

Town Centres and High Streets Working Group Remit

The remit of this group is to review the party's policies on Town Centres and High Streets, and make updated proposals which communicate our party's values of liberty, equality, democracy, and community in a way which helps secure the election of as many Liberal Democrats as possible, at local, regional and national level, in order to promote our vision of society. They should convey our vision of high streets as a central part of building communities, fostering entrepreneurship, providing opportunity and strong local economies.

The group will be expected to build on existing policy proposals as set out in the 2024 Election Manifesto. The group is expected to consider and address Liberal Democrat principles on diversity and equalities in developing their proposals.

This group will as a top priority:

- Develop up to three headline policies on town centres and high streets which the party can communicate widely to win votes.

The working group will develop policies on:

- Reshaping town centres to provide thriving community spaces fit for the future.
- Recognising the role of health facilities and health services to high street renewal.
- Protecting essential services like those provided by the post office, banking, libraries.
- The role of national and local planning policies in creating healthier communities and improving public health.
- The changing nature of high streets as destinations and experiential inclusive spaces, including the growth of markets, events and festivals .
- Making high streets safe, both through addressing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting public safety in terms of physical safety of pavements, access to defibrillators, transport safety etc.
- How the high street and town centres work for different age groups.
- Developing high streets that promote active and sustainable travel and are climate-ready.
- Re-balancing power in the food and drink sector between hospitality (including pubs) and supermarkets.
- Using public sector procurement to boost local small businesses.
- Tackling the imbalance of power between big out-of-town retailers and high streets, and between big chains and independent stores.
- Making it easier to bring empty properties back into use.
- Reviewing the taxation system to help promote vibrant high streets, including by addressing any unfair biases towards online-only retailers.
- The role and powers of local communities and democratically-elected local government to drive local regeneration.
- Ensuring new developments are environmentally sustainable.

The remit of the group is meant to cover both shopping districts in urban areas and high streets in rural market towns.

The group will also consider the need for institutional change at central, regional and local government levels to embed these approaches firmly in policy.

The group will take evidence and consult widely both within and outside the party. This evidence should inform the group's proposals, which will be presented alongside an analysis of costs and an Equalities Impact Assessment.

A policy paper of no longer than 10,000 words should be produced for debate at Spring Conference 2026. Prior to that a consultative session should be held at Autumn Conference 2025, and a draft policy paper should be presented to the Federal Policy Committee by December 2025.