
REPORT TO:	Environmental and Development Services	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	8th October 2009	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Gill Hague 595742 Email gill.hague@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Swadlincote Conservation Area Partnership Scheme	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Swadlincote	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS03

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members acknowledge the positive impact that working in partnership has had on the historic environment of the town centre;
- 1.2 note the invitation from English Heritage to submit a bid to continue with the Swadlincote Conservation Area Partnership Grant Scheme (PSiCA); and
- 1.3 recognise current finances do not permit continuing with the scheme at present but future opportunities to work in partnership will be investigated where appropriate.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 At the request of the Heritage Grants Sub-Committee to advise Members of the status of partnership working arrangements with English Heritage.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The concept of partnership funding between English Heritage and Local Planning Authorities is a long established one that has an excellent track record of success in protecting and enhancing the special appearance of conservation areas. Members will recall the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme for Melbourne. Latterly English Heritage policy has been to concentrate such efforts on the regeneration of historic commercial centres.
- 3.2 The Swadlincote Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) started in June 2001. Investment in the town centre has resulted in top quality repair and restoration of Swadlincote's historic buildings, improving the shopping and visitor experience for all. There have been some arresting schemes of complete transformation and the impact on the character of parts of the town is impressive. Over the six years of the HERS the total offered in grant aid amounted to just under half a million pounds and this generated a total investment in the town of over £1million.

- 3.3 In 2007 the HERS was re-branded and become known as Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas or 'PSiCAs' with investment in the town by the partners and businesses continuing as per the earlier scheme. Members will recall that the Council recently received a regional award from English Heritage in recognition of its sustained commitment to preserving the historic elements of the Swadlincote Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 3.4 The current scheme is in its final year. English Heritage acknowledges that work in the town centre has not yet reached a critical mass to the extent that it no longer needs support and has therefore invited the Council to bid to participate in the PSiCA for a further 3 years.
- 3.5 Investment in Sharpe's Pottery and work on the Town Centre Masterplan have resulted in a comprehensive approach that has helped the Council to make a strong case for a variety of other external funding sources in order to move towards achieving the Vision & Strategy agreed in 2001. Whilst the PSiCA has delivered improvements to the buildings, considerable finance has been levered in from the Derby & Derbyshire Economic Partnership (DDEP), Derbyshire County Council, Groundwork Erewash and the government via Growth Point money towards implementation of the masterplan for improving the public realm.
- 3.6 Phase I of the masterplan focused on improvements to the eastern approach to the town. Phase II is more ambitious and works will stamp a high quality identity on important spaces signalling clearly that the regeneration process is underway. This will help instil confidence in the retail and leisure sectors by providing an attractive environment in which to invest in readiness for when the economy picks up.
- 3.6 We will continue to seek out and identify external funding streams and when appropriate use Section 106 money as a means of maximising the Council's resources in order to deliver the public realm masterplan and other works and improvements as part of securing the long term Vision & Strategy for the town centre.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Contributions for 2009/10 for the final year of the current scheme are met from existing budgets, as is the work for phase II of the town centre public realm improvements.
- 4.2 The minimum contribution required from the Council to continue the scheme would be £40,000 per year assuming as at present a £10,000 contribution from the County Council and it is recognised that current finances do not permit continuing with the PSiCA.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 Participation in the PSiCA has contributed towards achieving Corporate Plan theme Sustainable Growth & Opportunity. However, it is not the only initiative that will contribute towards the vitality and viability of the town centre as delivery of the public realm improvements will continue for some time as part of the long term Vision & Strategy for Swadlincote Town Centre.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 A Vibrant Economy and a Sustainable Environment are themes that partnership working in the town centre have helped to deliver by ensuring the valuable heritage assets within the town centre are restored and replaced to reflect the distinctive historic character as a setting for businesses, shoppers and visitors alike. Appropriate investment in the town will halt environmental decline and secure its long term viability.

7.0 **Conclusions**

7.1 The benefits of partnership working are clearly visible in the improvements to the historic fabric of the town centre and should be supported when circumstances permit as the levered in match funding and benefits are considerable. Although current finances do not permit continuing with the PSiCA officers will continue to investigate external funding streams and future opportunities for use at a more appropriate time.

8.0 **Background Papers**

None