

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL



Cabinet

Report of: Simon Green Executive Director PLACE

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17 July 2013

Subject: Darnall Shop Front Improvement Scheme

Author of Report: Elaine Feeney 01142039568

Summary: The report seeks approval for a proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme (The Scheme) to be delivered under the Successful Centres Programme.

The Scheme forms an important part of a wider regeneration strategy for Darnall District Centre and will contribute to the overall attraction and confidence of the area by improving the street scene, helping boost the image and reputation of the centre and encouraging private investment in shops and housing.

In 2011 a citywide strategy was approved by the Council, to help, support and promote our Centres. Support has primarily been targeted at the worst performing District Centres and this includes Darnall.

Darnall has all the ingredients of a thriving and successful District Centre including a strong community, good range of shops and community facilities, and access to good transport links; however the quality of the shopping is poor in relation to the scale, role and function of the centre which serves a wide residential area. The centre has a poor environment, with some buildings in a poor state of repair. In addition to this there is also a high number of poorly maintained vacant units.

The Scheme will help to address this image through the funding and implementation of physical improvements to the front elevations of existing independent businesses to create an attractive centre that people are proud of and encourage further investment by the existing businesses themselves

Reasons for Recommendations:

The Successful Centres strategy approved by the East Community Assembly in 2012 identified that Darnall centre is in great need of investment to improve the overall quality, appearance and environment with some buildings in disrepair and a high number of poorly maintained vacant units.

The proposed scheme will support independent traders, and help to boost the confidence and image of the centre, increase footfall to improve the local economy.

Recommendations:

- That the proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme detailed in this report and set out in the appendix to this report be approved
- That the Head of City Regeneration be authorised to finalise the procurement processes, evaluate tenders and select the contractor to deliver the works under the above scheme, in accordance with Council procedures
- That the Head of City Regeneration, in consultation with the Director of Legal Services, Director of Commercial Services and the Director for Finance be authorised to negotiate and agree the terms of appointment with the Contractor selected to deliver the works for the above scheme.
- The Head of City Regeneration be authorised to amend the Designated Area under the Scheme.

Background Papers:

- **TDLC Strategy for East Community Assembly approved 29 March 2012**
- **TDLC Citywide framework approved March 2011**

Category of Report: OPEN

* Delete as appropriate

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
YES/NO Cleared by: Paul Schofield
Legal Implications
YES Cleared by: Brendan Twomey
Equality of Opportunity Implications
NO Cleared by: Ian Oldershaw
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
NO
Human rights Implications
NO
Environmental and Sustainability implications
YES/NO
Economic impact
YES
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
YES/NO
Area(s) affected
<u>Darnall District Centre</u>
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Harry Harpham
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
YES/NO
Press release
YES/NO

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report seeks approval for a proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme (The Scheme) to be delivered under the Successful Centres Programme. The Scheme forms an important part of a wider regeneration strategy for Darnall District Centre. The Scheme will contribute to the overall attraction and confidence of the area by improving the street scene, helping boost the image and reputation of the centre and encouraging private investment in shops and housing.
- 1.2 District and local centres are vital to the attractiveness and success of housing areas and are a key component in why people choose to live or work in an area. They are important hubs for the neighbourhoods they serve, providing facilities and services for everyday needs as well as opportunities for employment
- 1.3 Darnall is one of the 5 District centres targeted by Local Growth Fund as one of the worst performing centres. Darnall was identified in the initial TDLC strategy approved in 2011, as having a very poor environment.
- 1.4 Darnall has all the ingredients of a thriving and successful District Centre including a strong community, good range of shops and community facilities, and access to good transport links; however the quality of the shopping is poor in relation to the scale, role and function of the centre which serves a wide residential area.
- 1.5 The centre has a poor environment, with some buildings in a poor state of repair. In addition to this there is also a high number of poorly maintained vacant units.
- 1.6 The Scheme will help to address this image through the funding and implementation of physical delivering improvements to the front elevations of existing independent businesses to create an attractive centre that people are proud of and encourage further investment by the existing businesses themselves
- 1.7 The proposed Scheme is just one element of a number of initiatives to be delivered under the successful centres programme for Darnall, and as part of the wider regeneration framework for the centre such as Public realm improvements
- Training and support for traders
 - Facilitating and enabling housing development on adjacent vacant sites

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE

- 2.1 The Scheme is an important element of the Successful Centres Programme that will help to achieve the Council's vision that all centres will be a source of pride for local people and contribute to their sense of belonging in an area. Local people and businesses will be able to get involved in improving and looking after their centres.

2.2 The Scheme contributes directly to delivering the outcomes of the Strategic Core objectives, such as:

- **Great Places to Live:** This outcome relates to the activities and assets that make local neighbourhoods attractive, safe, accessible and vibrant, so that Sheffield people feel happy about where they live. Better Centres will help ensure that new homes are built more quickly to meet local housing needs and aspirations, and that empty properties are brought back into use.
- **Competitive City:** This outcome area is reflected by the work we do to grow the local economy with more jobs and businesses (and make the city more successful). The improvements proposed by this Scheme will help Darnall to be seen as a good place to do business with an attractive shopping area where investors choose to invest in land and premises. Increased confidence in the area will also help encourage new housing development on adjacent vacant sites.
- **Business Friendly:** The Council is committed to support for and partnership with local businesses to maximise employment and growth through listening and responding. Through the Scheme we will be able improve the image of Darnall and encourage and boost confidence in the area with a view to promoting viable and sustainable business. We will also be working with traders to look at other non-financial types of business support through the Enterprise Team.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 The scheme will deliver improvements to the front elevations of existing independent businesses which will create an attractive centre that people are proud of and encourage further investment by the existing businesses themselves.

3.2 Assisting with improving the appearance and environment within the centre will also help attract new and expanding businesses. More businesses will attract more money to local economy, fill up the empty vacant units, increase local satisfaction with the range and variety of shopping on offer and ultimately attract more investment.

4.0 PROPOSALS IN DETAIL

4.1 Back ground

4.1.1 The Thriving District Local Centres Strategy was produced in 2011 and identified key themes and priorities to support and develop a network of successful Centres across the city, based on extensive city wide consultation with local residents and business about what needed to change in their area.

4.1.2 Through this strategy the Council is showing strong city leadership, using modest funds as a catalyst to stimulate private sector investment in Centres, and bringing together untapped resources in local partners such as traders and voluntary organisations to improve the areas in which they live and work.

- 4.1.3 In 2012, a business case was approved using funding from the Local Growth Fund to fund a Successful Centres Programme and Darnall was one of 5 centres identified for intervention. The Successful Centres Programme business case was further revised and approved in March 2013, to include delivery of a shop front improvement scheme in Darnall as part of a range on initiatives to help revitalise the centre.
- 4.1.4 The proposed Scheme will improve the street scene in Darnall enabling the continuation of the momentum generated in 2011/12.
- 4.1.5 Other initiatives proposed subject to funding include:
- Work with Traders to promote the centre
 - Future training opportunities for traders and businesses
 - Support to fill the vacant shop units, and possible re-use of upper floors for residential above the shop
 - Public Realm Improvements to make the area feel cleaner and safer
- 4.1.6 In Darnall, there are a number of development sites close to the centre with good potential for development. It is therefore essential to optimise the opportunities available via vacant sites and other land owners. This will be greatly advanced by improvements to the shopping centre.
- 4.1.7 Consultation on the proposed scheme has taken place with local stakeholders, including Darnall Forum and local ward members, and independent traders throughout March and April 2013. This has been carried out in the form of information letters, member briefings and public meetings. To date the scheme has been supported and initial interest has been shown with great enthusiasm from local independent traders.

4.2 Shop Front Improvement Scheme

- 4.2.1 The aim of the Scheme is to improve the image of the area, creating conditions that will attract future investment and boost trader confidence. The proposed Scheme will :-
- Improve the front elevations of the shops,
 - Improve the street scene,
 - Consolidate the other public sector investment in the area:
 - Increase confidence in the area and encourage other private investment increasing potential job opportunities
- 4.2.2 To be eligible for inclusion in the Scheme, the properties must be either occupied by an independent Trader operating from that property, or be vacant, the appearance of which is detrimental to the Street Scene and located within the designated area as shown in the plan attached to the policy. In addition, external condition of the property must be such that it is detrimental to the street scene image.

- 4.2.3 The designated area is identified by the Council as the shopping core of Darnall and does not necessarily accord with the whole District Centre as designated in either the Unitary Development Plan or Sheffield Local Plan. The details of the criteria and eligibility are set out in the Policy document in the appendix to this report.
- 4.2.4 The designation of the area has been driven by the need to remain within the available budget, and to enable the scheme to focus on the core shopping area. However if additional funding became available, to further meet the aims of the Scheme, adjacent properties could be added to the designated area. It is therefore proposed that the Head of City Regeneration be authorised to amend the designated area should further funding become available or should the costs of the Scheme be lower than estimated.
- 4.2.5 In order for the scheme to be successful, the majority of Independent owners need to participate so that a sufficient impact can be made on the street scene. In the current economic climate and the decline of Darnall Centre, owners will find it difficult to make substantial payments to fund the whole costs of shop front improvements. It is proposed that 100% assistance be granted to meet the costs up to the basic level of improvements.
- 4.2.6 To encourage participation, we are involving traders in the development of the scheme through regular consultation events, the Successful Centres team also aim to set up a regular traders group based on successful models from other centres across the city. This will aid with creating a lasting legacy in the area, where the traders can work together to help themselves through carrying out small scale social initiatives such as seasonal events to help increase footfall and trade.
- 4.2.7 In addition to the capital works being delivered, an engagement package with independent traders will be developed based on successful models from other District Centre projects across the city. This package of support will be refined by working with the local traders to establish need and could include: bespoke business training in Customer Services, Visual Merchandising and Marketing, a shop local campaign and events encouraging local people to support their centre and the businesses.
- 4.2.8 The improvement works are to be limited to the front elevations and gables only. Whilst they will be tailored to the needs of each particular property and agreed with the shop owner, the scope of work will be limited to external improvements, which will include:
- Repointing
 - Repair of architectural features
 - Brick cleaning
 - Other Elevation Treatment
 - New signage
 - Painting existing timber
 - Painting of wastepipes.

The project is intended to act as a pilot for this approach and if successful may be applied to other District Centre with similar problems

- 4.2.9 In order for the Scheme to be successful, the majority of Independent owners need to participate so that a sufficient impact can be made on the street scene. Therefore it is essential a minimum of 90% of the independent traders sign up to the scheme this will be achieved through regular consultation events and officers regularly visiting the centre to build strong relationships.
- 4.2.10 The Council's Capital Delivery Service have been commissioned to manage the contract and the properties in the scheme will be grouped into phases which will ensure that works are carried out as efficiently as possible and enable the greatest impact

4.3 Financial Implications

- 4.3.1 Funding for the Scheme from the Local Growth Fund has been secured as part of the successful centres programme The total funding available is £300,000.

This is to cover delivery of the project and also any professional and project management fees.

The estimated fees are around 10% of the project at £30,000, with the remaining £270,000 on actual project delivery.

- 4.3.2 In order for the Scheme to be successful, the majority of Independent owners need to participate so that a sufficient impact can be made on the street scene. In the current economic climate, traders will find it difficult to make substantial payments to fund the whole costs of shop front improvements
- 4.3.3 It is proposed that 100% assistance be granted to meet the costs up to a maximum of £5000 per property of the basic level of improvements and encourage full participation into the scheme to achieve maximum impact. Initial feasibility work has indicated that works are achievable within this limit
- 4.3.4 The scheme will be developed, procured and managed by Sheffield Council as one contract in order to ensure quality, consistency and take advantage of any economies of scale. Where possible, and in consultation with the Principle Quantity Surveyor, Director of Commercial Services and the Director for Finance, a local contractor will be procured to carry out the works.

On completion of works to each property, the Successful Centres Team, Capital Delivery Service and the Clerk of Works will sign off the works. Further information will be detailed within the Procurement strategy which is currently being developed.

4.4 Legal Implications

- 4.4.1 The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a “general power of competence” which enables them to do anything that an individual can do as long as the proposed action is not specifically prohibited.
- 4.4.2 A purpose of the Act is to enable local authorities to work in innovative ways to develop services that meet local need.
- 4.4.3 The proposed Scheme falls within the general power of competence. In addition, there is no specific statutory prohibition, preventing the Council from implementing the proposed Scheme. The Council therefore is empowered to produce, implement and administer the Scheme as detailed in this report and set out in the appendix .

4.5 Equality Implications

- 4.5.1 Fundamentally this proposal is equality neutral affecting all local people equally regardless of age, sex, race, faith, disability, sexuality, etc. However, it should prove particularly positive for the VCF sector, for financial inclusion and community cohesion. Successful centres across the city are key to developing Great Places to Live, helping to sustain communities, enhancing the competitiveness of the city’s economy and supporting local jobs/businesses. No negative equality impacts have been identified

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 When carrying out works to private commercial properties there may be a possibility of claims being submitted arising from damage caused by contractors. The contractor will be expected to keep detailed photographic records of the condition of the properties before works commence, reducing the risk of successful claims. Damage due to contractor negligence will be met by the Contractor
- 5.2 Consideration will also need to be given to the length of the defect liability period, given the superficial (facelift) nature of the works. The Council’s Capital Delivery Service who will manage the contract will ensure the defect period is relevant to the works being carried out.
- 5.3 Consideration needs to be given to the timing of the scheme , as it is understood that the Streets Ahead programme is due to start in the Darnall area some time in summer 2014, however we have not yet been provided with a detailed programme. We are working closely with the AMEY Client team to ensure synergy in the delivery of these two schemes.

6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Do nothing – This would mean leaving any improvement to the Market. However, the current economic climate is not conducive to this, as there is already widespread market failure and there is strong risk of Darnall District Centre falling into further decline.
- 6.2 As proposed –the Scheme aims to deliver a project that will deliver the agreed objectives for Darnall District Centre outlined in the Successful Centres Strategy to improve the viability, use and appearance of the centre.
- 6.3 Another option is a scheme providing loans to owners to carry out the shop front improvements. - In order for the scheme to be successful, the majority of independent traders need to participate so that a sufficient impact can be made on the street scene. In the current economic climate, owners will find it difficult to make substantial payments to fund the whole costs of shop front improvements.

7.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Successful Centres strategy approved by the East Community Assembly in 2012 identified that Darnall centre is in great need of investment to improve the overall quality, appearance and environment with some buildings in disrepair and a high number of poorly maintained vacant units.
- 7.2 The proposed scheme will support independent traders, and help to boost the confidence and image of the centre, and increase footfall to improve the local economy.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the proposed Shop Front Improvement Scheme detailed in this report and set out in the appendix to this report be approved
- That the Head of City Regeneration be authorised to finalise the procurement processes, evaluate tenders and select the contractor to deliver the works under the above scheme, in accordance with Council procedures
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Job Title: Project Officer
Date