

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

18 NOVEMBER 2020

NEWARK HERITAGE ACTION ZONE PROGRAMME DESIGN

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Committee Members on the Newark High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), including updating on the Programme Design for 2020-2024.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In May 2019, Historic England launched the £95 million High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), aimed at finding ways to revive and unlock the potential of historic high streets. Newark & Sherwood District Council (NSDC) submitted an expression of interest for this fund and in September 2019 were notified that our bid was successful in principle. Officers submitted a more detailed project plan in December 2019 which was approved in February 2021. Due to the COVID pandemic, work on the HAZ proposals and updates to this Committee were necessarily delayed, with the HAZ Agreement being signed following Member support in October 2020.
- 2.2 The High Street HAZ fund is split between 68 high streets across England. There were 13 successful High Street HAZ area bids in total within the Midlands area, notably Leicester, Grantham and Lincoln.
- 2.3 Newark Conservation Area (CA) is on the national Heritage at Risk Register, with vacancy and erosion of architectural and historic significance key factors. There are a number of buildings, including those with vacant upper floors, where there is limited prospect of change without some level of intervention. These include significant listed buildings such as the Grade II* listed former White Hart on the Market Place and the Grade II listed Corn Exchange. There are 15 listed buildings on the local Heritage at Risk Register in Newark labelled as very bad or poor, as well as a further 19 in danger of becoming poor or very bad due to vacancy.
- 2.4 Working closely with Historic England, we identified that the most significant concentration of heritage at risk properties, combined with vacancy and other key high street problems lay in the medieval core of the town centre, ranging from the Castle area to the Market Place via the important retail streets of Kirk Gate, Stodman Street and Middle Gate. Bridge Street, Carter Gate (as far as Beaumont Cross Junction/Portland Street) and Appleton Gate were also identified. A map of the HAZ area boundary is shown in the background papers.
- 2.5 It is important to note that the HAZ forms one strand of work for Newark Town Centre. The need to re-purpose and revitalise the centre has been acknowledged as a strategic priority for the District Council through the Community Plan (notably objectives 6 and 7) and the recently submitted Newark Town Investment Plan, which is subject to a separate update on this agenda.

3.0 Newark High Street HAZ Programme Design 2020-2024

- 3.1 Newark has a very attractive town centre which in recent years has faced the same challenges as other market towns with chain stores closing and vacant shops deteriorating. Unlocking potential and finding ways to revitalise its central core is essential to regenerate and enhance the historic character of the CA. The potential to create new homes within the town centre through converting vacant sites and buildings and the repurposing and re-designing of public realm to create more appealing and accessible public space and greater connectivity is at the heart of the HAZ Programme Design.
- 3.2 Our initial bid sought a funding pot of £250,000, which is to be match-funded with NSDC and private-sector funding. However, since working up the details of the bid in detail in consultation with our Historic England colleagues, this figure has risen to £275,000. This is primarily in order to cover the cost of a full-time HAZ officer, which is an essential requirement of the fund and matches our commitment to delivering project outcomes. This post is currently out to advert, with an appointment expected prior to or immediately after the Committee.

The Projects – Part 1 of the HAZ

- 3.3 The key Newark HAZ projects are:

- Condition surveys and appraisals of key heritage at risk within the HAZ area, including the Corn Exchange, former White Hart Inn and other individual buildings at risk. Such surveys will inform urgent works and repairs discussions with owners. If works are not secured the Council and Historic England will also consider formal action as required.
- Shop front and upper floors 'development guide' based on quantified costs to demonstrate benefits;
- Shop front grants for appropriate historic replacements on a grant funded basis. It is expected that 3-4 shopfronts can be supported over the HAZ term;
- Public realm and way-finding feasibility and visioning: This project will focus on connecting and removing barriers/unwelcome desire lines between the different parts of the town centre, notably connecting the Potterdyke area (at Beaumont Cross and Martindale Lane). It will be necessary for any strategy to be produced in conjunction with a wider town centre review (as part of the TIP) and in association with Nottinghamshire County Council as highway authority. Wider wayfinding will be considered alongside improving legibility;
- Review of the local council tax and business rate regime – exploring and modelling alternative and incentivised approaches at a local level to a tax regime over a longer term;
- Tenant and Landlord Advice – working with both cohorts and legal advisors to identify best practice and balance when looking at lease approaches issues of dealing with repairs, and the need to support tenancies for longevity whilst securing ongoing income for landlords;
- Installation of footfall counters to provide insights and measure success (tender returns pending);
- Publication of a local book on Newark's Heritage. This publication will be a collaboration with Historic England and will draw on research and findings made throughout the HAZ project.

- 3.4 In tandem with the above, the Newark CA Appraisal is to be completed (in accordance with the 12 September 2018 Economic Development Committee timetable). Whilst there has been some delay and unforeseen challenges (for example, during the COVID pandemic, it is not possible to carry out a public meeting for this project, a legal requirement under s71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990), it remains the intent to produce a draft of the Appraisal for adoption in 2021.
- 3.5 In addition, Historic England are keen to ensure that a review of Local Listings forms part of this process. Development of a robust Criteria to underpin the survey of Local Listings is critical and forms another agenda item in this Committee.

The Cultural Program – Part 2 of the HAZ

- 3.6 The Cultural Program is linked to, but otherwise run and funded separately to the HAZ projects detailed above. A core of organisations has been identified from the wider community to lead on our cultural programme, including Inspire (Culture, Libraries and Learning), Newark Civic Trust, Newark Heritage Trust, Newark Book Festival, Newark and Sherwood CVS and Newark and Sherwood College (Schools of Violin, Piano and Woodwind). Collectively, these are 'the Cultural Consortium'. Their brief is to explore a range of mediums to deliver a programme that is accessible and welcoming to everyone. This can include a wide range of cultural activities encompassing theatre, street art, poetry, literature, music festivals and photography projects, amongst other activities.
- 3.7 The objectives of the Cultural Programme are:
- a) to revitalise high streets through cultural activities, bringing both a wider range of people and new activity to the heart of communities and raising aspirations;
 - b) to encourage greater use of high streets and increase dwell time;
 - c) to create greater pride, sense of community and wellbeing through cultural engagement;
 - d) to help local organisations, communities and stakeholders to embed and sustain the benefits of the Programme in the future; and
 - e) to support the work of the overall capital programme.
- 3.8 At this stage the programme is being developed. They will need to align with and complement any relevant Covid-19 restrictions and, if successful, the Newark Heart proposals within the Newark TIP. NSDC is not expected to run the consortium, but should be a facilitator and ensure, with the consortium partners, integration of events and activities.
- 3.9 Inspire, the lead partner in the Cultural Consortium, have successfully applied for a pilot grant for the Cultural Programme of £10,000. Supported by the Heritage and Culture business unit, Inspire will use this funding to formalise the consortium and engage with members to build capacity and skills, undertake community engagement to underpin the development of the cultural programme, and develop a delivery plan.

HAZ Projects Officer

- 3.10 The HAZ Programme allows for the employment of a Project Officer for the duration of the scheme. Following the signing of the HAZ Agreement with Historic England, the post was advertised (closing date 2nd November). It is hoped at Committee to conform an appointment and likely start date with the Council.

4.0 Proposals

4.1 For the Committee to note the information on the Newark High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) Programme Design for 2020-2024.

5.0 Equalities Implications

5.1 The Programme Design will need to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and that no individuals or groups are disadvantaged or discriminated against because of race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, maternity and pregnancy, marriage or civil partnership, age, or social inequality.

6.0 Digital Implications

6.1 There are no direct implications for ICT.

7.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/9977)

7.1 The HAZ Programme covers the period from now until March 2024. The overall project is £550,000, of which the Council has allocated revenue budget for the agreed contribution of £125,000 over the period (Historic England's contribution is £275,000, with the remaining £150,000 coming from private sector contributions). The breakdown of this budget is contained within the background papers. However, a summary of the yearly spend profile is as follows:

	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	TOTAL
HE Contribution	£7,813	£27,938	£118,750	£86,750	£33,750	£275,000
NSDC Contribution	£2,813	£17,938	£60,250	£30,750	£13,250	£125,000
Private Sector	£0	£0	£80,000	£65,000	£5,000	£150,000
Grand Total	£10,625	£45,875	£259,000	£182,500	£52,000	£550,000

7.2 The schemes within the HAZ programme are mostly revenue expenditure but any of the schemes that are deemed to be Capital expenditure, will need to be individually reported to Policy and Finance Committee to seek approval for the budget included in the capital programme. These will be financed by a revenue contribution, HAZ funding and external grant, therefore there will be no additional revenue implications in relation to the proposed projects.

8.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

8.1 The community engagement on the HAZ accords with the Objective that seeks to increase participation with the Council and within local communities. It will also align with the Objective to enhance and sustain Town centres whereby heritage is appropriately protected.

9.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee notes the information contained within the report.

Reason for Recommendations

To help unlock the heritage potential of the town whilst assisting to rejuvenate Newark Town Centre.

Background Papers

Newark High Street HAZ boundary area.

Newark High Street HAZ Programme Design 2020-2024.

For further information please contact Oliver Scott on Ext 5847.

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