

Rural Rate Relief Guidance

Position as at 1 April 2025

Rural Rate Relief

Rural Rate Relief is a mandatory business rates relief provided under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 and the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

From 1 April 2017, eligible properties receive 100% mandatory Rural Rate Relief. This position remains unchanged for the 2025/26 financial year.

The relief is intended to support essential services in rural communities by removing the business rates liability for qualifying properties that are the sole provider of that service within a designated rural settlement.

How Rural Rate Relief is Granted

Where a property meets the statutory conditions for Rural Rate Relief, the Council is required to award 100% mandatory relief.

Relief will normally be awarded on an ongoing basis while the property continues to satisfy the qualifying criteria. Ratepayers are required to notify the Council of any change in circumstances which may affect entitlement.

General Qualifying Criteria

To qualify for Rural Rate Relief, the ratepayer must be liable for National Non-Domestic Rates and the property must be occupied.

The property must be located within a designated rural settlement with a population not exceeding 3,000 and must have a rateable value below the relevant statutory threshold.

The property must be the only qualifying business of its type within the settlement.

Mandatory Relief – Qualifying Criteria

Post Office or General Store:

- Rateable Value must not exceed £8,500
- The property must be used as a Post Office and/or General Store
- It must be the only such premises within the rural settlement

Public House or Petrol Filling Station:

- Rateable Value must not exceed £12,500

- The property must be used as a Public House or Petrol Filling Station
- It must be the only such premises within the rural settlement

Food Shop:

- Rateable Value must not exceed £8,500
- The property must be used mainly as a Food Shop
- It must be the only Food Shop within the rural settlement

General Store Definition

A General Store is a business which wholly or mainly sells retail food for human consumption (excluding confectionery) together with general household goods.

Where more than one General Store exists in a settlement, none will qualify on that basis, although a store may qualify independently as a Post Office or Food Shop.

Public House Definition

A Public House is premises licensed under the Licensing Act 2003 authorising the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises, where the premises are used primarily for the sale of alcohol to the general public.

Petrol Filling Station Definition

A Petrol Filling Station is premises where fuel is sold by retail to the public for the fuelling of motor vehicles intended or adapted for use on roads.

Food Shop Definition

A Food Shop is a business wholly or mainly engaged in the sale of food for human consumption, excluding confectionery and catering businesses whose primary purpose is the sale of hot food or food for consumption on the premises.

Discretionary Rural Rate Relief

The Council has discretionary powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief to other rural businesses.

Discretionary relief may be granted where the property is located in a rural settlement, the rateable value does not exceed £16,500, the business benefits the local community, and it is reasonable to grant relief having regard to Council Tax payers.

Application Requirements

Applicants **are** required to complete an application form and provide information confirming occupation, use of the property and continued eligibility for relief.

How Applications Are Determined

Mandatory relief is awarded in accordance with legislation.

Discretionary relief is assessed on its individual merits in line with Council policy, government guidance and subsidy control requirements.

Relief may be withdrawn and backdated where eligibility ceases.

Qualifying Rural Settlements

The qualifying rural settlements within Mid Sussex are:

Albourne

Ansty and Staplefield

Ardingly

Ashurst Wood

Balcombe

Bolney

Fulking

Horsted Keynes

Lindfield Rural

Poynings

Pyecombe

Slaugham

Turners Hill

Twineham

West Hoathly