

Name of meeting: Cabinet
Date: 19th February 2019
Title of report: Huddersfield Heritage Led Regeneration Scheme (HLR)

Purpose of report

To seek approval to develop a scheme for the improvement of shop fronts, the creation of viable new uses within the upper floors of the buildings through grant aid and to consider enforcement measures to facilitate the same objectives within Huddersfield town centre.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes - as spend shall be more than £250K
Key Decision	Yes it involves spend of over £1.20m
The Decision - Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by Strategic Director & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Karl Battersby - 6.02.2019 Eamonn Croston - 8.02.2019 Julie Muscroft - 7.02.2019
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr P McBride- Economy

Electoral wards affected: Newsome

Ward councillors consulted: Cllr Allison, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Stewart-Turner,

Public or private: Public

GDPR - This report contains no information that falls within the scope of the General Data Protection Regulation.

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to develop a scheme for the improvement of shop fronts, the creation of viable new uses and to consider enforcement measures to facilitate the same objectives.
- 1.2 It sets out a number of key areas of activity which need to be progressed prior to finalisation of the above, which will be considered by Cabinet.
- 1.3 These areas of activity will cover all the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area but have a specific focus on the “Old Town” area of the town centre including John William Street, Westgate and Northumberland Street among others. It is also felt appropriate to include Cross Church Street and New Street areas to help support proposed public realm improvements
- 1.4 In particular it sets out detail of:-
 - To seek the necessary funding required
 - The issues of the town centre heritage
 - How the scheme will aid the delivery of the Huddersfield Town Centre Masterplan
 - Requirement of any enforcement action to be taken
 - Delivery of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
 - Delivery of a Design Guide for Huddersfield
 - Partners in the delivery of the scheme
 - Authority to enter into discussions with outside funding agencies.

2 Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 Concern has been raised over a number of years in regards to the condition of the shop fronts and vacancy rates in both the ground and upper floors of buildings in the Huddersfield Conservation Area. The current appearance of many of the shop fronts is a result of many factors including a legacy of poor workmanship, display of ill-considered advertisements, lack of maintenance and some unauthorised alterations. The combination of these factors fail to contribute to the significance of the buildings and the conservation area as a whole. Due to this the Huddersfield Conservation Area was included on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register.
- 2.2 To seek to understand the town centre, its issues and opportunities, along with the need to carry out preparatory work for the Huddersfield Area Action Plan consultants have been commissioned to carry out a Masterplan for the town centre. Early indications are that the poor quality of the shop fronts and the vacancy rates are having a negative effect on the economic viability of the area. Equally there may be a need to re-imagine the town in terms of the uses within certain areas.

- 2.3 Discussions have been held with representatives of the Huddersfield Civic Society who have raised their concerns over the poor quality and the recent changes to some shop fronts that do not have planning permission. Whilst they suggested enforcement action be taken, due to the length of time some of the shop fronts have been this way and because of generous deemed consents for the display of advertisements, such action would not be enough on its own. Grant funding, along with the production of a design guide and proactive enforcement action may provide a greater solution to the problem. Equally if grant funding was offered for the building as a whole rather than just shop fronts, including empty floor space conversion, then the viability of the area would increase.
- 2.4 Due to the inclusion of the conservation area in the 2018 and soon to be published 2019 Heritage at Risk Register, discussions have been held with Historic England to see how and what improvements can be made to ensure that the town is removed from the Register by 2021.
- 2.5 Early considerations are that a scheme, based upon the principles of the Heritage Lottery Fund's former Townscape Heritage Initiative and Historic England's Heritage Action Zone, may resolve most of the issues. New guidance on how such schemes will work and the exact issues the grants will help solve is expected in February 2019. However, notwithstanding this at this stage external funding has not fully been considered, firstly because the Heritage Lottery Fund does not offer area based grants at the moment and secondly due to some of the buildings being in Council ownership, albeit on long term repair leases, means that funding from external sources may not be forthcoming. Another issue to consider is that should we need to take enforcement action then this would not attract external funding whereas, the offer of funding from a Council grant scheme may achieve the desired effect.

3 Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with people

- 3.1.1 Relationships with property owners and tenants will be important from the outset so that views and opinions over how the area can be improved can be gained. Such views and opinions will be important for the success of the scheme.
- 3.1.2 As part of the grant scheme public consultation will be carried out and workshops carried out with owners and tenants. When schemes for the improvement of the buildings are to be submitted, including the change of use for unoccupied floor space, discussions will be held to ensure that the proposals are of good design and sustainable for the future.

3.2 Working with partners

- 3.2.1 Approval is sought to enter into discussions with Historic England (Heritage Action Zone grant), Heritage Lottery Fund and possibly other funders such as the Architectural Heritage Fund. At this stage it is not clear that funding will be available due to the limited information that is available from each of the grant bodies. Working in partnership is a key requirement of all of the grant funders where the engagement of local

business groups and the Civic Society will be paramount to the success of the scheme.

3.3 Place Based Working

3.3.1 The HLR, which is located within Huddersfield Town centre, will reflect the diversity of its immediate population, which is mixed and evident particularly through the retail/food offer in the town. The diversity of the area is a strength of the town, which certainly can be built upon, to bring vibrancy and stimulate activity in the town centre.

3.3.2 Through delivery of the HLR over the forthcoming years engaging directly with property owners, tenants, residents, and local groups, with the support of local ward Councillors will gain a real understanding of the issues and needs of the area.

3.3.3 Through this understanding it will allow the HLR to tailor its approach, in helping and encouraging applicants, with their formulation of property improvements, which not only meets their operational needs, but also that of the HLR in terms of 'Conservation Standards' and the Council's objectives of improving 'Place' and 'Economy'.

3.3.4 The refurbishment of several key properties will contribute to the attractiveness of the area by bringing a derelict premises back in to use, thus being more welcoming to customers and improving the perception of the area. The scheme will enhance the streetscape and raise the quality of the town centre environment, particularly in the area of focus around the 'old town' of Huddersfield.

3.4 Improving outcomes for children

No Implications

3.5 Other (Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Financial

3.5.1 It is proposed that to make the necessary impact in the area, a fund of £1.2m shall be set up from the Capital allocation of £30m for the Regeneration of Huddersfield Town Centre. This fund will then be used to offer grants to third parties and, subject to partner agreement, to secure match funding from other funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England and the Architectural Heritage Fund if available.

Legal

3.5.2 It will be a requirement that any grant recipient must enter into a grant agreement that will be drawn up by the Council's legal team. The grant agreement will impose conditions upon the grant recipient that will be similar to conditions contained in third party grants that have been made under other Heritage led Schemes in the Council's area.

- 3.5.3 As part of any application for funding from the individual property owners Legal would have to confirm that any award of grant to a recipient would either be in compliance with the European Union 'State Aid' General Block Exemption Rule (GBER), of Article 53 or would fall within the de minimis exemption of the State Aid Rules.
- 3.5.4 The applicant will enter into an agreement with the Council for the grant; the agreement for the works is between the applicant and contractor. The applicant is then responsible for paying the contractor and a 10% retention is also held until final completion of the project.

4 Consultees and their opinions

- 4.1 Local Ward Councillors have been consulted on the proposal and are supportive of the scheme.
- 4.2 At this time extensive consultations have not taken place although discussions have taken place with the Huddersfield Civic Society who are supportive of the scheme. It is proposed to carry out further consultation as part of the proposed Area Action Plan for Huddersfield and with the property owners and tenants. Discussions will be had with the aforementioned grant giving bodies.

5 Next steps and timelines

- 5.1 There are various packages of work that will need to be carried out as part of the scheme, firstly to understand the area involved and the issues that need to be resolved either through enforcement action where necessary or the offer of grant funding to achieve the outcomes of the scheme.

5.1.1 Town Centre Audit

An audit of the area outlined above needs to be carried out. Such an audit would include an assessment of the issues affecting the town centre and the buildings themselves. This would focus on where enforcement action would achieve the outcomes, which properties that would benefit from funding where enforcement is unnecessary and the amount of funding required. This audit has begun with a survey of the area in regards to enforcement issues

5.1.2 Definition of the area

It is proposed that the whole of the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area (see Appendix 1) forms the area for overall funding but the main area of focus will be in the 'old town' area of the town centre focussing on John William Street, Westgate, Northumberland Street and Station Street (see Appendix 2). These areas were considered due to the poor quality of the shop fronts and the lack of viable uses in the upper floors, the close relationship with the railway station and the 'entrance' to the town centre and the outcomes of the forthcoming Town Centre Masterplan. The proposed masterplan will look at new uses in the town and how these can be delivered so it is proposed that this regeneration scheme will be aligned to this to ensure that the required delivery is achieved.

5.1.3 Enforcement

As part of the audit, consideration will be given to the need to take action where shopfronts and signage have been erected without the benefit of Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent or Advertisement Consent. Initial scoping exercise of the town centre suggests a number of the shop fronts and advertisements do have the benefit of consent or are lawful due to the period of time the alterations have been carried out. However, in certain cases alternative enforcement tools maybe considered where the appearance is significantly harmful. The poor quality of the shop fronts and advertisements does have a negative impact upon the conservation area and is a reason why the area is considered to be at risk. However, until a full audit is carried out the scope of enforcement action is unknown but where it is felt that where action can be taken all necessary notices will be considered. As discuss above, the enforcement part of the audit has commenced and following a full survey a schedule of required actions will be undertaken early in the New Year.

5.1.4 Funding

To enable the works to be carried out the audit will identify the properties, the work necessary to each building and where properties will benefit from the upper floors being converted to residential uses. The scheme will be based on the current Townscape Heritage Initiative Grant and the soon to be launched Heritage Action Zone in Dewsbury where numerous properties have been converted and new shop fronts added. Based on this scheme, the average grant is between 70% and 80% of the total costs of refurbishment and replacement shop fronts. It is likely though considering the need for significant works and for the scheme to have a high level of uptake, a grant of 80% may have to be offered. An average shop front of a suitable design will likely to cost in the region of £16,000 to £20,000 depending on the amount of work necessary. Conversion of upper floors will cost around £100,000 to £150,000 dependant on the scale of the works; any grant will only cover works up to 'first fix' and will not include decoration of fittings. The audit will look towards the number of properties and the scale of the grant needed but based on the scheme at Dewsbury it is likely that the amount of funding needed to make an impact will be in the region of £1.2 million.

However, due to the amount of funding required it is felt that negotiations should take place with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Currently there are no area based lottery funded schemes until their strategic framework is released in February 2019 and it is likely that there will only be one over-arching grant scheme covering a number of funding types. However, the HLF are inviting discussions with possible bidders to seek advice prior to the grant scheme is released.

Discussions are to take place with Historic England in relation to their Heritage Action Zone grant scheme where the Council have been successful in securing funding from them for the Daisy Hill Area of Dewsbury. Due to the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area being on their At Risk Register Historic England may look

sympathetically at a bid for Huddersfield under this scheme. This would look towards up to 50% of the costs of targeted buildings being restored and put into a new use. Therefore the Council's budget for this scheme would go further. The recent budget released £40m to Historic England for another round of funding bids and it is felt opportune that discussions are held at this time.

As well as the £40m allocated to Historic England from the recent budget, a further £15m was allocated to the Architectural Heritage Fund under their Transforming Places Scheme. The scheme is to support:-

- Investment to assist the delivery of an estimated 150-200 projects across England, including exemplar, scalable schemes, such as 'retail to residential' pilots, workspaces and cultural venues
- In partnership with the National Trust, the piloting of new social enterprise 'heritage development trusts' to investigate taking ownership of and developing historic buildings in urban and town centres
- A team of AHF project advisors to support schemes for the delivery of new uses of historic buildings on high streets
- Increased investment into alternative use feasibility studies and 'meanwhile uses' for existing building

The proposed masterplan is looking at, amongst other issues, rebranding of certain areas of the town centre, which could bring new uses and vibrant places to live, shop and work. Areas such as around the open market and Northumberland Street could benefit from the approach of the Transforming Places Scheme

5.1.5 Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

To fully understand the character, significance and the issues within the conservation area it is felt that the area should be assessed and a management plan drawn up to guide the future development of the town. This in turn will provide a focus to improve those areas highlighted in the appraisal which have the greatest impact upon its significance. An appraisal is often required to be carried out as part of any bid for external grant funding, with most grant schemes able to make a contribution to the cost of consultants carrying out the work. Once complete the management plan will be subject to a period of public consultation before formal adoption by the Council. Once adopted the appraisal and management plan will be part of the decision making process of any planning applications in the area as well as being able to be used as part of any further future funding bids.

5.1.6 Design Guide

To secure good quality shop fronts, advertisements and streetscape it is proposed that as part of the scheme a Design Guide will be produced. There is such a guide for Dewsbury which has proven to be popular with planning agents and building owners leading to securing well designed shop fronts in that town centre. Working with the Huddersfield Civic Society, who have already commenced a draft document, it is proposed that such a document is formalised and used as part of the planning process. To enable new uses in the buildings

and to support possible improvement of the night time economy the Design Guide should look at how sensitive alterations could be carried out to historic buildings to comply with Environmental Health requirements. It is anticipated that such a design guide will be drafted, subject to approval, in spring 2019.

5.1.7 Future management of the scheme

It is suggested that the day to day Project Management of the scheme will be carried out utilising existing resources within the Investment Service. Due to the success of the THI and the launch of the Dewsbury HAZ there is a great deal of experience in delivering a heritage led regeneration scheme. Should external grant funding be sought and secured, the post of a Project Officer could be part of the bid. However, due to the external funding not being discussed yet it is too early to give a commitment to such a post.

6 Officer recommendations and reasons

- 6.1 That resources of £1.2m be approved to support the installation of shop fronts and secure more viable uses where necessary. This will be taken from the Town centre Capital allocation.
- 6.2 That the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure be authorised to set up a grant scheme for the award of third party grants to owners of properties for the purposes of the installation of shop fronts and/or for the purposes of securing more viable uses where appropriate
- 6.3 That the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure be authorised to enter into discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund and Historic England to secure possible funding for the scheme
- 6.4 That the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure be authorised to enter into discussions with the Huddersfield Civic Society to join the scheme as partners and secure the publication of a Huddersfield Town Centre Design Guide.
- 6.5 That the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure be authorised to take any necessary enforcement action to secure better quality shop fronts and advertisements.

7 Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation

- 7.1 Councillor McBride supports the report but requests that further checks be made around enforcements for the town centre. The report highlights the need to carry out an audit of the buildings and continue to take enforcement action where necessary.

8 Contact officer

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9 Background Papers and History of Decisions

Map of the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area
Map of the focus area.

10 Strategic Director responsible

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