Dartford Town Centre Conservation Area- Application For A Townscape Heritage Initiative

BRENT, NEW TOWN, TOWN, WEST HILL
1. Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on the success of the Council’s Stage One bid for lottery funding of a Townscape Heritage Initiative for Dartford Town Centre and outlines the work to be undertaken for the Stage Two bid. The report also updates Members on the financial aspects of the scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. That Cabinet note the award of Heritage Lottery Fund for the first stage of a Townscape Heritage Initiative for Dartford Town Centre and the proposals for progressing to Stage Two.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1. The Council submitted a Stage One bid for a Townscape Heritage Initiative in the Town Centre Conservation Area in May 2005. Officers from the Heritage Lottery Fund visited in July and were escorted on a tour of the conservation area.

3.2. The Council received confirmation in early November 2005 that the Stage One bid was approved with an in-principle agreement to Stage Two. Stage One is for a development grant to carry out research and provide an informed basis for a Stage Two bid. The development grant is a maximum of 75% of the development costs and is capped at £25,000. The remaining estimated costs are to be met from the Planning Delivery Grant budget.

3.3. If the Stage Two bid is successful, this will commence in April 2007. Stage Two is the implementation of the scheme, involving the repair and reinstatement of lost detail to buildings via grant aid, a comprehensive training plan, and small townscape works to provide heritage-related signboards. Part-time staff will be appointed to assist the administration of the scheme. These are fully funded from the grant.

3.4. A consultant has been appointed by the Heritage Lottery Fund as a ‘monitor’ to give guidance to officers and approve work elements as they proceed. This duty is usually undertaken by English Heritage as part of the scheme.

3.5. Initial discussions with the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) for financial support were favourable and SEEDA may contribute
to the scheme. There is also the possibility of an ODPM contribution from the Sustainable Communities Fund. Approaches will also be made to the Town Centre Traders Forum and other potential partners.

3.6. The Stage One bid was constructed to address unsympathetically altered building frontages and lack of repair to a list of 47 properties. Although the Townscape Heritage Initiative can be used to improve the public realm, only a minor sum was included in the bid, because repairs to buildings are less likely to be funded from other sources, whereas public realm works may attract other funds. During the development of the Stage Two bids there are several strands of work to be completed for a submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund by 27 October 2006. This work is set out below and the programme for this is shown in Appendix A.

a) Policy related

Conservation Area Appraisal
To meet the terms of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal has to be available to establish the heritage asset. The current appraisal was adopted in 1999 and fails to meet the BVPI as it is over five years old. Therefore a new appraisal process is to be undertaken. This will formulate a new technical document as part of the Local Development Framework.

Conservation Area Management Plan
To ensure that the heritage assets and the financial investment of the project are protected, Heritage Lottery Fund require the production of a conservation area management plan which will be in place for a minimum of 10 years. This will be the primary document to set down the principles and management guidelines for the conservation area. Government and English Heritage guidance require that every conservation area should have its own management plan. The Town Centre Conservation Area will be the first conservation area in the borough to have such a management plan.

Shopfront Policy
The current shopfront policy guidance is not detailed and does not inform potential planning applicants sufficiently well on good shopfront design. This document needs updating, and the new document will help applicants for new shopfronts meet the aspirations of the Council and the Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme in a more comprehensive manner.

b) Educational aspects
The Heritage Lottery Fund has the following guidance on learning: “We support projects which aim to:
• conserve and enhance the UK’s diverse heritage;
• encourage more people to be involved in and to make decisions about their heritage; and
• make sure everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage. All the projects we fund must meet one (or both) of the first two of these aims and must meet the third”...

We welcome applications for projects which aim to:
• increase opportunities for learning about the heritage by people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds;
• increase the total volume and quality of heritage learning;
• promote community involvement in learning, access and new audience development;
• through education, increase people’s capacity to make decisions about the heritage and raise awareness of the impact of individual actions on the heritage; and
• encourage partnerships in delivering and evaluating heritage learning”.

The bid was based on these principles, and following the success of the Stage One bid, Greenwich University, North West Kent College and Kent Adult Education Services have confirmed their continued support to the project. These partners and officers will be developing the educational aspects over the coming months. One recent development is the monitor approval of potential educational schemes entitled ‘Town Detective’ and ‘Historical Treasure Hunt’ that would be open to a wide age range from primary school children to adults.

c) Conservation and Enhancement
The main focus of the scheme is to deliver suitable and appropriate repairs and enhancement to the built stock in the town centre. As part of the Stage Two development, some of the buildings assessed in Stage One will require comprehensive surveys to establish their exact condition and level of need. These surveys will supplement the initial estimate prepared for Stage One and give a comprehensive scope of works required. They will be undertaken by consultants appointed by the Council.
The Council must also be pro-active on development control enforcement during the Stage Two bid period and in the subsequent life of the conservation area management plan. This means not only enforcing on rejected planning applications or other infringements, but considering the use of Section 215 Notices for visual improvements to buildings.

**d) Scheme administration and controls**

The Council will be responsible for the administration of the scheme. The HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND have specific requirements for administration. Officers will be developing appropriate controls and systems for the administration of the scheme in Stage Two.

4. **Relationship to the Corporate Plan**

4.1. Relates to Regeneration Key Action 7; ‘To rejuvenate Dartford Town Centre, restoring its economic prosperity through careful planning and investment and making the town centre safer and more attractive’.

5. **Financial, legal, staffing and other administrative implications and risk assessments**

**Financial Implications**

5.1. Carrying out the Stage One works and preparing the Stage Two submission will require funding for consultants to advise on the repair and reinstatement costs required, and to produce the conservation area appraisal and management plan. The overall cost of this work is currently estimated at £33,560, requiring funding over and above the Stage One Heritage Lottery Fund award of £25,000 Funding is available within the Planning Delivery Grant budget to meet this cost.

5.2. The scheme is estimated to deliver a package of works as set out below. The ‘Common Fund’ is the financial umbrella for contributions into the scheme and for grant awards out to applicants or towards other costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: Category</th>
<th>B: Total eligible cost (£)</th>
<th>C: Grants proposed from the Common Fund (£)</th>
<th>Grant rate (that is, C as percentage of B)</th>
<th>D: Funding you would like from Heritage Lottery Fund (£)</th>
<th>Heritage Lottery Fund proportion of the common fund (that is, D as a percentage of C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Repairs</td>
<td>1119251</td>
<td>559625</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>279813</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoring Architectural Detail</td>
<td>580680</td>
<td>435510</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>217755</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing empty historic floor space into use</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3. The total scheme is estimated to deliver just over £2m of improvements to the town centre, with £649,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The breakdown of contributions is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New buildings for gap sites</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public-realm work</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>12500</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs and overheads</td>
<td>185644</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92822</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary initiatives (for example, raising awareness, training, and evaluation)</td>
<td>94200</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>47100</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,029,775</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>649,990</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5.4. It is clear from paragraph 5.3 that there is at present a funding shortfall of £674,990, provision for which will need to be identified by the time a Stage Two submission is made. Discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund have indicated that contributions to the Common Fund can be made as a lump sum at the commencement of the scheme (i.e. 2007/8), or as a series of contributions over the life of the scheme (i.e. to 2011/12). The Heritage Lottery Fund will prefer a lump sum contribution, as this offers greater funding security.

5.5. The currently unfunded element of approximately £675,000 is being sought from the ODPM via SEEDA, as part of the town centre funding which sought from the Thames Gateway Delivery Programme. The case for this funding will be made as part of the overall town centre funding requirement and it will be some months before it is known whether the case has been made successfully.

5.6. In the meantime, officers are working with SEEDA to establish any interim or permanent funding arrangements which can be made for at least the first two years of the scheme (2007/8,2008/9), for example by roll-over of SEEDA’s existing town centre funding stream.
5.7. There is no provision within the Council’s budget to meet any shortfall of funding for this project. This will be considered, alongside other priorities, as part of the 2007/8 budget, after submission of the Stage Two bid and after details of further external funding are clarified. When Members return to the Stage Two bid later this year they will consider whether they have sufficient funding to match. At this stage the Council does not have sufficient capital resources to fund any shortfall from the Stage Two bid.

**Legal Implications**

5.8. The Council will enter into contractual arrangements with the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding partners if a Stage Two bid is successful. This places conditions on the Council to lead and administer the scheme to Heritage Lottery Fund requirements.

**Administrative Implications**

5.9. The Council will employ consultants to update the conservation area appraisal and management plan, produce a detailed survey of the buildings involved, formulate a draft shop front policy and provide a schedule of repair costs for the buildings involved.

5.10. If the Stage Two application is successful, the Council will administer the scheme with a dedicated project officer, who would assess application for grants, carry out design and specification approval and award grants on completion of the works. There may also be a need for other specialist advice as the work proceeds, and consultants will be brought in on an hourly rate basis. These will be managed within the Project Delivery Team.

**Risk Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Management of Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work currently being undertaken for Stage 1 is abortive due to funding issues for Stage Two not being resolved</td>
<td>Currently high</td>
<td>Continued discussion with SEEDA/ ODPM. Research for other appropriate funding streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work currently being undertaken for Stage 1 is not of sufficient quality to meet Heritage Lottery Fund requirements</td>
<td>Low- Medium</td>
<td>Continued reporting and dialogue with Heritage Lottery Fund on progress and acceptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of bid/ scheme requirements for Stage Two</td>
<td>Currently medium</td>
<td>Expansion of dialogue with Heritage Lottery Fund by officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of take- up of grant offers</td>
<td>Currently medium</td>
<td>Programme for contact and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in Stage Two | information disbursement during Stage Two bid period to build interest in scheme

6. **Appendices**

Appendix A Stage Two bid development programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents consulted</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>File Ref</th>
<th>Report Author</th>
<th>Section and Directorate</th>
<th>Exempt Information Category</th>
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<td>File Ref</td>
<td>Report Author</td>
<td>Section and Directorate</td>
<td>Exempt Information Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/12/2005</td>
<td>Dartford TC THI (public section only)</td>
<td>Tony Phillips 343269</td>
<td>Regeneration Project Delivery Team</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>