Local Government Finance Act 1988

³ LGFA 1988, s.47, as amended by Sch. 1 to the Local Government and Rating Act 1997

⁴ the increase to 100% mandatory relief is effected by The Non Domestic Rating Act 2023 with effect from 1st April 2024.

Value of up to £8500; and the sole pub and the sole petrol station in the settlement provided it has a Rateable Value of up to £12500.

- 2.6 Where businesses in defined rural settlements have a Rateable Value of up to £16,500 **and** are not in receipt of mandatory relief, the Council may decide to give up to 100 per cent discretionary relief if it is satisfied that the business is of benefit to the community and having regard to the interests of its Council Taxpayers.

3.0 Discretionary Relief – Legislative Background

Introduction

- 3.1 The original purpose of discretionary relief was to provide assistance where the property does not qualify for mandatory relief, or to ‘top’ up cases where ratepayers already receive mandatory relief.
- 3.2 Over recent years and particularly since 2011, the discretionary relief provisions have been amended to allow authorities the flexibility to provide more assistance to businesses and organisations.
- 3.3 The range of bodies, which are eligible for discretionary rate relief, is wide and not all of the criteria laid down by the legislation will be applicable in each case.
- 3.4 Unlike mandatory relief, ratepayers are obliged to make a written application to the Council. The Council will expect all businesses to make applications in such a format as is required (which may vary from time to time) and for the business to provide such information and evidence as required in order to determine whether relief should be awarded.
- 3.5 The Council is obliged to carefully consider every application on its merits, taking into account the contribution that the organisation makes to the amenities within the authority’s area. There is no statutory appeal process or Tribunal against any decision made by the Council although, as with any decision of a public authority, decisions can be reviewed by Judicial Review. The authority will however, upon request, review decisions made. Details of the internal review process are given within this policy.
- 3.6 Granting of the relief falls broadly into the following categories:
- (a) Discretionary Relief – Charities who already receive mandatory relief.
 - (b) Discretionary Relief – Premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts **or** premises occupied by organisations not established or conducted for profit and wholly or mainly used for purposes recreation;
 - (c) Discretionary Relief – Rural Rate relief - premises not receiving mandatory relief but of benefit to the local community and less than £16,500 RV;
 - (d) Discretionary Relief – Granted under the Localism Act 2011 provisions;
 - (e) Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1st April 2023 for a period of up to three years); and

- (f) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1st April 2025 for a period of one year);

3.7 The decision to grant or not to grant discretionary relief is a matter purely for the Council.

The Council's general approach to granting Discretionary Relief

3.8 All discretionary rate relief applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and the council's strategic objectives and priorities.

3.9 Applications will therefore need to provide details of how their current activities contribute to some or all of the following:

1. **Jobs and economic growth** within the borough – attracting new business and growing our leisure, retail, and tourism sectors in urban and rural areas; working with partners to grow the borough's education capabilities and our skills base. Examples might include:
 - community hall to provide a range of community services such as a play group
 - mobile sports/arts programmes for young people to tackle anti-social behaviour;
2. **Quality homes and places to live** – for individual homes, new developments, our environment and the borough's infrastructure and communities. Examples might include:
 - local maintenance and conservation schemes, community allotments, play, outdoor recreation, and events;
3. **Great value service** – providing the range of council services benefiting Ashford's residents, ensuring that resources are deployed efficiently; developing specific programmes for the young and the elderly. Examples might include:
 - projects that provide services to council tenants, such as support and advice for the take up of benefits/access to services;
 - projects that provide support, advice, or intervention to prevent homelessness;
 - projects that deliver recreational activities for young people outside of school hours, such as youth clubs, sports projects, community arts and festivals

3.10 In deciding which organisations should receive discretionary rate relief, the Council will consider the services provided by the organisation against use the following eligibility criteria to assess any entitlement:

- be a not-for-profit organisation with either charitable status or a constitution with a formally appointed voluntary management committee;
- have a bank or building society account in the organisation's name;
- operate in Ashford borough and/or serve borough residents;
- deliver services that provide a meaningful contribution to achieving Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives and priorities;
- demonstrate a wide community reach and ensure that service(s), project(s) or facilities are open at all times to all sections of the community and that all users are treated equally or have a clear, non-financial justification for targeting or prioritising a user group;

- if appropriate, have a pricing policy that does not create a barrier to the use of their service(s), project(s) or facilities for particular groups of users (i.e. the disabled, students, deprived communities);
 - if appropriate, demonstrate that the organisation has relevant safeguards, insurances, and policies in place (i.e. public liability insurance, health and safety policy, child protection policy)
 - demonstrate a need for discretionary rate relief and hold no more than 12 months' running costs in unrestricted/free reserves;
 - provide a copy of the organisation's accounts for the last two years or if a new organisation (less than a year old), a business plan together with 12 months' cash flow forecast and balance sheet to date signed by the Chairman or Treasurer;
 - allow Ashford Borough Council to use the organisations name and the name and details of any project in its own publicity materials.
- 3.11 Further details can be found on the Council's website:
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/business/business-rates/business-rates-exemptions-and-reliefs/discretionary-rate-relief/discretionary-rate-relief-guidance/#furtherguidance>
- 3.12 Where any reduction or remission is granted to a ratepayer under S49 Local Government Finance Act 1988 where hardship is proven to the Council, then there will be no requirement to grant Discretionary Rate Relief for that amount.
- 3.13 In certain cases, the order in which relief is granted is specified. Mandatory relief shall be granted in all cases where the criteria is met irrespective of whether discretionary relief can be granted or not.

The Council's approach to granting Government led Discretionary Relief schemes.

- 3.14 The Council will assess any entitlement, and amount of entitlement to relief based the criteria outlined within this policy.

4.0 Effect on the Council's Finances

- 4.1 The granting of discretionary relief will, in the main, involve a cost to the Council. Since the change to the funding for Non-Domestic Rating in April 2013, the effect of the relief is complex.
- 4.2 Any amounts granted prior to 1st April 2013 and continuing since that date will be included in the Council's baseline within the Business Rates Retention Scheme. For any amounts granted for similar cases after 1st April 2013, the costs of the relief will be borne in accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme share namely 50% borne by Central Government, 40% by the Council and 10% by Kent County Council. This also applies where mandatory relief is granted.
- 4.3 Where Central Government leads an initiative, grants are often available through section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This is not automatic and Central Government will look to the Council to adopt the recommended approach when granting in these areas.

4.4 The financial effects of discretionary reliefs covered by this policy are as follows:

Appendix	Relief Type	Granted after 1st April 2025
	Charity Relief	
A	Discretionary relief granted to Mandatory Relief recipients	40% borne by the Council
B	Non-profit Making Organisations including Sports Clubs and societies	40% borne by the Council
	Rural Rate Relief	
C	Other premises within a rural settlement under £16500 RV	40% borne by the Council
	Localism	
D	Discretionary Relief granted to ratepayers generally and not covered by any other section.	40% borne by the Council
	Supporting Small Business Relief	
E	Supporting Small Businesses Relief (from 1 st April 2023 for a period of up to three years if conditions are met	Section 31 Grant
	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief	
F	Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief (from 1 st April 2025 for a period of one year)	Section 31 Grant
	S49 Hardship Relief	
G	Partial or full relief for cases of hardship where it would be reasonable to do so having due regard to the interests of council taxpayers	40% borne by the Council

5.0 Administration of Discretionary Relief

5.1 The following section outlines the procedures followed by officers in granting, amending, or cancelling discretionary relief and reduction as allowed by the Non Domestic Rating Act 2023.

Applications and Evidence

5.2 All reliefs must be applied for. Application forms are produced by the Council both in hard copy and electronic format. The relevant forms are available online via:
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/business/business-rates/business-rates-exemptions-and-reliefs/discretionary-rate-relief/>

5.3 Organisations are required to provide a completed application form plus any such evidence, documents, accounts, financial statements etc. necessary to allow the Council

to make a decision. Where insufficient information is provided, then no relief will be granted. In some cases, it may be necessary for officers to visit premises and we would expect organisations claiming relief to facilitate this where necessary.

- 5.4 Applications should initially be made to the Revenues and Benefits Services and will be determined in accordance with this policy.
- 5.5 **The Council will provide this service and provide guidance free of charge. Ratepayers are encouraged to approach the Council direct and NOT pay for such services through third parties.**

Granting of relief

- 5.6 In all cases, the Council will notify the ratepayer of decisions made.
- 5.7 Where an application is successful, the ratepayer will be notified. Where relief is not granted, then the following information is provided;
- An explanation of the decision within the context of the Council's statutory duty; and
 - An explanation of the appeal rights (see below).
- 5.8 Discretionary relief is to be granted from the beginning of the financial year in which the decision is made or when liability begins whichever is the later. Where the relief is fully Government funded, relief will be granted from the date the ratepayer is eligible subject to a maximum backdate to 1 April 2023.
- 5.9 A decision to award discretionary relief and how much relief is given is normally only applicable to the financial year for which the application is made. However, the Council reserves the right to grant relief for any other period as appropriate.
- 5.10 A fresh application for discretionary relief will be necessary for each financial year **or** at such time-period as the Council determines.

Variation of a decision

- 5.11 Variations in any decision will be notified to ratepayers as soon as practicable and will take effect on a date determined by the Council.
- 5.12 A decision may be revoked at any time by the Council.

6.0 Scheme of Delegation

Granting, Varying, Reviewing and Revocation of Relief

- 6.1 All powers in relation to reliefs are given under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003, and the Localism Act 2011. However section 223 of the Local Government Act 1992 allows for delegation of decisions by the Council to Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees or Officers.

- 6.2 The Council's scheme of delegation allows for the Revenues and Benefits Manager to award, revise or revoke any discretionary relief applications. However, any application which is considered to be of a significant nature will be subject to consultation with the relevant executive or committee prior to final determination.
- 6.3 Applications that are refused will, on request, be reconsidered if additional supporting information is provided or the refusal is subsequently considered to be based on a misinterpretation of the application.

Reviews

- 6.4 The policy for granting relief will be reviewed annually or where there is a substantial change to the legislation or funding rules. At such time, a revised policy will be brought before the relevant committee of the Council.

Appeals

- 6.5 Where the Council receives an appeal from the ratepayer regarding the granting, non-granting or the amount of any discretionary relief, the case will be reviewed by the Revenues and Benefits Manager. Where a decision is revised then the ratepayer shall be informed, likewise if the original decision is upheld.
- 6.6 Where the ratepayer wishes to appeal the decision of the Revenues and Benefits Manager, the case will be considered by the Section 151 officer whose decision on behalf of the Council will be final.
- 6.7 Ultimately the formal appeal process for the ratepayer is Judicial Review although the Council will endeavour to explain any decision fully and openly with the ratepayer.

7.0 Reporting changes in circumstances

- 7.1 Where any award is granted to a ratepayer, the Council will require any changes in circumstances which may affect the relief, to be reported as soon as possible. This will be important where the change would result in the amount of the award being reduced or cancelled e.g., where the premises comes unoccupied or is used for a purpose other than that determined by the Council as eligible for relief.
- 7.2 Where a change of circumstances is reported, the relief will, if appropriate, be revised or cancelled as appropriate. Where any award is to be reduced, the Council will look to recover the amount from the date the change of circumstances occurred.

8.0 Fraud

- 8.1 Where a ratepayer falsely applies for any relief, or where the ratepayer provides false information, makes false representation, or deliberately withholds information in order to gain relief, prosecutions will be considered under the Fraud Act 2006.

Appendix A
Discretionary Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

Discretionary Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients

General Explanation

- A.1 S43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows mandatory relief (80%) to be granted on premises if the ratepayer is a charity or trustees for a charity and the premises are wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. No charge is made in respect of unoccupied premises where it appears that *when next in use* it will be used wholly or mainly for those purposes.
- A.2 The legislation has been amended by the Local Government Act 2003 (effective from 1st April 2004) to include registered⁵ Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC). These organisations can now receive the mandatory (80%) relief.

Charity registration

- A.3 Charities are defined within the legislation as being an institution⁶ or other organisation established for charitable purposes only or by persons administering a trust established for charitable purposes only.
- A.4 The question as to whether an organisation is a charity may be resolved in the majority of cases by reference to the register of charities maintained by the Charity Commissioners under s.4 of the Charities Act 1960. Entry in the register is conclusive evidence. By definition, under the Non-Domestic Rating legislation, there is no actual need for an organisation to be a registered charity to receive the relief and this has been supported by litigation⁷, however in all cases the organisation must fall within the following categories:
- trusts for the relief of poverty;
 - trusts for the advancement of religion;
 - trusts for the advancement of education; and
 - trusts for other purposes beneficial to the community, but not falling under any of the preceding heads.
- A.5 Certain organisations are exempted from registration generally and are not required to make formal application to the Charity Commissioners these are:
- the Church Commissioners and any institution administered by them;
 - any registered society within the meaning of the Friendly Societies Acts of 1896 to 1974;
 - units of the Boy Scouts Association or the Girl Guides Association; and
 - voluntary schools within the meaning of the Education Acts of 1944 to 1980.
- A.6 The Council will consider charitable organisations, registered or not, for mandatory relief.

⁵ Registered with HMRC as a CASC

⁶ S67(10) Local Government Finance Act 1988

⁷ Income Tax Special Commissioners v Pemsell (1891)

Use of Premises – wholly or mainly used.

- A.7 Irrespective of whether an organisation is registered as a charity or not, the premises **must** be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. This is essential if any relief (either mandatory or discretionary) is to be granted. In most cases this can be readily seen by inspection, but on occasions the Council has had to question the actual use to which the premises are to be put. In some cases, it will be necessary for the Council to inspect any premises fully.
- A.8 Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (now DLUHC) has stated that in the case of ‘mainly’, at least 51% must be used for charitable purposes whether of that charity or of that and other charities
- A.9 The following part of this section gives details on typical uses where relief may be given plus additional criteria that have to be satisfied. The list is not exhaustive but gives clear guidance on premises for which mandatory relief can be granted *and therefore* premises which may be equally considered for discretionary rate relief.

Offices, administration, and similar premises

- A.10 Premises used for administration of the Charity include:
- Offices;
 - Meeting Rooms; and
 - Conference Rooms.

Charity shops

- A.11 Charity shops are required to meet additional legislative criteria if they are to receive mandatory relief. Section 64 (10) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 provides that a property is to be treated as being wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes at any time if, at the time, it is wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to a charity and the proceeds of the sale of the goods (after any deduction of expenses) are applied for the purposes of the charity.
- A.12 In order to ascertain whether an organisation meets these requirements, inspections may be made by an officer of the Council when an application is received

Granting of Mandatory Relief - the Council’s Policy

- A.13 Where the criteria for awarding mandatory relief are met, the rate charges shall be calculated in accordance with the legislation reducing the liability of ratepayers for each day that the criteria are met.

Charity Relief – Mandatory Relief recipients, the Council’s Policy for granting discretionary relief.

A.14 The Council will consider applications for a discretionary rate relief top up from charities based on their own merits, on a case-by-case basis.

A.15 In determining the application, the following:

Evidence required	% top-up relief for registered charities and similar
Clear evidence of need, of wide community reach, and a material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	10-20
More limited evidence of need, of community reach, and some material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	5-10
No evidence of need, very restricted community reach, and no material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	0

A.16 The Council wishes to support and enable appropriate businesses to start, develop and continue with their operations that deliver outcomes directly related to the Council’s aims and vision. In the main, this will be done through other means rather than granting discretionary relief. There may be occasions where applications are made for such relief or where a package of measures, including discretionary relief, are appropriate in supporting businesses.

Appendix B

Discretionary Relief – Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation.

Discretionary Relief – Non-Profit Making Organisations including Recreation.

General explanation

Non-Profit

- B.1 The legislation⁸ allows the Council to grant discretionary relief where the property is not an *excepted* one and all or part of it is occupied for the purposes of one or more institutions or other organisations none of which is established or conducted for profit and each of whose main objects are charitable or are otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature, or the fine arts.
- B.2 Relief cannot be granted to any premises occupied by the Council, or any town, parish council or major Precepting Authority (*excepted premises*).
- B.3 A number of issues arise from the term 'not established or conducted for profit'. This requires the Council to make enquiries as to the overall purpose of the organisation although if surpluses and such amounts are directed towards the furtherance or achievement of the objects of the organisation then it does not necessarily mean that the organisation was established or conducted for profit.⁹
- B.4 In view of the changes in legislation from 1st April 2025 which removes certain private schools from receiving mandatory relief, the Council has decided that those establishments will **not** be granted any discretionary relief.
- B.5 For the purposes of this change the definition of 'Private School' is an educational establishment that provides compulsory full time education where a fee or other consideration is payable.

Recreation Clubs

- B.6 Ideally all recreation clubs should be encouraged to apply for Community Amateur sports Club (CASC) status, which would automatically entitle them to 80% relief. The relief granted to CASCs is covered earlier within this policy.
- B.7 Recreation clubs can also apply to the Charity Commissioners for registration as a Charity (thereby falling under the mandatory provisions for 80% relief) where they meet the following conditions:
- a. The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation and by the provision of facilities for the playing of particular sports; and
 - b. The advancement of the physical education of young people not undergoing formal education.

⁸ S47 Local Government Finance Act 1988

B.8 Where sports clubs do not meet the CASC requirement, and are not registered charities, discretionary relief can be granted (0-100%) where the property is not an *excepted* one, it is wholly or mainly used for purposes of recreation and all or part of it is occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit.

Definition of Recreation

B.9 Recreation is clearly defined by the Sports Council as any of the following¹⁰

Aikido	Croquet	Kabaddi	Real Tennis	Tang Soo Do
American Football	Crossbow	Karate	Roller Hockey	Tenpin Bowling
Angling	Curling	Kendo	Roller Skating	Trampoline
Archery	Cycling	Korfball	Rounders	Triathlon
Arm Wrestling	Disability Sport	Lacrosse	Rowing	Tug of War
Association Football	Dragon Boat Racing	Lawn Tennis	Rugby League	Unihoc
Athletics	Equestrian	Life Saving	Rugby Union	Volleyball
Australian Rules Football	Fencing	Luge	Sailing	Water Skiing
Badminton	Fives	Modern Pentathlon	Sand/Land Yachting	Weightlifting
Ballooning	Flying	Motor Cycling	Shinty	Wrestling
Baseball	Gaelic Football	Motor Sports	Shooting	Yoga
Basketball	Gliding	Mountaineering	Skateboarding	
Baton Twirling	Golf	Movement, Dance, Exercise & Fitness	Skiing	
Biathlon	Gymnastics	Netball	Skipping	
Bicycle Polo	Handball	Orienteering	Snowboarding	
Billiards and Snooker	Hang/Para Gliding	Parachuting	Softball	
Bobsleigh	Highland Games	Petanque	Sombo	
Boccia	Hockey	Polo	Wrestling	
Bowls	Horse Racing	Pony Trekking	Squash	
Boxing	Hovering	Pool	Skater/Street Hockey	
Camogie	Hurling	Quoits	Sub-Aqua	
Canoeing	Ice Hockey	Racketball	Surf Life Saving	
Caving	Ice Skating	Rackets	Surfing	
Chinese Martial Arts	Jet Skiing	Raquetball	Swimming & Diving	
Cricket	Ju Jitsu	Rambling	Table Tennis	
	Judo		Taekwondo	

Access to clubs

B.10 Guidance issued by the DCLG (now DLUHC) also requires the Council to consider access to clubs within the community before granting discretionary relief.

¹⁰ Definition last reviewed by Sport England in 2002

- B.11 Membership should be open to all sections of the community. There may be legitimate restrictions placed on membership which relate for example to ability in sport or to the achievement of a standard in the field covered by the organisation or where the capacity of the facility is limited, but in general membership should not be exclusive or restrictive.
- B.12 Membership rates should not be set at such a high level as to exclude the general community. However, membership fees may be payable at different rates that distinguish the different classes of membership such as juniors, adults, students, pensioners, players, non-players, employed and unemployed. In general, the club or organisation must be prepared to show that the criteria by which it considers applications for membership are consistent with the principle of open access.
- B.13 The Council also asks the following question to help establish the level of access 'Does the organisation actively encourage membership from particular groups in the community e.g., young people, women, older age groups, persons with disability, ethnic minorities' etc.?'

Provision of facilities

- B.14 Clubs which provide training or education are encouraged, as are those who provide schemes for particular groups to develop their skills e.g., young people, the disabled, retired people.
- B.15 A number of organisations run a bar. The mere existence of a bar will not in itself be a reason for not granting relief. However, the Council focuses on the main purpose of the organisation. The Council is encouraged to examine the balance between playing and non-playing members.
- B.16 Within this area, the Council also considers whether the facilities provided relieve the Council of the need to do so or enhance and supplement those that it does provide.

Discretionary Relief - Non-Profit Organisations – the Council's Policy

- B.17 The Council will consider applications for discretionary rate relief from non-profit making organisations on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. In determining the application and amount of discretionary relief, the following matters will be taken into consideration:

Evidence required	% discretionary relief for other not-for-profit bodies
Clear evidence of need, of wide community reach, and a material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	50-100
More limited evidence of need, of community reach, and some material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	5-50
No evidence of need, very restricted community reach, and no material contribution to Ashford Borough Council's strategic objectives	0

Discretionary Relief - Recreation Non–Profit Organisations – the Council’s Policy

B.18 The Council will consider applications for discretionary rate relief from non-profit making organisations whose main objects are recreation, based on the following.

B.19 For sports clubs which are not registered as a CASC or charity, the score on the sports matrix relates directly to the level of discretionary rate relief (i.e. from 0-100%) you will be awarded. For example, if you score 30 on the matrix you will be awarded 30% discretionary rate relief, if you score 60 on the matrix you will receive 60% discretionary relief, and so on.

No.	Characteristic	Examples of evidence required	Score
1.	Constituted group	Evidence in the club's constitution which demonstrates that the club is open to all sections of the community.	15
2.	Clubmark (or equivalent) accreditation	Copy of accreditation certificate. If you have received Clubmark (or equivalent) accreditation, please proceed to question 11. If not, please continue on question 3.	70
3.	Policies and procedures	Copies of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Protection Policy - Code of practice for coaches/officials - Code of practice for parents/carers and other supporters - Code of practice for junior members 	10 1 document = 2 2 documents = 4 3 documents = 6 all documents = 10
4.	Membership	Evidence in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That membership is open at all times to all sections of the community regardless of age, race, gender, ability, religious views, etc and that all users are treated equally. - That the club has a pricing policy that does not create a barrier for different groups (i.e. the disabled, veterans, deprived communities, students). - That the club has a specific membership/pricing policy for children and young people. <i>Weighting will be given to evidence of local reach, such as those clubs focusing on local residents.</i>	15 1 area met = 4 2 areas met = 8 all areas met = 15
5.	Affiliation	Evidence of current affiliation to a recognised National Governing Body for their sport. Or, where a governing body is	5

No.	Characteristic	Examples of evidence required	Score
		not present, evidence of reasonable efforts to seek alternate, comparable means of affiliating.	
6.	Insurance	Copy of club insurance document and/or proof of individual liability insurance holders (i.e. membership letter/number) and a breakdown of what these policies cover.	5
7.	Competitive opportunities	Evidence that club holds regular competition for its members (intra or inter-club), for example through copies of current or most recent season's fixture lists or tables.	5
8.	Coaching provision	Evidence in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of lesson plans/resources the coaches use to deliver the training sessions - That coaches are suitably qualified (to those standards set by the sport's governing body) - Job/task descriptions for coaches 	10 1 area met = 3 2 areas met = 6 all areas met = 10
9.	Health and Safety	Evidence of the following health and safety provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First aid equipment - That emergency procedures are in place for dealing with an accident/incident - Risk assessments for each of the venues that might be used during the course of a season (not including away fixtures) 	5
10.	Further club development	Evidence in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School-club link agreement or documented communication with at least one school/youth organisation - The club is committed to further development and outreach work (for example as documented within a development plan) - Evidence that the club communicates regularly with members, parents or carers i.e. by newsletters, website and/or mailings (letter or email) 	15 1 area met = 5 2 areas met = 10 3 areas met = 15

No.	Characteristic	Examples of evidence required	Score
11.	<p>External bookings</p> <p>Are facilities advertised and made available to individuals/organisations other than members?</p>	<p>Evidence of your approach to external bookings, including the proportion of users which are external.</p>	<p>5</p>
12.	<p>Re-investment of generated income</p>	<p>Evidence of the club using generated income to reach out to the community, for example, through copies of the income and expenditure accounts for the club (and bar if applicable)</p> <p><i>NB. If a club bar is routinely open to the public then this will be classed as a full commercial operation and the club will not be accepted for discretionary rate relief.</i></p>	<p>10</p>

Appendix C
Discretionary Relief – Premises within Rural Settlements

Discretionary Relief – Premises within Rural Settlements

- C.1 The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 allows discretionary relief of up to 100% to be granted where the rateable value is £16500 or less and:
- (a) Property is used for purposes which are of benefit to the local community; and
 - (b) It would be reasonable for the billing authority to award relief, having regards to the Council's Council Taxpayers.
- C.2 As with most discretionary relief, part of the cost, is met by Central Government and the balance from local sources.
- C.3 The main criteria for granting discretionary relief in respect of rural rate relief is that premises are used to benefit the local community.

Benefit to the local community

- C.4 Whilst each application for the relief will be considered on its own merits, there are certain factors which weigh heavily in the decision-making process. It is this Council's belief that the spirit of the legislation is to assist businesses and amenities, which contribute significantly to the quality of life of the people who have their main home in the Rural Settlement.
- C.5 To be successful for consideration, a business must show that its existence is a significant benefit to the local community with the majority of local residents directly benefiting from services or facilities provided by that business

Rural Rate Relief – the Council's Policy for granting discretionary relief.

- C.6 The Council will also consider applications for a discretionary rural rate relief from all ratepayers, not entitled to mandatory relief up to a maximum of 100%.
- C.7 In determining the application the following matters will be taken into consideration:
- The granting of any discretionary relief will be essential in ensuring the viability of any business within the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is proportionate given the level of any business rates charged compared with the overall turnover of the business;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief will assist the business in continuing to be viable and / or prevent the business from failing;
 - The business is considered by the Council to be essential to the community and that any reduction or withdrawal of the business will have a serious detrimental effect on the rural settlement;
 - The granting of any discretionary relief is reasonable having regard to the effect on taxpayers of the Borough.

Appendix D

Discretionary Relief – Localism Act 2011

Discretionary Relief – Localism Act 2011

General explanation

- D.1 Section 69 of the Localism Act 2011 amended Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. These provisions allow all Councils to grant discretionary relief in **any** circumstances where it feels fit having regards to the effect on the Council Taxpayers of its area.
- D.2 The provisions are designed to give authorities flexibility in granting relief where it is felt that to do so would be of benefit generally to the area and be reasonable given the financial effect to Council Taxpayers.

Discretionary Relief – Localism – the Council’s Policy

- D.3 Applications will be considered from any ratepayer who wishes to apply. However, where a ratepayer is suffering hardship or severe difficulties in paying their rates liability then relief can be granted under the existing provisions as laid down by Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. There will be no requirement to grant relief in such cases under the Council’s discretionary relief policy.
- D.4 Any ratepayer applying for discretionary rate relief under these provisions and who does not meet the criteria for existing relief (charities, non-profit making organisations etc.) must meet **all** of the following criteria and the amount of relief granted will be dependent on the following key factors:
- (a) The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to mandatory rate relief (Charity or Rural Rate Relief);
 - (b) The ratepayer **must not** be entitled to Central Government funded reliefs;
 - (c) The ratepayer **must not** be an organisation that could receive relief as a non-profit making organisation or as a sports club or similar;
 - (d) The ratepayer **must** occupy the premises (no discretionary rate relief will be granted for unoccupied premises);
 - (e) The premises and organisation **must** be of *significant* benefit to residents of the Council’s area;
 - (f) The premises and organisation **must** relieve the Council of providing similar facilities;
 - (g) The ratepayer **must**;
 - Provide facilities to certain priority groups such as elderly, disabled, minority groups, disadvantaged groups; **or**
 - Provide *significant* employment or employment opportunities to residents of the Council; **or**
 - Provide the residents of the area with such services, opportunities or facilities that cannot be obtained locally or are not provided locally by another organisation;
 - (h) The ratepayer **must** demonstrate that assistance (provided by the discretionary rate relief) will be for a *short time only* **and** that any business / operation is financially viable in the medium and long term;

- (i) whether the premises occupied are considered to be reasonable having regard to the size and location of the premises, the size and nature of the organisation, and the use being made of the premises by the organisation; **and**
 - (j) The ratepayer **must** show that the activities of the organisation are consistent with the Council's core values and priorities.
- D.5 Where a ratepayer can demonstrate that **all** of the above criteria are met, relief will be considered for initially a short period.
- D.6 In view of the changes in legislation from 1st April 2025 which removes certain private schools from receiving mandatory relief , the Council has decided that those establishments will **not** be granted any discretionary relief.
- D,7 For the purposes of this change the definition of 'Private School' is an educational establishment that provides compulsory full time education where a fee or other consideration is payable.

Appendix E
Supporting Small Businesses Relief (until 31st March 2026)

General Explanation

- E.1 For the financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26, the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out below, reimburse the Council if it uses its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), to grant 2023 Supporting Small Business relief.
- E.2 It will be for the Council, which administers the 2023 Supporting Small Business (2023 SSB) relief, to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47.
- E.3 Central government will reimburse the Council and major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the 2023 Supporting Small Business relief that falls within the definitions in this policy.

Who is eligible for the 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief (2023 SSB) and how much relief will be available?

- E.4 2023 SSBR will help those ratepayers who as a result of the change in their rateable value at the revaluation are losing some or all of their Small Business, Rural Rate Relief or 2017 SSBR and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
- E.5 Charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs, who are already entitled to mandatory 80% relief, are not eligible for 2023 SSBR.
- E.6 To support these ratepayers, 2023 SSBR will ensure that the increase in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to a cash value of £600 per year. This cash maximum increase ensures that ratepayers do not face large bill increases in 2023/24 after transitional relief and small business rate relief (as applicable) have been applied. In order to simplify the scheme, the 2023 SSBR will not include minimum percentage bill increases (unlike the 2017 scheme).
- E.7 Those on 2023 SSBR whose 2023 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to fund small business rate relief while they are eligible for 2023 SSBR.
- E.8 The 2017 SSBR scheme was provided to support small and medium ratepayers who had seen large increases in their bills at the 2017 revaluation. They have, therefore, had 6 years of support to allow them to adjust to their full 2017 bills. Therefore, for those ratepayers receiving 2017 SSB relief in 2022/23, any eligibility for 2023 SSBR will end on 31 March 2024.
- E.9 The Council will ensure this eligibility criteria is clear in the scheme approved and that relief for these ratepayers is awarded for one year only so that the relief can then be withdrawn on 31 March 2024 without further notice.
- E.10 A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Business scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.

- E.11 There is no second property test for eligibility for the 2023 SSBR scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2022/23 lost entitlement to Small Business Rate Relief (because they failed the second property test) but have, under the rules for Small Business Rate Relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended - can continue on the 2023 SSBR scheme for the remainder of their 12 month period of grace.

Sequence of reliefs

- E.12 Hereditaments eligible for charity or Community Amateur Sports Club relief or hereditaments which are unoccupied are not eligible for 2023 SSBR. For the avoidance of doubt, small business rate relief or rural rate relief will not be applied to further reduce the bill found under 2023 SSBR (to avoid the double counting of relief).
- E.13 The same principle applies to properties for which a Section 44A certificate has been granted (apportionment of rateable values for partly occupied properties). The presence of a section 44A certificate will not further reduce the bill found under 2023 SSBR.
- E.14 All other discretionary reliefs, including those funded by section 31 grants, will be considered after the application of 2023 SSBR.

Subsidy control

- E.15 The 2023 SSBR is likely to amount to a subsidy. Therefore, any relief provided by the Council under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.
- E.16 To the extent that the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a three-year period (consisting of the 2025/26 year and the two previous financial years).
- E.17 In those cases where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the MFA limit then the Council will withhold the relief. Otherwise, the Council may include the relief in bills and ask the ratepayers, on a self-assessment basis, to inform the Council if they are in breach of the MFA limit.
- E.18 MFA subsidies above £100,000 are subject to transparency requirements. This is not cumulated per beneficiary but applies per subsidy award. This means that for every individual subsidy provided of more than £100,000, the Council will include details of the subsidy on the subsidy control database.

Recalculations of reliefs

- E.19 As with other reliefs, the amount of SSBR awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or to the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.

- E.20 Therefore, when making an award for SSBR, the Council will ensure the conditions of the award that the relief are subject to the property's continuing eligibility. If the use of the property changes so that it is no longer eligible, the relevant chargeable amount must be recalculated to reflect that fact.
- E.21 The Council will also ensure that the scheme provides that eligibility for those ratepayers previously in the 2017 SSBR scheme in 2022/23 are eligible for one year of relief only and that the relief will then be withdrawn from those ratepayers on 31 March 2024 without further notice.

Supporting Small Business Rates Relief (2023/24 to 2025/26) - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

- E.22 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

Appendix F
Retail Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme (2025/26)

General Explanation

- F.1. The 2025/26 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme will provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 40% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

How will the relief be provided?

- F.2 As this is a temporary measure for 2025/26, Government is not changing the legislation relating to the reliefs available to properties. Instead, Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse the Council if it uses its discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) to grant relief. It will be for the Council to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47.
- F.3 Government will fully reimburse the Council and major precepting authorities for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme as a result of awarding the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance, using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- F.4 The government expects the Council to apply and grant relief to qualifying ratepayers from the start of the 2025/26 billing year.

Which properties will benefit from relief?

- F.5 Hereditaments which benefit from the relief will be those which for a chargeable day in 2025/26:
- (a) meet the eligibility criteria; and
 - (b) the ratepayer for that chargeable day has not refused the relief for the eligible hereditament. The ratepayer may refuse the relief for each eligible hereditament anytime up to 30 April 2026. The ratepayer cannot subsequently withdraw their refusal for either all or part of the financial year.
- F.6 The Council has decided that, for the purposes of section 47 of the 1988 Act, hereditaments where the ratepayer has refused the relief are outside of the scheme and outside of the scope of the decision of which hereditaments qualify for the discount and are therefore ineligible for the relief.
- F.7 In line with the legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council may not grant the discount to themselves or precepting authorities

How much relief will be available?

- F.8 Subject to the £110,000 cash cap per business, the total amount of government-funded relief available for each property for 2025/26 under this scheme is for chargeable days from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, 40% of the chargeable amount.
- F.9 The relief will be applied after mandatory reliefs and other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grants have been applied, but before those where the Council has used its

wider discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act 2011, which are not funded by section 31 grants. However, the former categories of discretionary relief available prior to the Localism Act 2011 (i.e., charitable relief etc.) will be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs and, therefore, before Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief. Authorities may use their discretionary powers to, at cost to themselves, offer further discounts outside this scheme or additional relief to hereditaments within the scheme. However, where the Council applies a locally funded relief under section 47, this will be applied after the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief.

- F.10 The ordering **will** be applied in following sequence:
- Transitional Relief
 - Mandatory Reliefs (as determined in legislation)
 - S.47 Discretionary Relief in the following order:
 - (i) 2023 Supporting Small Business (SSB);
 - (ii) Former categories of discretionary relief available prior to the Localism Act 2011 (i.e., charitable, CASC, rural top up, and not for profit) will be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs, after SSB;
 - (iii) Other discretionary (centrally funded);
 - (iv) 2025/26 Retail Hospitality and Leisure relief scheme; and
 - (v) Other locally funded schemes (such as section 49 hardship).
- F.11 Subject to the cash cap, the eligibility for the discount and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The following formula will be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted for a chargeable day for a particular hereditament in the financial year 2025/26:
- Amount of relief to be granted = $V \times 0.40$ where:
 - V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any certain other discretionary reliefs.
- F.12 This will be calculated ignoring any prior year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.
- F.13 Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties up to the maximum £110,000 cash cap, per business.

The Cash Cap and Subsidy Control

- F.14 Under the cash cap, no ratepayer can in any circumstances exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in England.
- F.15 Where a ratepayer has a qualifying connection with another ratepayer, then those ratepayers will be considered as one ratepayer for the purposes of the cash caps. A ratepayer shall be treated as having a qualifying connection with another:
- (a) where both ratepayers are companies, and
 - (i) one is a subsidiary of the other, or
 - (ii) both are subsidiaries of the same company; or
 - (b) where only one ratepayer is a company, the other ratepayer (the “second ratepayer”) has such an interest in that company as would, if the second ratepayer were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other.

- F.16 The Retail Hospitality and Leisure Scheme is likely to amount to subsidy. Any relief provided by the Council under this scheme will need to comply with the UK's domestic and international subsidy control obligations.
- F.17 To the extent that the Council is seeking to provide relief that falls below the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) thresholds, the Subsidy Control Act allows an economic actor (e.g., a holding company and its subsidiaries) to receive up to £315,000 in a 3-year period (consisting of the 2025/26 year and the 2 previous financial years). MFA subsidies cumulate with each other and with other subsidies that fall within the category of 'Minimal or SPEI financial assistance'.
- F.18 In those cases, where it is clear to the Council that the ratepayer is likely to breach the cash cap or the MFA limit, then the Council will automatically withhold the relief.
- F.19 MFA subsidies above £100,000 are subject to transparency requirements. This is not cumulated per beneficiary but applies per subsidy award. This means that for every individual subsidy provided of more than £100,000, the Council will include details of the subsidy on the subsidy control database.

Splits, mergers, and changes to existing hereditaments

- F.20 The relief will be applied on a day-to-day basis using the formula set out above. A new hereditament created as a result of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, will be considered afresh for the relief on that day.

Recalculations of relief

- F.21 The amount of relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.

Eligibility for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme

- F.22 The Council uses the following definitions to establish eligibility for the relief:

Hereditaments that meet the eligibility for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure scheme will be occupied hereditaments which meet all of the following conditions for the chargeable day:

- they are wholly or mainly being used:
 - (i) as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, or live music venues,
 - (ii) for assembly and leisure; or
 - (iii) as hotels, guest & boarding premises, or self-catering accommodation

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)

- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/caravan show rooms
- Second-hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
- Shoe repairs/key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g., for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/TV/domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- Tool hire
- Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bar

iv. Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas.

v. Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:

- Live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
- Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g., the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g.,

because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).

- There may be circumstances in which it is difficult to tell whether an activity is a performance of live music or, instead, the playing of recorded music.

vi. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure, and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities).

- Sports grounds and clubs
- Museums and art galleries
- Nightclubs
- Sport and leisure facilities
- Stately homes and historic houses
- Theatres
- Tourist attractions
- Gyms
- Wellness centres, spas, massage parlours
- Casinos, gambling clubs and bingo halls

vii. Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public.

- Public halls
- Clubhouses, clubs, and institutions

viii. Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business:

- Hotels, Guest, and Boarding Houses
- Holiday homes
- Caravan parks and sites

F.23 To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used for the above qualifying purposes. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

F.24 The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied uses that exist within the qualifying purposes.

Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

F.25 The list below sets out the types of uses that the government does not consider to be an eligible use for the purpose of this discount. Again, it is for the Council to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them **not** eligible for the discount under their local scheme:

- Financial services (e.g., banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short-term loan providers, betting shops);
- Medical services (e.g., vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors);
- Professional services (e.g., solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, employment agencies, estate agents, letting agents); and
- Post office sorting offices.

Retail Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Scheme (2025/26) - the Council's policy for granting discretionary relief.

F.26 The Council has decided to grant relief strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.