



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Policy and Resources Committee – 29 September 2011

Rushden Townscape Heritage Initiative Bid

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to advise the committee of the progress to date on the Rushden Townscape Heritage Initiative application, and to seek the committee's approval to prepare and submit a stage one bid.

Attachment(s)

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) programme provides grants for schemes to regenerate conservation areas that are displaying particular social and economic need. The scheme is run by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- 1.2 The THI programme funds works that will have the greatest effect on the preservation, enhancement and regeneration of conservation areas. The highest priorities of the programme include structural and external repair of historic buildings and structures which are still being used; and repair and conversion for new uses of vacant or partly-used historic buildings. In addition, other works and activities are also funded, including public realm works, although this cannot make up more than 25% of the overall works. Schemes which focus on single buildings are not eligible for this programme.
- 1.3 It is important that THI schemes are undertaken as part of a wider regeneration strategy or programme, so as to ensure that schemes endure long-term success.
- 1.4 The HLF advises that a successful scheme should deliver the following outcomes:
- Preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas affected by high levels of deprivation and in need of regeneration.
 - Bringing historic buildings back into appropriate and sustainable use.
 - Safeguarding the character of conservation areas through:
 - increasing training opportunities in heritage skills;
 - increasing community participation; and
 - improving approaches to conservation management and maintenance.
- 1.5 The THI programme budget is between £500,000 and £2 million. At least 25% of the overall budget/fund must be provided by partnership funding. A proportion of the partnership funding can be made up through in-kind contributions, such as staffing costs.

2.0 The application process

- 2.1 Applications for the THI programme are assessed in two rounds. The first round is competitive and assessed in a national batch. The deadline for first-round applications is 30 November each year, with decisions being made in April.
- 2.2 Providing the first-round is successful, the scheme then has 12-months to develop before a second-round submission is due. A development grant is provided by the

HLF. The second-round submission is usually assessed within three months of it being received, and after this assessment period it is taken to the next quarterly decision meeting of the HLF.

- 2.3 Considering the above timetable, schemes submitted in November 2011, and are successful, are not anticipated to commence until mid 2013.

3.0 Outline of bid

- 3.1 Rushden has been identified as an area that would be eligible for a THI grant owing to the fact that it is a conservation area that is displaying a significant heritage need. The council's corporate focus for the regeneration of the town, and the corporate plan priority outcome for a high quality built environment support this. The regeneration work carried out in the town to date complement this proposal to ensure a successful scheme.
- 3.2 Officers have submitted an expression of interest to the HLF regarding a THI bid for Rushden. We will be receiving feedback at the end of September, which should provide a steer as to the likelihood of an application being successful. The outline of the bid is as follows in the text below.
- 3.3 The scheme will focus on the High Street part of the conservation area. Officers are developing a list of potential buildings for enhancement, along with their conservation needs and estimated restoration costs. The total amount of required works is estimated to be in the region of £1.2 million.
- 3.4 The focus of the work will be on building frontages, including above-shop features. Historic buildings which could be put to a new economic/business use are also being investigated. The works range from replacement of frontages to new windows. The aim is to restore the buildings in general, replacing or repairing aspects of the buildings to appropriate heritage standards; reinstating lost architectural details, etc. Shopfronts will also be improved where there is clear evidence of how they looked historically, in line with the council's adopted shopfront design SPD. The HLF deem replacement shopfronts to be low priority however, and so this cannot make up more than 25% of the overall bid.
- 3.5 The money cannot help private owners to the disadvantage of others (state aid rules apply). The grants will effectively bridge the gap between the cost of doing a 'cheap job' and a proper repair. The maximum proportion on offer to owners will be set once the bid is past stage one. The HLF have advised that 90% grants for reinstatement is not uncommon.
- 3.6 The Rushden Historical Society has already been very helpful, supplying photographs and drawings dating back over the past 100 years that provide us with a good evidence base. Additionally, members of the public will be invited to lend us their old photographs of the town centre, to supplement the Historical Society's considerable archive, and this will help involve the community at an early stage in this project.
- 3.7 We shall actively seek community input and participation in the building restoration programme, including developing a programme of community-based heritage initiatives, such as historical research for a shutter project, providing closed shutters with pictures of the buildings they cover as they historically appeared.
- 3.8 In addition, the intention of the project also offers the opportunity for increasing training opportunities in heritage skills and apprenticeships. In this regard we plan to investigate links with Moulton College and other building skills training providers to develop courses based on heritage building techniques, and to work with local construction businesses to encourage the development of heritage apprenticeships.
- 3.9 A key part of this project will be working alongside local organisations and individuals,

including Rushden Town Council and the Rushden Town Partnership.

3.10 Notwithstanding the above, members are advised that the details of the bid can be altered as necessary throughout the process, right up until the submission of a stage two bid.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 There are no significant risks in relation to this report.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 As part of the bid approximately 25% matching funding will need to be provided, which to draw down £1.2 million equates to £250,000. However, this figure may change as the external funding picture becomes clearer. A proportion of the match funding can be made up with in-kind contributions, such as staffing costs.

8.0 Corporate Outcomes

8.1 The relevant corporate outcomes are:

- Regeneration and economic development
- Sustainable development
- High quality built environment
- Effective partnership working
- Strong community leadership.

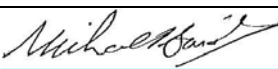
9.0 Other possible issues to consider

9.1 It is likely that this will be the last year that the HLF will be running this particular grant programme, and as such, should that be the case, the council will not have an opportunity to put the project on hold until a later date.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the proposal in principle to proceed to stage one of the THI programme

(Reason: The proposal would provide further opportunities to regenerate Rushden Town Centre, a priority of the council)

Legal	Power: Local Government Act 2000				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
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Date: 9 August 2011					
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