

## EXECUTIVE 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Kettering High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	George Candler, Executive Director of Place and Economy
<b>Lead Member</b>	Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth & Regeneration

<b>Key Decision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

### List of Appendices

None

### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. This report seeks agreement to accept an additional £503,631 grant from Historic England, and to deliver on the investment before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. It also asks that Members agree to an extension of the High Street Heritage Action Zone boundary to incorporate Sawyer's Almshouses and the Manor House Gardens in Sheep Street, Kettering.
- 1.2. The reason for this report is to set out that the Council agrees to accept the additional funding grant provided by Historic England and confirm that it will invest the funds into public realm works in line with the conditions required, including to commit to the funds being spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 1.3. Also, to support an extension to the High Street HAZ area for the benefit of enabling investment of funds to be considered in relation to the restoration of the Grade II\* Listed Sawyer's Almshouses, and potentially Manor House Gardens in Sheep Street, Kettering.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1. Officers have been working closely with Historic England and the Council's delivery partners on public realm enhancements in Kettering town centre. Progress has been made such that work on the public realm enhancements started on site on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the programme plans for the scheme to be complete during July 2022, with the Historic England element of the investment complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 2.2. An Expression of Interest for additional funds from projected underspend nationally on projects was considered late last year. This resulted in Historic England offering the Kettering scheme an additional £503,631 to invest in public realm enhancements as a part of the Kettering High Street HAZ programme.
- 2.3. The funding is conditional on the Council spending the projected additional £503,631 by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The projected spend for this year is already challenging, but with the contractors now on site, and committing extra staff to deliver the project, it is considered achievable.
- 2.4. The area identified for investment is an extension of the current scheme northwards in High Street, Kettering. The scheme design will reflect the choice of materials and design principles already established in the implementation of the design under construction immediately to the south, in High Street.
- 2.5. Members are asked to accept the additional £503,631 grant and thank Historic England for their continued support and confidence in the Council's ability to deliver on a high-quality set of investments for Kettering town centre.
- 2.6. The Council has been approached by the Chief Executive of the Almshouses Association and Historic England who has expressed concern that the Sawyer's Almshouses in Bowling Green Road, Kettering may have fallen into a poor state of repair. Sawyer's Almshouses is Grade II\* Listed and was constructed in 1688. Concerns include issues around poor heating, cracks to a chimney stack and other property cracks, replacing non-breathable materials and potential timber damage. A detailed survey is required as a matter of urgency, it is estimated that a survey and repairs to the almshouses could cost between £5,000 - £30,000. If, however it's found that the condition of the property is very poor, then there's the opportunity to submit an application to Historic England for a regional grant to cover the cost of the building's restoration.
- 2.7. An application for these funds would normally be considered acceptable through the High Street HAZ programme however, Sawyer's Almshouses falls outside the designated High Street HAZ area. It is suggested the area is extended to include the almshouses, and the Manor House Gardens opposite. The gardens feature as an area of historic public garden space serving the town. Both meet characteristics expected to be found in the High Street HAZ area and fall within the Kettering Town Centre Conservation Area.

- 2.8. Members are asked to agree to an extension to the High Street HAZ boundary, enabling the funding to be used as a vehicle to support an important Grade II\* Listed Building in Kettering town centre, and potentially the Manor House Gardens if it is considered necessary.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Agrees to receive an additional £503,631 of Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zone funding, and to commit to the funding being invested to extend the public realm works in High Street before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022; and
- b) Agrees to the extension of the Kettering High Street Heritage Action Zone boundary to incorporate Sawyer's Almshouses and the Manor House Gardens in Sheep Street, Kettering.

- 3.2. Reasons for Recommendations :-

- a. To formally accept the additional £503,631 grant offer by Historic England and confirm it will be invested in the project for which it was offered.
- b. To commit to deliver the additional spend within the timescale conditional to the funding offer.
- c. To work to optimise the investment for the longer-term benefit of Kettering town centre and its environment.
- d. To enable Sawyer's Almshouses and Manor House Gardens to benefit from support from the High Street HAZ programme.

- 3.3. Alternative Options Considered:-

- a. To not accept the extra £503,631 from Historic England that allows NNC to extend the Public Realm works, was considered but rejected on the grounds that with the approved works ongoing it is better to extend them rather than come back should further funding arise. Also considered was that the funding does not require match funding from the Council.
- b. To not extend the HSHAZ area would prevent any grant funding for the Almshouses. The financial requirement is low at present and should more be required there is an alternative means of funding this from Historic England that would not impact the HSHAZ budget.

## 4. Report Background

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- 4.1. On 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the Executive considered a number of matters in relation to the Kettering High Street Heritage Action Zone programme. Amongst the resolutions agreed was an agreement to accept an additional £150,000 grant from Historic England for works to the cobbles in West Street.
- 4.2. The primary purpose of the High Street HAZ fund is to support historic high streets and town centres in conservation areas through physical improvements, community engagement and cultural activities. The HSHAZ programme provides funding to support project delivery within high street conservation areas. The main objectives of the programme are:
  - To change perceptions of heritage and high streets;
  - To support sustainable economic and cultural growth on and around high streets; and
  - To restore and enhance local historic character.
- 4.3. Any funding awarded through HSHAZ must usually be match funded by the Council and would seek to leverage further investment from the private sector. The High Street HAZ programme will run for four years, it's nearing the end of year two.
- 4.4. The indicative total funds identified for Kettering High Street HAZ initially amounted to £4,400,000, £4,000,000 of which was identified for capital projects, namely shopfront and building improvement grants, and public realm enhancements. This rose to £4,150,000 with Historic England's additional grant commitment for West Street.

## 5. Issues and Choices

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- 5.1. Officers have continued to work closely with Historic England, delivering against the agreed programme of projects, in particular, those associated with building and shopfront grants, and public realm enhancements. Progress has been made in confirming Balfour Beatty as the parent contractor, and Kelbec as the subcontractor in delivering the public realm enhancements. Work on the public realm enhancements started on site on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the programme plans for the scheme to be complete during July 2022, with the Historic England element of the investment complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### **Additional Funding Grant Offer**

- 5.2. In early December 2021, through discussions with Historic England, an Expression of Interest was submitted to seek to secure additional grant funds for the Kettering scheme, from a projected underspend nationally on projects. In mid December, Historic England offered the Council an additional £503,631 to invest in public realm enhancements as a part of the Kettering High Street HAZ programme.

- 5.3. Funding is conditional on the Council not only spending the projected funding it has committed to in this financial year, but also the additional £503,631, all by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The projected spend for this year is already challenging, but with the contractors now on site, and committing extra staff to deliver the project, it is considered achievable. In terms of the additional spend, the Council plans to delay carrying out the works in Meadow Road, which is outside the Conservation Area and so not eligible for Historic England funding, until it has completed that part of the scheme funded by Historic England, at 100% spend. The Council's contribution is simply deferred, and the works to be carried out early in the next financial year will be funded by North Northamptonshire Council's contribution.
- 5.4. The area of Kettering town centre identified for investment is an extension of the current scheme northwards in High Street. The scheme designers are currently working on the scheme plans for this area, but it is expected to reflect the choice of materials and design principles already established in the implementation of the design under construction immediately to the south.
- 5.5. Given the pressing deadline faced with in terms of delivery, and the need to confirm acceptance with Historic England, through the Executive Director for Place & Economy, the Executive Member for Growth & Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Director, accepted the offer on behalf of the Council. If Members did wish to decline the offer, there is the flexibility for the Council to do so, by refunding the additional £503,631 grant, using its own capital contribution to the High Street HAZ scheme, which would otherwise be invested in the scheme in the next financial year.
- 5.6. Members are asked to accept the additional £503,631 grant and thank Historic England for their continued support and confidence in the Council's ability to deliver on a high-quality set of investments for Kettering town centre.

#### **Extension to High Street HAZ Boundary**

- 5.7. The Council has been approached by the Chief Executive of the Almshouses Association who has expressed concern that the Sawyer's Almshouses in Bowling Green Road, Kettering may have fallen into a poor state of repair after the Trust responsible for their upkeep failed. A photograph of the building in question is provided below to help with the building's identity.

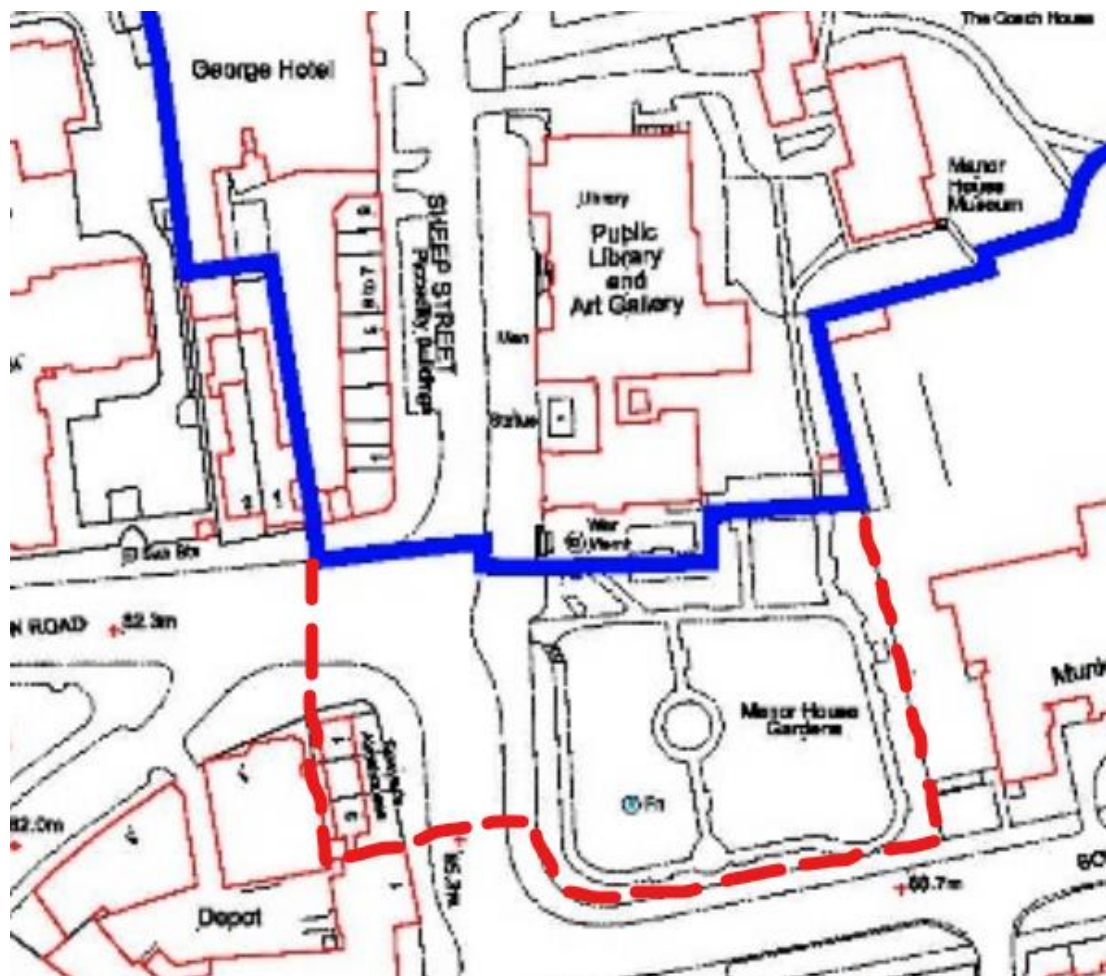


*Sawyer's Almshouses, Sheep Street, Kettering*

- 5.8. Sawyer's Almshouses is Grade II\* Listed and was constructed in 1688, second only in age to St. Peter & St Paul Parish Church in the town. The structure started life as 6 cottages, with ground and first floor accommodation. It has since been converted into 2 cottages, the first floors are considered uninhabitable due to space standards, mainly the low roof height. The cottages are temporarily in the care of the Almshouses Association until a new Trust organisation is found.
- 5.9. Historic England has also been approached and have highlighted that the structure of the building needs survey and repair. Concerns include issues around poor heating, cracks to a chimney stack and other property cracks, replacing non-breathable materials and potential timber damage. A detailed survey is required as a matter of urgency to assess the current condition throughout. It is estimated that a survey and repairs to the Almshouses could cost between £5,000 - £30,000. If, however it's found that the condition of the property is very poor, then there's the opportunity to apply to Historic England for a regional grant to cover the cost of the building's restoration.
- 5.10. Historic England have suggested committing funds for the survey from the High Street HAZ budget. This would normally be standard, and acceptable under the High Street HAZ programme however, unfortunately Sawyer's Almshouses falls outside the designated High Street HAZ area. It is suggested the area is extended to include the almshouses, and the Manor House Gardens opposite. The gardens feature as an area of historic public garden space serving the town. Both meet characteristics expected to be found in the High Street HAZ area and fall within the Kettering Town Centre



Conservation Area. A plan showing the proposed extension is provided below.



*Proposed extension to the High Street HAZ boundary shown in red*

- 5.11. Historic England will also consider the proposal to extend the High Street HAZ boundary through its own governance processes, initial soundings are positive. Members are asked to agree to the above extension, enabling High Street HAZ to be used as a vehicle to support an important Grade II\* Listed Building in Kettering town centre, and potentially the Manor House Gardens if it is considered necessary.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. Following approval an application would be made to Historic England to add the extension to the Council's existing scheme.
- 6.2. The size of the extension is considered as minor and would be decided by the Director of the HSHAZ programme.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1. Resources and Financial**

7.1.1. Funding is drawn from both the Council's and Historic England's budgets, the Council's contributions having originally been committed by Kettering Borough Council and carried forward as a commitment into North Northamptonshire Council's budget. This consists of match funding as well as support in kind. The additional £503,631 funding offered by Historic England is a full grant, the Council is not required to match fund the offer made. The spend profile will be managed through the High Street HAZ Board and monitored by the Strategic Capital Board.

### **7.2. Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. The Council has agreed a contract to deliver the public realm enhancements using Balfour Beatty, through the SCAPE framework. The Council has flexibility within its own funding contribution to vary scheme design or refund Historic England if it were to become necessary.

7.2.2. It is an Executive function to agree to accept grant funding. The amount of grant funding is over the key decision threshold as noted in the report and therefore in accordance with the Constitution, the Executive must determine the decision.

### **7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. Improvements in the town centre are intended to create an attractive and sustainable environment for people to live and visit. The HSHAZ will restore pride in the historic character of the town centre, providing growth and investment to bring residents and visitors to enjoy the facilities and environment created. This will contribute to the Council's Corporate priority of 'Safe and thriving places' by contributing to the priorities of strengthening the cultural identity of the town, helping town centres respond to changing trends and attracting visitors and inward investment.

### **7.4. Risk**

7.4.1. The risks to delivery of this project, and so spending the additional funds before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, include loss of workforce due to Covid-19, and lost days due to poor weather conditions. The delivery team is working collaboratively to limit the potential of lost days and have contingency plans in place by increasing the workforce at the site if it becomes necessary. It is recognised that the weather can be unpredictable at this time of year, but what measures can be put in place, are in place. Ultimately, if the deadline for delivery is missed, that part of the additional funding unspent will need to be returned to Historic England, but the Council has sufficient flexibility within its only funding commitment to leave the project with a tidy finish, in an



appropriate place. Further phases can subsequently be picked up and completed at a future date.

## **7.5. Consultation**

7.5.1. Consultation on the original part of the scheme was undertaken by notifying businesses and residents of the works during December. A Consultation Trailer in High Street/Meadow Road was also provided for a morning to meet with any interested parties to discuss the scheme to be delivered. Electronic communication has been important throughout the scheme design, with interested parties being directed to a drone fly-through of the completed design. Discussions have now also taken place with the businesses in the extended area of the scheme. No consultation has taken place with regards the proposed extension to the High Street HAZ area.

## **7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

7.6.1. This report has not been considered by an Executive Advisory Panel.

## **7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by Scrutiny but the wider project can be considered as part of its work programme if required.

## **7.8. Equality Implications**

7.8.1. An Equalities Screening Assessment has been completed. There are no negative equality impacts identified.

## **7.9. Climate Impact**

7.9.1. Improvements in the town centre are intended to create an attractive and sustainable environment for people to live and visit, thereby reducing the numbers who need to travel away from the town. Also, the town centre benefits from a broader range of public transport and active travel options, encouraging their use rather than use of the private car. The public realm enhancements have set a target of achieving at least 10% biodiversity net gain, this through retaining all existing trees and planting 4+ new trees, and the planting of native species or off-site planting in Meadow Road Park.

## **7.10. Community Impact**

7.10.1. HSHAZ will restore pride in the historic character of the town centre, providing growth and investment to bring residents and visitors to enjoy the

facilities and environment created. Also, contribute towards securing an important historic building in Kettering town centre.

#### **7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1. Improvements to the public realm will create a sense of pride in place which can have a positive impact on the locality and reduce the fear of crime.

### **8. Background Papers**

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8.1. North Northamptonshire Council - Executive meeting 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021  
(<https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=142&MId=324>)