

**Report of the Executive Manager Regeneration**

**Report to Director of City Development**

**Date: 04 July 2019**

**Subject: High Street Heritage Action Zone Fund**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Little London and Woodhouse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

- On the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019 the government published guidance and invited bids in competition for Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, which aims to support the regeneration of high streets within Conservation Areas across the country. The deadline for submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to this programme is 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019, allowing a very short period of time for the assessment of opportunities and development of a bid. This has precluded reporting to Executive Board to either of the June or July meetings and necessitated a Delegated Decision being taken to ensure the Council is in a position to respond to the funding opportunity and submit an EOI. As a further result of the short timescale, it has not been possible to place the item on the Forward Plan with the requisite period of notice prior to a decision being taken and it is in addition required to exempt the decision from Call-In in order to avoid missing the bid deadline.
- This report therefore sets out the assessment undertaken and the recommendation to the Director of City Development to submit a proposal to the HSHAZ programme under existing delegations.

3. After reviewing conservation high streets across the city against the bidding criteria set out by Historic England, this report recommends the submission of an EOI centred on New Briggate. The Council's vision for New Briggate has been set out previously in several reports to Executive Board and there are existing detailed plans for heritage-led regeneration for the area, along with a number of complementary capital investment schemes, not least the Grand Theatre.

## **Recommendations**

The Director of City Development is recommended to:

- i. Endorse the approach to the assessment and shortlisting of high streets in Conservation Areas as outlined in Table 1, Appendix 2 and paras 3.5 – 3.12.
- ii. Approve for submission an Expression of Interest to the High Street Heritage Action Zone for New Briggate on or before 12 July 2019.
- iii. Exempt the resolutions arising from this report from the 'Call-In' process, on the grounds of urgency, as detailed within sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 of this report.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This paper sets out the terms of Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones programme and how it could help to facilitate the city's inclusive growth ambitions by supporting new investment and regeneration within our high streets in Conservation Areas.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 Leeds has a broad-based diverse economy that has enabled the city to recover strongly from the recession creating a vibrant, successful city for innovation and enterprise. Leeds is rightly proud of its strengths in financial services, health and health technology, digital, cultural and creative sectors, retail and visitor economy and innovative manufacturing. Notwithstanding our economic successes, it is the case that nationally the retail sector is facing a challenging environment, which will impact on the retail economy in Leeds. Moreover, because inclusive growth is about making sure that everyone benefits from the economy, it is as important for us to focus on our challenges as it is our strengths when we think about how we grow our economy in an inclusive way.
- 2.2 For many years the Council has recognised the importance of investing in the high street to improve vitality and viability. The Council-funded the £11m Town & District Centre (T&DC) scheme for example delivered improvements to 16 town and local centres across the district. Working with local businesses, communities and ward members this investment attracted over £6m of match funding enabling the creation of new affordable housing units, improved highway and pedestrian links, better security along with extensive public realm improvements, helping to sustain and improve the environment and performance of these centres. The Council has also committed to a further £5m programme of investment through its Local Centres Programme (LCP), which will target improvements in local retail and high streets in each ward across the district. This work has highlighted the council's commitment to delivering high street improvements, a programme that has also included two successful Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THIs) within Chapeltown and Armley and a third THI in the Lower Kirkgate area of the city centre that will complete in 2020.
- 2.3 The Department Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) has recently announced a new £62m fund to revitalise historic high streets across England. The funding includes:
- £44 million of government and Historic England funding to create dozens of High Streets Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) overseen by Historic England.
  - £3 million is from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a cultural programme to engage people in the life and history of their high streets.
  - £15 million for the Architectural Heritage Fund to support social enterprise organisations to take ownership of and bring buildings of local importance - such as pubs, libraries or theatres, as well as shops - back into use.
- 2.4 On the latter two funds the council may have a role in working with partners and stakeholders to facilitate applications for funding, but it is not envisaged that these bids would be council led. The main focus of this report is therefore, the new £44m HSHAZ programme and the opportunities this may present for Leeds.

- 2.5 The HSHAZ funding is part of the government's 'Our Plan for the High Street' and is designed to support a programme of physical improvements, community engagement and cultural activities to help restore historic high streets. The HSHAZ programme is managed by Historic England, whose research has highlighted the important link that exists between commercial confidence and the built environment in which it is situated, with 69% of commercial occupiers saying that historic buildings give a positive image to customers and clients. HSHAZ funding will give councils, businesses and community groups access to expert advice and financial support to help bring historic buildings back into use and support historic high streets to adapt to the challenges they face, to secure lasting improvements.
- 2.6 The fund will also allow the council to work with Historic England to find new ways to revive historic high streets. Although the Heritage Action Zones concept has been in existence for two years this is the first time that substantial funding has been aligned with it.
- 2.7 There HSHAZ is a two stage application process
- Stage One: Expression of Interest (competitive)
  - Stage Two: Programme Design (non-competitive)
- 2.8 The stage one bidding round commenced on 18 May 2019 and ends at 12:00 noon on 12 July 2019. Dates for stage two are to be confirmed. The key assessment considerations within the HSHAZ are outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 – HSHAZ Shortlisting Criteria**

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Shortlisting Criteria</b>
<b>A. The Place</b>	1. Within a Conservation Area, especially those considered 'at risk' by Historic England
<b>B. Your Proposed High Streets HAZ</b>	2. Has a well-articulated and publicised vision. 3. Can integrate with substantial planned improvement initiatives, with the ability to achieve significant impacts
<b>C. Partnerships</b>	4. Has existing networks for engagement with businesses and communities.
<b>D. Deliverability and Value for Money</b>	5. Schemes are already partially or wholly developed. 6. Has match funding opportunities within and external to the council.
<b>E. Communities and Engagement</b>	7. Area within an LSOA that is in the 10% most deprived nationally. 8. Has existing networks for engagement with businesses and communities (as 4).
<b>F. Cultural Programme</b>	9. Has significant opportunities for creative engagement with businesses and the local community.

2.9 The place-making potential provided by the HSHAZ is clear and presents an opportunity to achieve transformational change within the high streets selected, helping to elevate them into the resilient and vibrant places that contribute positively to the social and economic well-being of local communities.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 The scheme aims to support sustainable economic and cultural growth in and around historic high streets by enhancing local historic character, making the high street an attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and play. The HSHAZ seeks to do this through physical repairs and restoration of buildings and conversion to new uses including residential. HSHAZ will also look to improve shared spaces, environmental standards and create cultural opportunities through learning about the history of the high street and its importance to local communities.
- 3.2 There is potential to access grant of £250k - £2m, at an intervention rate of 50%, for a four year programme (2020-2024). Partnership and community engagement are expected to be at the heart of any scheme. However, HSHAZ funding cannot be used to match Future High Street Funds (FHSF), complicating the potential for any bid to complement the previously submitted Armley FHSF bid (the Council is awaiting the outcome of the Armley FHSF EOI). Crucially any funded scheme will also need to be in a Conservation Area.
- 3.3 Historic England is now inviting Expressions of Interest that will represent the first of the two phase selection process.
- 3.4 The timescale within which bids have been invited and are due to be submitted to government has prevented substantial consultation across the district. Guidance is limited at this stage, but the council has regular contact with Historic England and will be engaging with its officers throughout the bidding process. From the information available officers have developed a shortlisting process based on the HE guidance as summarised in Table 1 above and reflecting the need to work within the given time constraints.
- 3.5 The only two Leeds high streets with Conservation Areas at risk are the Grand Quarter, which centres on New Briggate and Headingley Hill; and Hyde Park and Woodhouse Moor (Headingley & Hyde Park Ward). Both are within LSOAs in the worst 3% of deprived areas nationally. However, only the Grand Quarter has the ability to meet the bid criteria, building on a previous work, within the deadline set by MHCLG and Historic England (see Appendix 2). With reference to the criteria set out in Table 1 the Grand Quarter:
- A. Is within a Conservation Area considered 'at risk' by Historic England;
  - B. Has a clear vision for conservation-led renewal set out in previous funding bids and has strong synergy with proposals coming forward through the Public Transport Improvement Programme and for investment in the Grand Theatre and Opera North;
  - C. Has an existing network of local businesses and stakeholders who support the vision for renewal;
  - D. Has a partially development scheme of improvements to public realm and both public and privately owned heritage buildings, which bring match funding opportunities;
  - E. Is within an LSO that is in the 10% most deprived nationally and networks for engagement with businesses and communities;

F. Has significant opportunities for a related cultural programme.

- 3.6 The Grand Quarter, centred on New Briggate, is an important and historic part of the city centre, which is home to the Grand Theatre and Opera House, a high profile and iconic heritage asset and also home to Opera North since 1978. Adjacent to the Grand Theatre is the Howard Assembly Room, leased to and operated by Opera North. Both venues operate in an increasingly competitive market and it is therefore important to ensure a local environment that is conducive to attracting patronage and to realising the economic opportunities within this part of the city centre in both the daytime and evening economies.
- 3.7 The Grand Quarter remains an area of the city centre in need of significant renewal. This is due to an historical under-investment in commercial properties and a vehicle dominated transport infrastructure that has created a poor pedestrian environment with a low grade retail offer and the loss of valued historic features.
- 3.8 There is currently a limited relationship between the Grand Theatre, Opera North/Howard Assembly Room and the immediate city centre setting. The two venues generate significant visitor numbers but there is very little dwell time from patrons in the Grand Quarter due to the unattractive environment and limited complementary offer in the vicinity. Should these issues not be addressed the area may continue to underperform, thus undermining the area's potential for entertainment, independent retailers and for introduction of new residential accommodation above the shops.
- 3.9 The council's vision for the New Briggate has been outlined in several Executive Board reports, including the 15 November 2017 report which sought approval for the most recent Townscape Heritage Initiative bid for the area. In addition, the area has a newly approved Conservation Area and an appraisal which sets out the council's policy vision for Grand Quarter, primarily in conservation and land use terms designed to support the kinds of investment that the HSHAZ could bring.
- 3.10 The council's wider regeneration aspirations include improvements to the public highway along New Briggate to enhance the pedestrian experience, including better connectivity with Briggate. The proposed improvement scheme is part of the city centre Our Spaces strategy, which aims to reduce unnecessary traffic in the city centre and create better pedestrian connectivity and environment. This work will complement the £174m investment proposed through the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme, which will deliver a wide range of activities to improve transport efficiency in the city. The proposals for the area include removing through traffic from New Briggate and relocation of bus stops to Vicar Lane. In addition, Opera North has begun work on its ambition to transform the sense of arrival for their patrons as part of its Transformation Project and the Council is making retail units available within the asset available to support this work. These improvements would also increase dwell time of patrons and provide a wider regeneration benefit for New Briggate as a whole.
- 3.11 If successful, the HSHAZ will offer property improvement grant opportunities to a number of local building/business owners along New Briggate and the Grand Arcade. Properties will be prioritised on the basis of heritage need, condition and negative impact on the appearance and functionality of the Grand Quarter. The eligible properties are listed in the table below, which can be read in conjunction with the HSHAZ scheme plan at Appendix 3.

**Table 2 – List of HSHAZ Eligible Properties**

Priority	Grand Parade (nos. 23-51)
Target	Grand Arcade
	34-44 New Briggate
	53-57 New Briggate

3.12 To help inform the way forward, town centres and high streets put forward for the HSHAZ funding must be able to demonstrate that they are facing ‘significant challenges’ and authorities ‘should include a rationale with supporting evidence showing why they have selected the town centre area covered in their Expression of Interest.’ The Grand Quarter is well placed to meet the bid criteria and is a strong proposition for government funding.

#### **4. Corporate considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The assessment process and recommendations for submission to the Fund have been subject to consultation with the Executive Board Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development. Little London and Woodhouse ward members have been advised of the intention to submit the proposals as set out in this report. The ability to undertake prior consultation has been affected by the timescale set out by Historic England. The proposal has been discussed with and is supported by the Chief Asset Management & Regeneration Officer and the Chief Planning Officer. Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Chamber of Commerce and Leeds Civic Trust have also been consulted.
- 4.1.2 Since the announcement of this funding opportunity officers have been approached by Councillor Golton (Rothwell) and by Councillor Hutchinson (Morley North) to support the inclusion of Rothwell and Morley, respectively. However, neither high street is in a Conservation Area at risk. Therefore the justification for scheme selection would not be fully aligned to the Historic England funding criteria. Furthermore, whilst Morley is developing a scheme to upgrade the public realm around the Town Hall as part of the Council’s Local Centres Programme, there is no current scheme that could form the focus of a Rothwell submission.
- 4.1.3 The extremely pressing timescales between the issuing of guidance by government and the requirement to submit expressions of interest has not enabled ward member consultation across all the high streets with Conservation Areas. However, given the emphasis on targeting Conservation Areas at risk, New Briggate and Headingley Hill, Hyde Park and Woodhouse Moor were the only areas to meet this criteria. Given the substantial body of work to build upon for New Briggate it is considered to be the clear choice for submission of the Council’s EOI.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 Full consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration will be given when considering the Stage 2 proposals when more detail on the impact on the communities affected will have been undertaken. In the meantime, the scheme developed has been guided by the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Core Strategy and the Grand Quarter Conservation Area Management Plan.

## **4.3 Council policies, climate change and best council plan**

- 4.3.1 The Inclusive Growth Strategy is a core policy approach underpinning Leeds City Council policies, including its planning policies such as the Core Strategy. By supporting the vitality and viability of the high street the HSHAZ also supports the retail and visitor economy aspirations of the Inclusive Growth Strategy. Repurposing historic buildings will ensure the embedded energy they contain is saved and improving their thermal values will help to reduce our carbon footprint in a context where this investment would be unlikely to happen otherwise.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 If successful, the HSHAZ scheme would provide capital grant to support the viability and diversity of local centres in Leeds. Although match funding would be required, much of this could come from existing council schemes and initiatives focused on the same area. Based on provisional estimates of scheme costs, this means that a council contribution could help to lever in £750k from Historic England. The Council's contribution is envisaged at this stage to be through existing capital programme commitments and other committed resources, rather than creating a new financial pressure. There is potential to secure a similar sum from National Heritage Lottery Fund, plus contributions from private property owners, thus maximising external funding opportunities and building upon existing or emerging council regeneration, infrastructure and housing initiatives.
- 4.4.2 The HSHAZ would also fund officer support to manage any successful scheme. At this stage the HSHAZ Expression of Interest is being worked up using existing staff time and resources.

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.5.1 Due to the short timescales presented for the consideration of potential projects and submission of EOI to the HAZ programme, it has not been possible to place this decision on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions with the requisite 28 clear calendar days' notice. In accordance with the General Exception provisions of the constitution the Chair of the Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Committee has been advised of the intended decision with 5 clear days' notice. It is further requested that this report is exempted from the Call In process due to the short timescales provided by this bidding process and the need to continue the development of the bid right up to the 12 July 2019 submission date.
- 4.5.2 Should the decisions, referred to within this report, be delayed by the operation of the call-in mechanism, the council would lose the opportunity to bid for up to £750k in funding for the Street Fund Heritage Action Zone scheme. There are no current legal implications arising from this paper, with further detailed matters to be



considered should expressions of interest meet with success and the Council is invited to proceed to Stage 2 of the process.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 A risk management plan has been produced for the HSHAZ submission. To minimise risks and to ensure complementarity with other capital projects, it is proposed that the programme is overseen by the Kirkgate THI Board which includes representatives from City Development, Legal Services and Finance.

### **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The council has considerable experience in supporting physical improvements to the high street as evidenced through the capital programme funded Town & District Centres and the Local Centre Programme. In addition, Leeds is the first and only authority to successfully apply for three Townscape Heritage schemes funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with Chapeltown and Armley successfully completed and Lower Kirkgate on the way to becoming so.
- 5.2 A successful bid would allow the city to build on experiences of T&DC, THI and the Council's on-going engagement with local business and communities to bring about a once in a generational transformation that would benefit a Conservation Area at risk and the setting of one of our most important cultural assets.

### **6. Recommendations**

The Director of City Development is recommended to:

- i. Endorse the approach to the assessment and shortlisting of high streets in Conservation Areas as outlined in Table 1, Appendix 2 and paras 3.5 – 3.12.
- ii. Approve for submission an Expression of Interest to the Street Fund Heritage Action Zone for New Briggate on or before 12 July 2019.
- iii. Exempt the resolutions arising from this report from the 'Call-In' process, on the grounds of urgency, as detailed within sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 of this report.

### **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None.

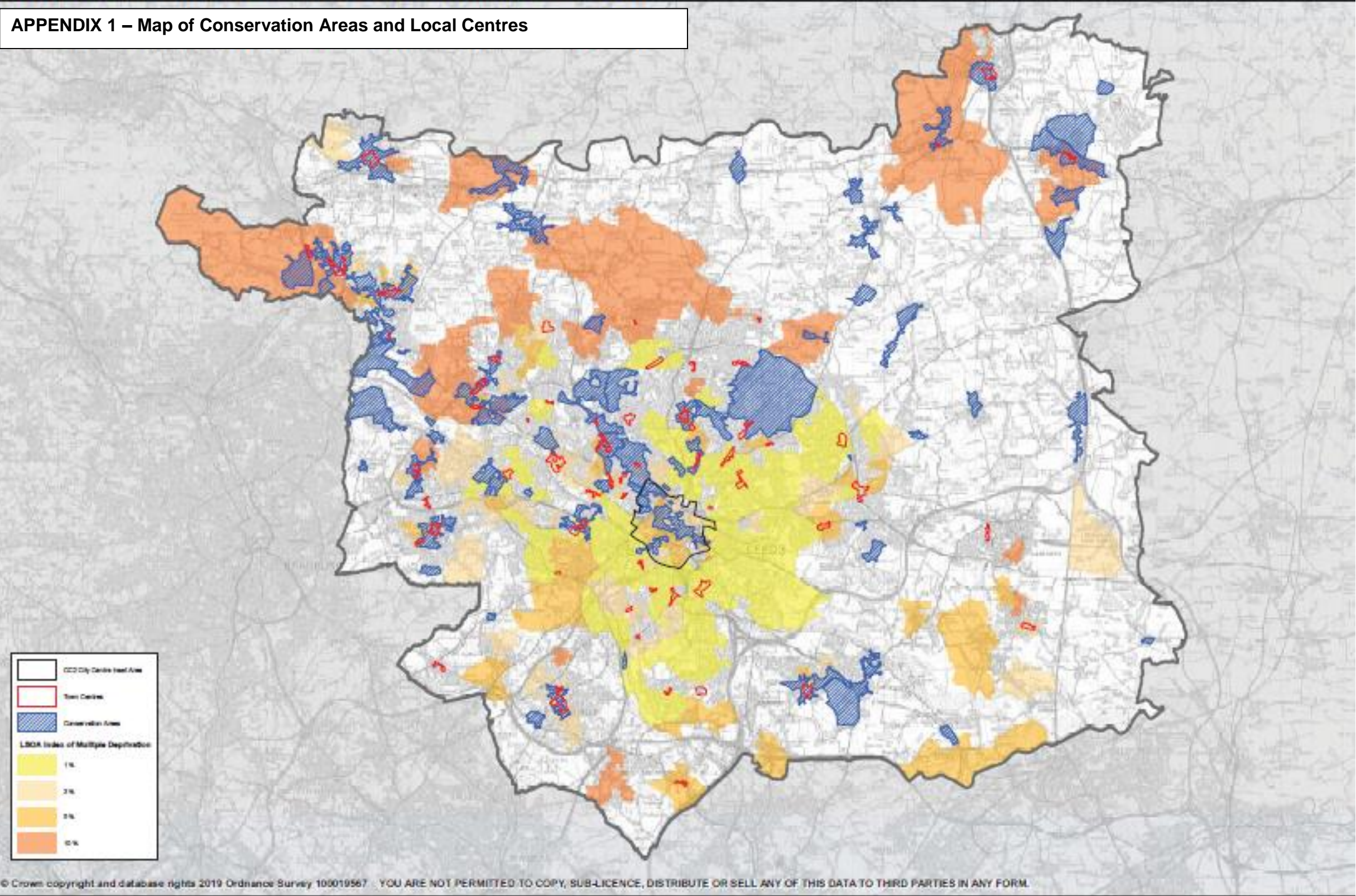
### **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Map of Conservation Areas and Local Centres  
8.2 Appendix 2 - High Street Heritage Action Zone Assessment Process  
8.3 Appendix 3 - Map of Proposed New Briggate HSHAZ

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

APPENDIX 1 – Map of Conservation Areas and Local Centres



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APPENDIX 3 – New Briggate High Street Action Zone Map

