

Report to: Cabinet
Regeneration Panel

Date: 2 October 2008
12 November 2008

Subject: Potential Heritage Lottery Fund (Townscape Heritage Initiative) Bids - Option Appraisal

Report of: Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Steve Thompson 01942 404246

Purpose / summary: 1. To report on the option appraisal carried out to examine the potential for future Heritage Lottery Fund (Townscape Heritage Initiative) bids within the borough.

2. To obtain members agreement to prepare and submit a Stage 1 Townscape Heritage Initiative bid for an area of Wigan town centre.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:

The council's Capital Programme cannot provide funding for historic building improvement grants and public realm enhancements within conservation areas. Whilst limited funding may be available from other sources, external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund can provide additional resources for the improvement of vacant and derelict historic properties and to support a comprehensive conservation-led regeneration scheme.

An Option Appraisal has been carried out which has identified part of Wigan town centre as the best current opportunity for a new Townscape Heritage Initiative bid within the borough.

Alternative funding sources and opportunities will be investigated in the other identified conservation areas, where the need for improvement has been identified.

Recommendation / decision: That members authorise the preparation and

submission of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Townscape Heritage Initiative funding for Wigan town centre.

Key Decision:

This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:

Subject to further survey work and cost estimates, it is expected that the Stage 1 bid will request over £1million from the Heritage Lottery Fund over a 5 year period. Match funding for these works is potentially available from a number of sources, including the Joint Service Centre scheme and the Transport Innovation Fund.

Staffing:

A suitable mechanism for delivering the Townscape Heritage Initiative programme will need to be agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund if the Stage 1 bid is successful. In this respect, the council may need to part fund a Project Manager to administer the grant scheme.

Policy:

Adopted UDP Policies EN8; TCS1

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?

A full diversity impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the Stage 1 bid.

Wards affected:

Wigan Central

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

No

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

No.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?	Yes
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	X
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Regeneration Panel-12 Nov.08		2 October 08	

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
THI bidding documents and guidance on HLF website at www.hlf.org.uk	N/A	N/A	HLF

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 10 September 2008

1.0 Background:

- 1.1 At its meeting of 12 March 2008, Regeneration Panel received a report which explained that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had agreed to designate Wigan Borough as a Priority Area, under their 3rd Strategic Plan. In this situation, they will encourage relevant funding bids and are aiming to increase investment in the borough from this particular source. In this supportive climate, it is appropriate to consider the potential for a new Townscape Heritage Initiative (T.H.I.) bid within the borough.
- 1.2 The Townscape Heritage Initiative supports schemes, led by partnerships, which aim to regenerate the historic environment within towns and cities. Schemes must be based within designated conservation areas and are designed to tackle problems of heritage decay within these areas. T.H.I. schemes must also be part of a wider regeneration strategy or programme for the area, which delivers significant benefits to the wider community. The HLF are able to provide funding of between £250,000 and £2million over a 5 year period following a 2 stage bidding process.
- 1.3 Currently, there are 2 T.H.I. schemes operating within the borough. The Wigan Pier Quarter T.H.I. scheme will be completed next year, whilst the Hindley Town Centre T.H.I. scheme operates until Autumn 2011. The deadline for submitting new T.H.I. bids is 30 November 2008.
- 1.4 Members will be aware that the existing Heritage Strategy for the borough reached the end of its life in 2007. This strategy set out the heritage regeneration priorities for the borough. Many of these identified priorities, have benefitted from, or are presently undergoing, conservation-led regeneration supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund or English Heritage. These include the Wigan Pier Quarter, the History Shop and Hindley and Atherton town centres. Work is currently progressing on developing a new Heritage Capital Strategy that will set the corporate priorities for heritage investment in future years. This document will be reported to Regeneration Panel and Cabinet in the near future.

2.0 Proposals:

- 2.1 The borough has 23 conservation areas, all of which may be potentially eligible for support through the T.H.I. programme. These areas have been considered as part of the option appraisal and these options have been assessed against the following criteria:
 - Do they meet the basic eligibility requirements of the HLF?
 - Do they meet the wider heritage aims of the council and its partners
 - Extent of conservation works required
 - Contribution to other regeneration schemes and initiatives
 - Availability of match funding
 - Deliverability of the scheme (ownership issues etc.)
- 2.2 A number of the conservation areas have Character Appraisals, which identify improvement works required to enhance their special character. These have been used as a basis for identifying potential works, where appropriate.

2.3 The potential options for a T.H.I. funding bid are summarised below:

1. Wigan Town Centre – A potential T.H.I. scheme based around The Wiend / Market Place / Wallgate

This option would complement the proposed Joint Service Centre scheme by improving historic areas and properties around the new civic quarter and would also improve the key Wallgate corridor from the railway stations to the Market Place. Match funding could potentially be provided through Section 106 contributions, the Joint Service Centre scheme and the Transport Innovation Fund.

The area contains a number of prominent buildings requiring attention, such as the Masonic Properties, Wallgate and the identified works would benefit large numbers of visitors and property owners. A T.H.I. scheme in this area would provide added value to major projects within the area.

2. Leigh Town Centre – Areas of the town centre along with peripheral areas such as Railway Road, King Street.

A number of areas within the various Leigh conservation areas would benefit from investment in the public realm and the private property stock.

Within the town centre, a major Masterplan study is to be commissioned shortly to look at options for improvement and redevelopment of the area. This study will set the strategic direction for the area and identify funding streams and delivery mechanisms. In this situation, before this study is carried out, it is considered premature to consider a T.H.I. bid at this stage, but it would be a priority for a future bid.

3. Tyldesley Town Centre – Based on an extended conservation area.

Although the centre has retained much of its historic character, the recent Conservation Area Character Appraisal identified a number of streetscape improvements which would enhance the character of the area, including refurbishment of the Market Square. The centre is receiving funding through the Local Transport Plan programme for a range of traffic management works.

However, whilst the potential for physical improvements has been identified, Tyldesley is not eligible for the large scale regeneration funding programmes which would be required to act as match funding for any T.H.I. bid.

4. Ashton Town Centre – Based around the town centre retail core

The character of the town centre area is harmed by large volumes of through traffic and several buildings have suffered from inappropriate alterations. The centre is currently the subject of a programme of pedestrian improvements and traffic management works funded through the Local Transport Plan. Previously, the area was the subject of an unsuccessful bid for English Heritage funding.

However, as with Tyldesley, the necessary match funding is not available from the major regeneration programmes and any T.H.I. project at this stage would be a 'stand alone' project rather than forming part of a wider regeneration initiative.

Ashton town centre is also to be the subject of a Masterplan study carried out by specialist consultants. This study will highlight the actions required within the town centre and the potential funding mechanisms to bring these about and in this situation a T.H.I. bid would be premature at this stage, but it would be a priority for a future bid.

5. Bridgewater Canal Conservation Area, Leigh – Covering a range of commercial and mill buildings along the canal corridor.

This area was the subject of an English Heritage Conservation Area Partnership bid in 1998. Whilst the bid was successful, the programme could not be delivered due to unwilling owners, weaker market conditions and lower property values. A major Housing Renewal Scheme was carried out along the Chapel Street corridor, which successfully addressed many of the environmental problems within this area.

Whilst some mill redevelopments have taken place in the intervening years, the same ownership issues and underlying market problems still remain and there are concerns over the deliverability of any scheme within this area.

6. Other Conservation Areas

The remaining conservation areas within the borough were also considered for their eligibility and potential for a T.H.I scheme. Several of these areas require conservation works to restore their historic character and which would have some benefit to the local area. These include Mayflower Conservation Area, Standish and Golborne Town Centre. However, the lack of match funding and their 'stand alone' project nature rules them out at the present time.

3.0 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

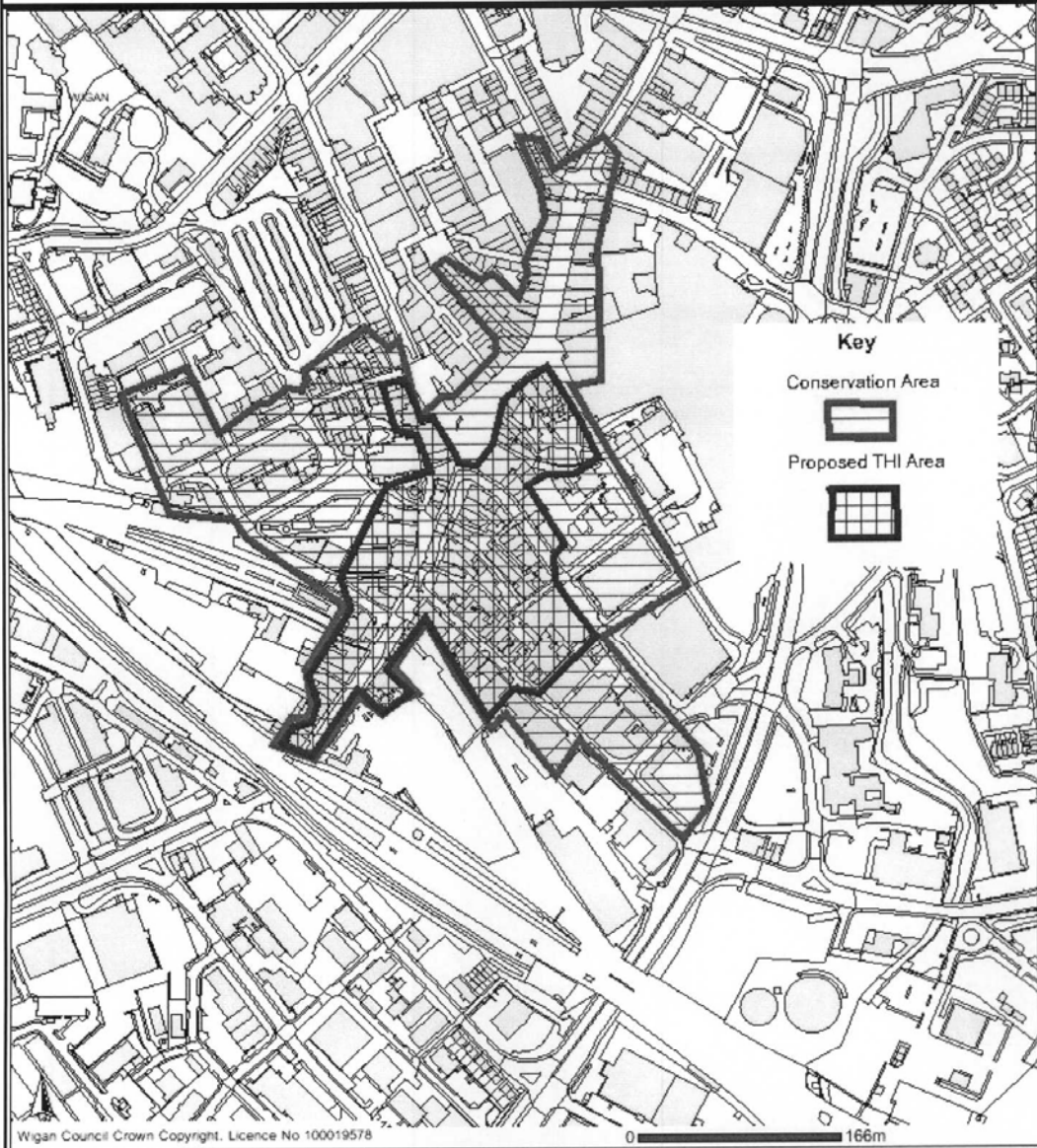
- 3.1 The council's Capital Programme cannot provide funding for historic building improvement grants and public realm enhancements within conservation areas. Whilst limited funding may be available from other sources, external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund can provide additional resources for the improvement of vacant and derelict historic properties and to support a comprehensive conservation-led regeneration scheme.
- 3.2 An Option Appraisal has been carried out which has identified part of Wigan town centre as the best current opportunity for a new Townscape Heritage Initiative bid within the borough.
- 3.3 Alternative funding sources and opportunities will be investigated in the other identified conservation areas, where the need for improvement has been identified.

4.0 Conclusions:

- 4.1 The option appraisal and recent work on Conservation Area Character Appraisals has shown that many conservation areas have problems of heritage decay and damage to their historic character. All these areas could benefit from investment in the public realm and in the historic building fabric.
- 4.2 The appraisal points to a Wigan Town Centre T.H.I. bid being the most appropriate at the present time. This scheme would complement other major projects and regeneration initiatives, would lever significant private investment and would benefit the greatest number of people. This scheme would appear to be best fit the criteria for the T.H.I.
- 4.3 In this situation it is recommended that a Stage 1 T.H.I. bid is submitted for the Wigan Town Centre Conservation Area.



Wigan Council - Proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative



Key

Conservation Area



Proposed THI Area



Key



Scale: 1:4659

Date Printed: 12 September 2008