

Introduction

This note provides an update on the proposals to regenerate the New Briggate area through property and environmental improvements. A key funding element of regenerating the area is to submit a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in August 2016. A successful bid will deliver important improvements to the Grand Arcade, Leeds Grand Theatre & Opera House, the New Briggate shops opposite and the public realm which are designed to improve and enhance its role in the economic and cultural life of the city (see map).

Background

The council has developed a Regeneration Vision, setting out a number of proposed improvements to the area. As well as the wider regeneration aspirations, a Townscape Heritage grant bid has been developed in partnership with a cross service internal project team and an external stakeholder group which involves the Leeds Business Improvement District (BID) team. The Regeneration Vision has recently been consulted on with local business owners and the general public and was well received.

Officers met with a representative from the HLF on 7 July to discuss our proposals. The meeting was very positive, highlighting areas of strength and pinpointing issues that will help to make the most of the application. The key message was that the bid should centre on the area's heritage to provide a cohesive heritage led regeneration response which incorporates and/or builds upon;

- a nationally recognised heritage construction training programme (Re-Making Leeds)
- references the additional investment / interventions brought about through other THI schemes in the city
- the threat to the built heritage posed by a rapidly changing city
- consolidation of previous HLF investment in the Leeds Grand Theatre

Leeds is the first and only authority to successfully apply for three THIs and there may be some pressure to spread HLF resources to other areas. However, officers are confident that the bid meets HLF objectives for the reasons outlined here.

A stakeholder group chaired by Richard Lewis (TCS) has helped to galvanise the voice of local businesses and key stakeholders, including Leeds Business Improvement District (BID). Following consultation with the group and members it is proposed that the key elements of the THI bid will be:

High Level Project (New Briggate block properties)

- Repairs and restoration of architectural features, such as shop fronts based on existing historic evidence.
- Bringing vacant historic floor space back into use on the upper floors

Medium level projects (Grand Arcade, Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House)

- Essential repairs to Grand Arcade building fabric
- Reinstatement of a traditional shop front and original faience on the entrance façade facing New Briggate
- Completion of restoration of iconic clock feature within the Grand Arcade
- Restoration of art deco style shop front units and/or reinstatement of original arch details on the Leeds Grand Theatre

Reserve level project (26-34 Merrion Street, LCC disposal)

Public realm

- Opportunities to reinstate natural Yorkstone flags in key areas, including the pedestrianised Merrion Street East
- To work as part of an overall public realm design to improve function and visual aspect of the area

Community engagement and training

- Another important aspect of the HLF bid is to promote heritage with the local community and to make heritage training opportunities an integral part of the grant schemes
- Working with the Grand Theatre & Opera's own employment and skills training programme
- Highlighting the cultural and heritage value of the area through community engagement
- Consultations aimed at landlords and business owners in order to support more diverse and complimentary uses

Dependent Activity

- Designation of the Grand Quarter Conservation Area in Spring 2017
- Develop proposals to create a better pedestrian environment and sense of arrival for Leeds Grand Theatre
- Match funding required approximately £0.35m (LCC), HLF contribution £1m, private £0.5m (required before Stage 2)

New Brigade Plan - A (HLF Townscape Heritage Boundary)

