

**The Growing Places Fund
Call for Proposals
Round 12A**

Managing Authority:	Staffordshire County Council of behalf of the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire SSLEP
Call Reference:	Round 12A
SSLEP Area Indicative Fund Allocation:	£1,000,000
Call Open:	OPEN CALL
Call Closes:	ON FULL ALLOCATION OF FUND

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1. Introduction

The Growing Places Fund (GPF) has been made available from Central Government to the Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) in line with the following objectives (see Section 2 for more information about the SSLEP):

- To generate economic activity in the short term by addressing immediate infrastructure and site constraints and promote the delivery of jobs and housing
- To allow local enterprise partnerships to prioritise the infrastructure they need, empowering them to deliver their economic strategies
- To establish sustainable revolving funds so that funding can be reinvested to unlock further development, and leverage private investment.

1.1 Key Facts of the Growing Places Fund

- It's a loan.
- **Interest rate:** Nil as long as the scheme complies with State Aid rules. The benefit of a Growing Places loan over a bank loan is that it is interest free over a period of 2 years (subject to qualifying criteria). If interest has to be charged, this will be at State Aid compliant commercial rates with compound interest.
- **Repayment terms:** To qualify for the 2 year interest free period, repayment in full must be made 2 years after practical completion of the element(s) funded or the End Date specified in the Funding Agreement (whichever is the sooner). Any repayment term beyond this 2 year period will be subject to interest at commercial rates in accordance with the terms specified in the Funding Agreement issued.
- **Minimum loan value:** £50,000.
- **Maximum intervention rate:** 50% of scheme cost excl. land value if the developer already owns it; i.e. the scheme would need to cost at least £100,000. The intervention rate requested will need to be justified
- **Security:** 100% surety is needed, various forms of security are acceptable and these will be considered at appraisal stage.
- **Retrospective payments:** Eligible expenditure must be defrayed (cleared through the beneficiaries bank) before it can be claimed from the fund. Claims are processed on a quarterly basis.
- **Monitoring & evaluation:** Carried out over a term as detailed in the Funding Agreement.
- **Publicity:** Acknowledgement of SSLEP funding on any scheme publicity.
- **Legal costs:** Each party is to cover its own legal costs with a limit on the SSLEP legal costs of £5,000. Any costs above this are to be borne by the applicant.

2. SSLEP Vision & Priorities

“An economic powerhouse driven by the transformation of Stoke-on-Trent into a truly competitive and inspiring Core City and by accelerated growth in our County Corridors and urban centres”.

Our aim is to dominate the space between a number of the UK’s largest urban areas, by connecting growth sectors, an offer of super-connectivity and compelling sites, supplying higher skilled labour and exploiting our indigenous energy potential. Our ambition is to sustainably drive:

- rapid growth in Stoke-on-Trent and its contribution to the county and national economy
- development of the peri-urban areas along the County’s key transport corridors that provide a strong, agile and competitive offer locally and nationally

To do this we need a step change in the way we connect to neighbours, investors, customers and collaborators. The SSLEP will need to maximise the opportunities presented by strategic infrastructure investments, including High Speed 2 phase 2.

50:50:10 – In 2011 we set a target to grow the economy by 50% and generate 50,000 new jobs by 2021. Whilst we are currently on target to deliver in excess of the 50,000 jobs created, we still have some work to do to meet our target for economic growth.

What Success Looks Like

The diversity within our economy is one of our strengths. Although partners have agreed a set of clear priorities for investment we have set our sights on our number of landmark developments against which we can measure progress and success up to 2034:

- The City of Stoke On Trent rapidly grows into a **Core UK City**.
- A **Connected County** the aim is “super connectivity”, maximising the benefit of existing road, rail and air connections and future strategic infrastructure investments, including HS2 and other strategic rail investment, to benefit the whole area and maximise opportunities across the County’s key transport corridors .
- Powerhouse Central: Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire internationally recognised as an investment destination and centre of expertise for indigenous energy.
- An internationally renowned **Applied Materials Technology Centre** for advanced research and innovation building on the expertise of Lucideon (formerly Ceram) and its ties to university and industry.

2.1 Our Focus

The future prosperity of the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire economy depends on growth and competitiveness within our business base. We are committed to ensuring our businesses grow, generate global customers, collaborate with suppliers, nurture new enterprise, drive innovation and draw in investment. The hallmarks of our Strategic Economic Plan are:

- **A Core City** - rapid, planned growth of the conurbation centred on the city of Stoke-on-Trent which would be a critical economic driver of the area spanning parts of Cheshire as well as Staffordshire, including through the development of a strong, competitive city centre brand offering the full mix of city centre uses.
- **Connected County**: our vital corridors across the SSLEP area and out to wider national and international markets are vital to our patterns of trade, investment and work. Our plan puts great stake in creating “super connectivity” by securing strategic and local links which allow people, goods and ideas from within Stoke-On-Trent and Staffordshire to engage with new opportunities over our borders and across the globe, both physically and digitally. To do this we need a step change in the way we connect to neighbours, investors, customers and collaborators. The SSLEP will need to maximise the opportunities presented by strategic infrastructure investments, including High Speed 2 phase 2. In addition to securing improved strategic access to the City of Stoke-on-Trent we have a Growth Triangle made up from the M6/West Coast Main Line (WMCL) Spine, the A5/M6 Toll Enterprise Belt and A38/A50 Eastern Links. The routes carve out a set of development corridors which link our strategic employment sites, enable further rapid economic growth in these peri-urban areas and underpin our economic ties to the markets beyond our borders.
- **Urban Growth**: the future prosperity of the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire economy will also be dependent on growth in Stoke-on-Trent and the chain of strategic centres at Stafford, Burton, Cannock, Lichfield, Tamworth and Newcastle-under-Lyme. Business and housing growth in and around these centres will underpin our economic progress. We also recognise that opportunities lie in the major conurbations across our border towards Manchester, Liverpool and Derby, and significantly to the South into Birmingham and the Black Country.

These priorities will be given greater traction if the area successfully maximises the benefits from all strategic transport infrastructure investment, including HS2 phase 2.

The Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire area has a strong set of businesses with growth potential in key sectors which sit centre-stage in our plans for the future. Our business growth agenda is based on recognised strengths in key aspects of advanced manufacturing:

- **Energy Generation**: building on the long standing presence of Alstom in Stafford, ABB, Siemens Wind Power, GE Power Conversion and the sustainable energy programme centred around Stoke-on-Trent and beyond, to meet growing local and international demand by diversifying into geothermal, anaerobic digestion, biomass and energy-from-waste.
- **Auto-Aero**: capitalising on the supply-chain opportunities emerging from global businesses such as JCB, Michelin, Jaguar Land Rover, Moog, and ZYTEK in our area.
- **Medical Technologies**: in which Keele University and its Science Park are internationally recognised leaders.

- **Agri-Tech:** drawing on our agricultural back-drop and Harper Adams University on our border to capitalise on an increased global focus on food security and the agri-plant capacity at JCB.
- **Applied Materials:** building upon our recognised heritage in metals and ceramics in both Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to exploit opportunities in applied uses for polymers, ceramics, glasses and composites.

These sectors each have recognised growth potential and can draw upon knowledge assets to sustain their competitiveness. Alongside this focus, we are committed to a diverse economy and supporting business growth across all our sectors, including local hot spots. Our focus on advanced manufacturing is complemented with a longer-term interest in strengthening the important [barometer] sectors of:

- **Tourism:** national attractions such as Alton Towers and Drayton Manor book-end a series of offers which can draw in day visitors and help retain families living locally such as Cannock Chase, the National Forest, and the Peak District.
- **Business/Professional Services:** the growth ambitions for our urban centres, and in Stoke-on-Trent in particular (including by creating a new central business district with a strong professional services offer), will draw in a growing base of professionals looking to support our indigenous businesses and capitalise on our excellent connectivity North to Liverpool & Manchester and South to Birmingham & London. Figure 1.1: Our Strategic Framework

The full documents can be found here:

<https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2014/04/140404-Stoke-and-Staffs-Economic-Plan-Part-1-Strategy-Website.pdf> or the Summary:
<https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2014/07/140708-Stoke-and-Staffs-Economic-Plan-Summary.pdf>

3. Call Context

Any application for funding will be required to clearly demonstrate that it provides good value for money and supports MHCLG reportable outputs and SSLEP priorities as detailed in Section 4.

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the detail of the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan Strategy **prior to** submitting an outline application.

Further information can be found on the SSLEP website:

<https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/>

4. Scope of the Call

Indicative fund allocation:	<p>Through this call the Growing Places Fund manager (Staffordshire County Council on behalf of the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire SSLEP) expect to allocate up to £1,000,000 in interest free loans (subject to qualifying criteria).</p> <p>There is no upper limit to the amount of loan that can be allocated, this will be subject to a number of criteria including demand, value for money etc.</p>										
Minimum application level	<p>The minimum application value for this Call is £50,000.</p>										
Duration of project activity	<p>Where a delivery period extends beyond the 2 year interest free loan repayment period, interest will be charged at commercial rates and as per the Funding Agreement issued to the beneficiary.</p>										
Geographical Scope	<p>Eligible projects must be located in the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire SSLEP area. Further information can be found on the SSLEP website: https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/</p>										
Specific Call Requirements	<p>This call looks to specifically support the priority areas of focus highlighted in the SSLEP Strategic Economic Plan including advanced manufacturing, tourism and business / professional services, although calls will be considered from other sectors subject to qualifying criteria.</p>										
Required Outputs	<p>Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Govt (MHCLG) reportable outputs:</p> <table data-bbox="563 1783 1399 1939"> <tr> <td>Job creation</td> <td>Site acquisition</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Site preparation</td> <td>Site access</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Site protection</td> <td>Transport infrastructure</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Acquisition of buildings</td> <td>New office buildings</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New industrial buildings</td> <td>New residential buildings</td> </tr> </table>	Job creation	Site acquisition	Site preparation	Site access	Site protection	Transport infrastructure	Acquisition of buildings	New office buildings	New industrial buildings	New residential buildings
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	<p>Refurbish buildings Broadband Environmental improvements</p> <p>SSLEP priorities: Economic growth and job creation</p> <p>Public realm Utilities</p>
<p>Call deadlines</p>	<p>Current bidding round: Open Call.</p> <p>Stage 1. No fixed deadline</p> <p>Stage 2. <i>by invitation subject to successful stage 1 application</i></p>

5. Application & Appraisal Process

There are two stages to the Growing Places fund application process;

- (i) Outline Application and, if successful
- (ii) Full Application.

Acceptance of an Outline Application to progress to full application stage does not in any way indicate or constitute an offer of Growing Places Fund loan.

Applicants must fully complete the Outline Application which will be assessed by the Growing Places Fund management team against the qualifying criteria.

Timescales

After the bidding window closes, the application and appraisal process is as follows:

- Approximately 2 weeks following the outline submission deadline, the GPF Steering Group will meet to review the submissions. Schemes will either be passed to develop their bid to a stage 2 application or rejected if the qualification criteria is not met.
- Those applicants having successfully passed the Stage 1 appraisal will be invited to submit a Stage 2 application within approximately 8 weeks of the initial deadline and will be called to an informal interview by the GPF Steering Group to present their proposal.
- In the 4-6 week period following the Stage 2 deadline, the project will be subject to an appraisal to test the eligibility of the application. Where the appraisal outcome is positive, a detailed 'due diligence' appraisal will then follow;
- Schemes that have successfully passed the due diligence process are then presented to the SSLEP Board for final acceptance for the agreed investment.
- A legal agreement will be forwarded to the applicant, which, once signed by both parties, would authorise eligible expenditure against the project.

In general, the above process can take up to 16 weeks between initial deadline and SSLEP agreement to invest. The length of time taken to complete the legal agreement lies primarily with the applicant but any expenditure incurred before the legal agreement is signed is not eligible for funding.

6. Application Checklist

Key supporting documentation

Stage 1

The following list shows the suite of supporting documentation:

Essential:

- Application form
- Company accounts (last 3 years published accounts)
- Business plan including proof of demand and development appraisal

Desirable (in the most complete form available):

- Scheme plans
- Cost Plan
- Scheme programme (before & during construction)
- Documentary proof of planning status

Stage 2

The following list shows the ideal suite of documentation:

Essential:

- Application form
- State Aid declaration
- Company Insurances
- Detailed programme (before & during construction)

Desirable (in the most complete form available):

Financial

- Parent company accounts (if needed, last 3 years published accounts)
- Proof of bank interest rates
- Credit worthiness documentation (if available)
- 3rd party financial investment information (if relevant)
- 3rd party land valuations (if relevant)

Legal/procedural

- Security for the loan
- Proof of land ownership
- Proposals for addressing any pre-commencement planning conditions

Design/construction

- Details of design team or consultant appointments
- All construction drawings
- Specification documents
- Survey reports and information
- Building control documents
- Updated cost plan and development appraisal
- Income forecast post completion until repayment of the loan
- Procurement proposals/process

7. Application Submission

Please return the completed form to Sarah Simpson / Nigel Senior at the email address below.

APPLICATION ENQUIRIES

Should you have any queries or require any further information in relation to the content of this form, please contact:

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