

Your Ref:
Our Ref:

Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ



Dear Chancellor,

Supporting the Long-Term Viability of Our Town Centres, High Streets and Villages

Following a motion at its recent full Council meeting, we are writing on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to raise urgent concerns regarding the challenging trading conditions faced by our retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and to seek that the Government take further steps to support the vibrancy and long-term sustainability of our town centres, high streets and villages. This motion has the support of all political parties.

Across our Borough, small businesses, particularly those in retail and hospitality, continue to experience severe economic pressures. These businesses, many of which are long-established, sit at the heart of our local communities, providing employment, services, culture and identity, and they are essential to the economic health and social wellbeing of our towns. Although residents still value and actively use their local high streets, rising fixed costs are increasingly threatening the ability of these businesses to survive.

As you will be aware, the Council is delivering substantial, once-in-a-generation regeneration programmes, supported by the £50 million Town Deal and Future High Streets funding awarded by the previous Government. These projects are transforming Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove - modernising key sites, improving connectivity, enhancing public spaces and helping to create the conditions for independent businesses to succeed.

This work has included the creation of new modern, safe and secure car parks to support town centre growth and the local economy. However, these major infrastructure commitments come at significant cost to both public and private sector car park operators and requires councils to have to choose between lower parking charges and investment in other key services. This is not sustainable, and having good quality, affordable car parking should be seen as a pillar of local economic growth, not a barrier to business. We therefore call on you to remove business rating for car parks which support retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

While these efforts will make a lasting difference, the scale of national economic pressures means that local action alone cannot secure the long-term viability of our high streets. Many businesses continue to be impacted by rises in employer costs and increases in business rates liabilities, and the uncertainty this creates risks undoing the progress being made through regeneration.

For these reasons, the Council requests that HM Treasury:

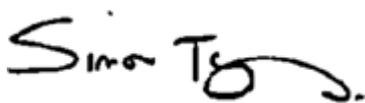
1. Extends the business rates relief measures currently available to pubs to all hospitality and high-street businesses, ensuring a fairer and more sustainable approach across the sector.
2. Undertakes a further review of business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) sector businesses, with a view to achieving permanent reductions in taxation - aligning with the Government's stated ambition of stronger economic growth and building on the commitments outlined by HM Treasury in October 2024 regarding support for the RHL sectors.
3. Recognises the crucial role of parking to support town centres, high streets and villages and commits to removing business rates for car parks which support our vital RHL businesses.

Such measures would provide stability for businesses, enable predictable trading conditions, and support the continued regeneration of our town centres. They would also help attract the investment and footfall necessary to ensure that our high streets remain vibrant, accessible and competitive places for residents, visitors and businesses.

The Borough's three Members of Parliament are being asked to support these efforts, and we look to work with them, as well as Government Ministers and officials, to secure a sustainable economic future for our town centres, high streets and villages.

Finally, we would invite you to see first-hand the regeneration in our town centre and beyond and welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further with you to ensure the continued economic and social vitality of our community.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Tagg
Leader



Gordon Mole
Chief Executive

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