

**Report of the West Leeds Area Manager**

**Inner West Area Committee**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

**Subject: Armley Town Centre Improvements**

<p><b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b></p> <p><b>Armley</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward members consulted (referred to in report)</p>	<p><b>Specific Implications For:</b></p> <p>Ethnic minorities <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Women <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Disabled people <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Council Function <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Delegated Executive Function available for Call In <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report <input type="checkbox"/></p>

**Executive Summary**

This report provides members with an update on progress on regeneration projects for Armley Town Centre including the Townscape Heritage Initiative, Town and District Centre Improvements, and Armley Moor. Members are asked to offer their continued support for the regeneration of Armley Town Centre and note progress on these projects.

**1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the latest progress on projects which are part of the regeneration of Armley Town Centre.

**2.0 Background Information**

2.1 Armley Town Centre has been identified as an area in need of comprehensive improvements to encourage new business to the area, and to provide a safer, more attractive environment for shoppers and businesses. Funding has been sought from the Council's Town and District Capital Programme and from the Heritage Lottery to undertake improvements. Armley Moor is maintained by Armley Common Right Trust for the people of Armley, and is a significant greenspace for Armley which is in need of improvement.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

#### **3.1 Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**

- 3.1.1 The stage 2 bid for the THI is to be submitted by October 31 2007. The council will be notified of the outcome of the bid by February 2008, and the THI will then run for a five year programme commencing 1 April 2008. The council will be notified of the outcome of the bid by February 2008, and the THI will then run for a five year programme commencing 1 April 2008.
- 3.1.2 The THI will focus on Branch Road, as a gateway to Armley and Town Street, and will compliment the public realm improvements being undertaken by the Council. The critical project for the THI is number 2 Branch Road (aka Mike's Carpets), and discussions are ongoing with the owner of the building about improvement proposals.
- 3.1.3 As part of the preparation of the bid a number of buildings have been surveyed by specialists to assess the extent and cost of repair and restoration for each building. The information from the inspections has been used to prepare a repairs schedule which contains all the key buildings and is being evaluated in order to determine grant levels and to inform the scope of the programme.
- 3.1.4 The repair and restoration projects will be contracted out to one main principal heritage qualified contractor who may use sub-contractors to carry out smaller restoration work such as repairing or replacing sash windows. The aim is to undertake group repair projects of 2 to 3 properties where possible, and to also provide individual grants to property owners whose property is not part of a group repair project.
- 3.1.5 It is important that the building industry has sufficient capacity to meet the demand for high quality repair and restorative work to historic buildings. A training plan has been developed to support the development of heritage skills within the construction industry in Leeds to help sustain the local environment and to offer local people the opportunity for skills training in this sector.
- 3.1.6 Key features of the training plan are the agreement with Leeds City Council's Jobs and Skills Service to provide a heritage module within their new BTEC Pilot plus a programme of on-site placements organised through Construction Leeds to ensure local people and local small builders have the opportunity to gain 2 – 3 weeks of practical work experience on acquiring heritage skills.

#### **3.2 Conservation area**

- 3.2.1 A Townscape Heritage Initiative can only operate within a designated conservation area. Preparation of a conservation area appraisal has been undertaken in parallel with the preparation of the Stage 2 bid.
- 3.2.2 The Boundary for the conservation area has been subject to extensive consultation with the Armley Forum, the West Leeds Gateway Board, the local community, developers, councillors, local businesses and other interested parties.

3.2.3 The draft appraisal is now complete and will be considered for approval by the Council's Planning Board on 18th October 2007. A map of the conservation area is attached as appendix 1.

### **3.3 Public realm improvements.**

3.3.1 A scheme of public realm improvements for Town Street which extends from the One Stop Centre to Armley Moor has been prepared by Jacobs architects. This has been the subject of previous reports to this committee. This will be undertaken in 2008, and element of the funding for this will be used as match funding for the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

### **3.4 Armley Moor**

3.4.1 Armley Moor is an open space of prime importance situated between Town Street and Far Fold. It is the remains of the common and waste ground allocated for siting tenters and wool hedges by the Inclosure Act. The Moor, whilst well maintained by the Armley Common Right Trust, has changed little since it was used as a tenter field to dry cloth.

3.4.2 Plans for improving the Moor have been prepared by the council in conjunction with Armley Common Right Trust. The plans offer an improved design and include provision for wider footpaths across the land, a strengthened area for markets and events, a focal point with sculpture, new seating, picnic benches, low ornamental perimeter rail to match the designs for the Town Street public realm improvements, designated areas for informal play and areas for native plants to encourage wildlife.

3.4.3 The plans will be subject to public consultation and will then form the basis of a structured approach to seeking funding for improving the moor. It is hoped that some of the improvement works can begin in 2008 with works to the Town Street edge of the moor being undertaken in conjunction with the Town Street public realm improvements.

3.4.4 Plans have also been prepared for two other sites managed by the Common Right Trust - Hill Top and Moor Top.

### **4.0 Consultation and Participation arrangements**

4.1 A key requirement of a Townscape Heritage Initiative is to engage with the local community. Raising awareness and understanding of the area's conservation value and the standards needed to protect and improve the area is an important part of sustaining the conservation area beyond the life of the THI.

4.2 This process has already begun through discussion at Armley Forum and public meetings and exhibitions in Armley library. A programme of education and awareness raising events will continue through the life of the THI programme and beyond which will be linked to other activities taking place in the area to avoid duplication.

- 4.3 Discussions with the relevant parties will be held with a view to establishing a local conservation area advisory group which could include members from Armley Forum, the Armley Society (local history group) the West Leeds Gateway Regeneration Board and other stakeholders. Such a group could assist in sustaining community interest and engagement in the THI during the lifetime of the programme and beyond. The exact role and remit of such a group is still to be determined and discussions have yet to be held about this with stakeholders.
- 4.4 Consultation on the plans for Town Street public realm improvements has taken place through exhibitions and meetings, plus individual consultations with a number of properties.
- 4.5 A consultation event is planned for Tuesday November 27th, 7pm at Armley One Stop Centre to give the public and other key stakeholders the opportunity to comment on plans for Armley Moor, Moor Top and Hill Top.

## **5.0 Implications for Council Policy And Governance**

- 5.1 Improvements to Armley District Centre will contribute to two of the strategic outcomes in the Council's Corporate plan, all neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and well maintained and all communities are thriving and harmonious communities where people are happy to live.

## **6.0 Legal and Resource Implications**

- 6.1 The THI is project managed by a team of officers from the West Area Management Team, the Council's Major Projects Team and the Development Department. It is proposed that a THI Project Officer is appointed by the council as soon as the Heritage Lottery Funding is approved to oversee the implementation of the scheme.
- 6.2 The THI award is worth £1.1m for Armley, match funding will be provided from Leeds City Council through the Town and District Centre capital programme.
- 6.3 The Town and District Centre Improvement Scheme is part of a citywide programme managed through the Major Projects Team with Area Management providing project management resource for the Armley scheme.
- 6.4 The total cost of the works outlined for Armley Moor is in the region of £150,000. Funding will be sought from S106 monies and grant funding to implement the improvements.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The Town and District Centre Funding, and the Heritage Lottery Funding will contribute to improving Armley Town Street through the repair and restoration of buildings of heritage value, and improvements to the public realm. If we are successful in delivering improvements to Armley Moor this will further enhance the area and provide an attractive and safe town centre. These improvements will provide a more attractive environment for shoppers and local businesses.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

- 8.1 Members are asked to offer their continued support for the regeneration of Armley District Centre and note progress on these projects.