



PRCC.63 16/17

Committee Prosperous  
Communities Committee

Date 21/03/17



**Subject: Gainsborough Town Centre – Heritage Masterplan**

Report by:

Commercial and Regeneration Director

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

This report is intended to brief members of the development of a Heritage Masterplan for Gainsborough Town Centre and support the additional heritage element of the Gainsborough Growth Fund

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. That members endorse the development of a Heritage Masterplan for Gainsborough Town Centre.
2. That members agree to add a heritage element into the existing Gainsborough Growth Fund.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:** No implications as this document is for guidance only

**Financial:** FIN-144-17

The funding for this project will be met from existing budgets.

**Staffing:** This project will be led by Wendy Osgodby (Senior Growth Strategy and Projects Officer) with support from the Conservation Planning Colleagues and Growth Team as part of the agreed work plan.

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

*NB: Please explain how you have considered the policy's impact on different groups (for example: young people, elderly, ethnic minorities, LGBT community, rural residents, disabled, others).*

**Risk Assessment :** No implications as this document is for guidance only

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :** No implications as this document is for guidance only

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

PRCC.06 16/16 Prosperous Communities Committee – Subject: Gainsborough Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Bid

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

*i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)*

**Yes**

**No**

**Key Decision:**

*A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications*

**Yes**

**No**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 As reported previously West Lindsey District Council has committed to a heritage-led regeneration approach to the development of Gainsborough Town Centre. As we have embarked upon an investment programme which seeks to transform Gainsborough and wider district it is critical to have a vibrant town centre at the heart. This revival must be commercially sound but also help restore the character and identity.
- 1.2 The heritage led- approach that has been promoted for Gainsborough is culminating in the development of a heritage masterplan for Gainsborough which has been compiled by Lathams, a specialist heritage architectural and urban design firm based in Derby and Nottingham. The work carried out to date can be seen on the Member's portal, this is due to size and nature of the file. (Please note this will be amended for the final document to ensure it can be circulated as widely as possible). However a summary is attached- Appendix A
- 1.3 The Gainsborough Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned to support the overall regeneration strategy for Gainsborough and to support a recent funding bid to Historic England for a Townscape Heritage Bid for Gainsborough Town Centre. This was agreed by Prosperous Communities Committee in June 2016.
- 1.4 Officers have recently been informed that the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) bid was unsuccessful on this occasion but representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF - the funding body for this scheme) are keen to support West Lindsey with a revised bid and have encouraged the Council to resubmit in September 2017. The latest THI bidding round was heavily oversubscribed with a number of competing bids from our region. However, HLF have recognised the need for such a scheme in Gainsborough and have recommended that the Council continues to develop its Heritage Masterplan, in consultation with stakeholders and the wider public, (and ultimately to embed this in policy) in order to strengthen Gainsborough's chances of success in the next THI bidding round.
- 1.5 Likewise, Historic England have encouraged the development of this Heritage Masterplan document as well as physical evidence of the Council's commitment to heritage-led regeneration (through active restoration works and sympathetic design) as a precursor to any funding support.

## **2. Gainsborough Town Centre – Heritage Masterplan**

### **2.1 Purpose**

- 2.1.1 The plan seeks to identify and co-ordinate opportunities for transformation of the town's historic core and pull this together in one plan. It explains where the need and opportunity for intervention are and some guidance.
- 2.1.2 The plan is based upon a physical audit of the town centre and a review of policy / regeneration aims.

2.1.3 The Masterplan is not an adopted policy document and is produced for information and guidance only at this stage. It is proposed that this document will inform the development of future policy, including updating the Conservation Area Appraisals for Gainsborough and through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

## **2.2 Contents of the plan**

1. Overview of town centre
2. Policy and regeneration context
3. Vision for Gainsborough Town Centre / strategic objectives for Town Centre
4. Intervention Strategy / 4 key areas
5. Town Centre Intervention Projects / building audit / key sites
6. Delivery options

## **2.3 How Plan will be used**

2.3.1 This document will provide 'heritage' guidance and principles for the town centre and can be used to support a range of initiatives:

- Invest Gainsborough
- Gainsborough Neighbourhood Plan
- A review of Gainsborough's Conservation Area Appraisals
- Gainsborough Place Board
- The remit of the Gainsborough Development Partner/JV programme

## **2.4 Next Steps**

2.4.1 Work with Gainsborough Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Group to help integrate Heritage Policy into the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.4.2 Work with Development Management Team to ensure that Heritage Masterplan work feeds into the review of the Conservation Areas in Gainsborough.

2.4.3 Soft launch of Heritage Masterplan / Commitment to heritage-led-approach – May 10<sup>th</sup> / 11<sup>th</sup> at Gainsborough Heritage Centre.

2.4.4 Ensure that the guidance provided within the Heritage Masterplan is put into practice through the physical restoration and development of the town centre, using our planning, conservation and enforcement powers, and through initiatives such as the Gainsborough Growth Fund.

## **3. Gainsborough Growth Fund**

3.1 The Gainsborough Growth Fund was designed to address commercial market failure in Gainsborough. This funding is intended to facilitate and enable new development, identified through strategic documents such as the former Gainsborough Masterplan and the most recent Gainsborough Growth

Programme Delivery Plan. The grant fund is helping the Council to deliver its growth objectives and to generate increased revenue through NNDR as vacant sites are brought back into economic use and new business premises are developed in the town.

- 3.2 Since the Scheme started in November 2014 the total grants awarded totalled up to approx £400K of which approx. £330K has been released and already claimed back by the applicants. To date the total value of investment levered through the GGF amounts to circa **£2.5m**. In terms of employment the Scheme so far has assisted **8 SMEs** and it is anticipated that these projects together will create approx. **65 jobs** in the next 2 years. A full Economic Impact Assessment for the scheme is currently underway.

### 3.3 Existing Scheme: Type of Grants

There are two types of grants currently available for this scheme:

- **Feasibility and Planning Fund**

Grants of up to £10k available to assist with professional fees and technical survey work associated with the development of sites and premises or technology and equipment which would support business growth. Types of activities eligible for support include:

- Architectural fees to support master planning and building development
- Survey work undertaken by professionals in support of sites/premises development and planning
- Professional fees for feasibility work in connection with capital equipment and product development
- Other potential feasibility costs to be considered on a project by project basis
- **Salaries and fees associated with statutory consents (e.g. planning) cannot be funded.**

- **Development Fund**

Grants of between £10-100k available (no more than 25% total project costs) to support capital activities, including investment in sites and premises and/or the purchase of equipment.

Types of activities eligible for support include:

- Investment in sites and premises (purchase, building works, refurbishment, infrastructure works)
- Purchase of capital equipment
- Premises fit-out
- Applicants will be expected to provide match funding covering as much of the project's costs as they are reasonably able to, from their own resources and those of third parties such as banks or investors.

- Aid offered under this scheme is delivered through the De Minimis Regulations, which are regulations enforced by the European Union. The maximum de minimis funding any recipient can receive is €200,000 (cash grant equivalent) over a 3-year period

### **3.4 Town Centre Targeted Lettings Fund**

- 3.4.1 There are currently a number of properties in the town centre which have been vacant for a considerable time. Vacancy rates have been approximately 15% for the past 3 years and there is no evidence to suggest a decrease. Discussions with local estate agents have highlighted a poor level of interest and enquiries in relation to these properties has flagged up key issues that currently make these properties unattractive to prospective businesses. By actively working with agents/landlords this initiative would accelerate the opportunity to bring these properties back into a viable commercial use.
- 3.4.2 The Targeted Lettings Fund offers a retail funding element to the Gainsborough Growth Fund (GGF) providing landlords/tenants of vacant retail premises in the town centre access to funding which will assist businesses with costs in respect of the renewal of shop fronts and internal fit out which can be prohibitive when initially starting up. When possible the Council will also be working in partnership with property owners and/or agents to explore possible incentives (rent reliefs) alongside the funding regime.
- 3.4.3 It is proposed that this grant scheme will provide a one-off discretionary financial contribution to eligible businesses to cover up to 75% (to a maximum value of £15,000) towards the total cost of physical works to the premises. An initial Fund of £50,000 has been earmarked for the Pilot from within the GGF budget.
- 3.4.4 Schemes with project cost below £40k will be eligible to apply to this fund. Larger schemes with total project costs over £40k are eligible to apply to the Gainsborough Growth Fund.
- 3.4.5 Same criteria and application process will apply for both the Gainsborough Growth Fund and the Targeted Lettings Scheme

### **3.5 Additional Heritage Element**

- 3.5.1 In light of guidance provided by both HLF and Historic England that the Council needs to demonstrate its commitment to heritage regeneration through both policy and practice in order to secure any future external funding, it is proposed that the remit of the GGF be expanded so that in specific cases it may also consider providing grant assistance to tenanted shops located within the eligible area that may be in need of renewal and physical repair and that may have a historic and conservation interest and value.
- 3.5.2 Such restoration works may not be conducive to direct job creations (e.g. for premises already occupied) but would have to demonstrate significant improvement to the appearance of the building as well as a positive

contribution to the wider street-scene, following have to follow Planning advice and guidance in respect of Conservation Policy (given that the project area is a Conservation Area).

- 3.5.3 It is the ambition of WLDC to transform the whole of the town centre through heritage-led regeneration and this ambition is described within the Gainsborough Heritage Masterplan. It is important this approach is mirrored within any town centre initiatives. This extended Targeted Lettings proposal will complement this work by addressing the much needed restoration of the existing town centre. It will help to demonstrate the Council's commitment to heritage-led regeneration and as such, will increase the chances of the Council being able to lever in external funding support for such work in the future from HLF and Historic England.

# Gainsborough Town Centre

## Heritage Masterplan



## Introduction

West Lindsey District Council have now embarked upon an ambitious multi-strand socio-economic and environmental regeneration and investment programme which seeks to positively transform both Gainsborough and the wider District. The Council recognise that for their development plans, including substantial housing growth, to succeed it will be critical to have a vibrant and attractive town centre at the heart of the District.

The Council is therefore now committed to the revival of Gainsborough town centre in terms of the interlinked and interdependent themes of commercial vitality and confidence, and character and identity.

The Gainsborough Town Centre Heritage Masterplan has been prepared by West Lindsey District Council to help provide a strategic investment and intervention plan for the historic core which can pragmatically respond to both identified priorities as well as opportunities. It also seeks to support and compliment the wider regeneration objectives for the District by placing a town centre, which both current and future citizens of Gainsborough can be proud of, at the heart of West Lindsey.





## Purpose

The Gainsborough Town Centre Heritage Masterplan seeks to identify and co-ordinate established and emerging opportunities for the transformation of the town's historic core and to pull these together in a single location. The Masterplan explains where the need and opportunity for intervention is located within the town centre and provides some guidance on what this intervention might consist of. At the heart of the Masterplan is a recognition that further loss of the town's historic fabric will harm its character and identity and that this could be harmful to its social and economic regeneration.

## Status

The Masterplan will not be an adopted policy document and is produced for information and guidance only. It is anticipated however the evidence gathered to inform the Masterplan can be used by the Gainsborough Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan and that some of the strategic objectives set out within the Masterplan might inform the heritage policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Need

The heritage significance of the surviving historic town centre is recognised by its designation as a Conservation Area. Many of the buildings (38) within the Town Centre Conservation Area are further protected by statutory listing. Despite the protection of the historic core its commercial fragility represents a serious threat to its survival. Historic England in their Heritage at Risk, East Midland Register 2015, note that the condition of Gainsborough Town Centre Conservation Area is very bad and that its vulnerability is high.

A detailed survey of the town centre to provide evidence to support the Masterplan has identified many under-occupied buildings and cluster of neglected and poorly maintained buildings both of which harm the economic vitality of the commercial core.

## Vision

*WLDC is now committed to ensuring that its policies, investments and decision making will seek to protect and enhance the historic centre of Gainsborough. Any future development within (and impacting upon) the Town Centre Conservation Area must seek to avoid visual harm to its townscape and the historic environment. Poor quality design and inappropriate land uses which will harm the historic environment of the town centre will be forcefully resisted by WLDC.*

## Objectives

### **Improve understanding of heritage significance**

WLDC is renewing the Conservation Area Character Appraisals for the town centre, which are up to 30 years old. These will explain what is significant about the heritage of the town centre and will inform planning decision making.

### **Effectively communicate the history of Gainsborough**

Many of those visiting Gainsborough, and even some residents, are not aware of the towns fascinating history and its connection to a range of important characters and events which helped to shape our national story. Through interpretation material, public art and promotion the town will celebrate its past.

### **Restore the physical fabric of historic buildings**

Where historic town centre buildings are in a poor physical condition WLDC will seek to identify mechanisms that will provide financial support and technical expertise to owners. The Council is actively engaged with the Heritage Lottery Fund with a view to making a Townscape Heritage Initiative bid in the near future.

### **Remove or otherwise mitigate visually harmful features**

The town centre includes many poor quality shop fronts and several visually harmful buildings which compromise the quality of the historic core. WLDC has recently published a Shop Front Design Guide and will support proposals which lead to the removal of harmful features.

*Objectives continued overleaf*





*Objectives continued*

**Ensure that new development responds to identified character and context and supports town centre vitality**

In future new development within the town centre must be of the highest design quality and it must demonstrate how it learns from and enhances existing character. Development which harms the historic environment will be resisted.

**Use the renewal of the historic core to aid wider regeneration**

Households, businesses and investors are attracted to attractive and vibrant towns. The renewal of Gainsborough's historic core will support the socio-economic transformation which is taking place elsewhere within the town and the District.

**Police and monitor management and change within the historic environment**

WLDC will employ the full tool kit of their statutory powers to ensure that fabric of the historic town centre is protected from harm and appropriately maintained.

## Process

West Lindsey District Council have been supported with the development of the Gainsborough Town Centre Heritage Masterplan by Lathams (Architects, Planners and Heritage Consultants). The emerging Masterplan is underpinned by extensive evidence gathering, which has included archival research and field surveys, which has been shared with officers and Historic England. The Council is now keen to ensure that the draft Masterplan is appropriately consulted on and has arranged for the Gainsborough Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to be briefed on emerging findings and proposals.

## Progress

The Masterplan is currently in draft form and it is anticipated that the final document will be launched in early May 2017. Prior to the launch the Council will carry out a full review of the draft document to ensure consistency with WLDC regeneration objectives.

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