



Report to St Matthews & Birchills, Leamore LNP, 25 April 2007

Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Townscape Heritage Initiative

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the St Matthews & Birchills, Leamore LNP on the Council's plans for the Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and to seek the assistance of the LNP in establishing the Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Heritage Partnership to steer the project.

Recommendations

The LNP is recommended to:

- (1) Note the contents of this report.
- (2) Nominate one of its members to join the Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Heritage Partnership.

Background

The Bridge Street and Ablewell Street area as defined by the map in Annex A, has been identified as requiring heritage based regeneration. The area has experienced economic problems such as vacant properties, low property values and failing shops. In addition to this its historic townscape of Georgian, Victorian and early 20th Century buildings had been damaged by loss of heritage details, inappropriate shop fronts, lack of maintenance, low quality repairs and little regard for the heritage character of the area when rebuilding or renovating.

Funding has now been secured until 2011 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands and Walsall Council for the regeneration of this key gateway into Walsall. The total amount of funding available for the project is £1.1m including project administration costs.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative

The scheme will improve the historic environment by offering grants to owners of buildings within the defined THI area shown on the map in Annex A. Grants will be available for:

- Building repairs – this will cover up to 70% of the total cost of the work
- Reinstatement of architectural detail – owners can apply for up to 90% of the total cost of the work

- Bringing vacant floor space back into use – grants will be calculated based on the difference between the cost of the work and the end value of the property

Owners with a freehold or leasehold with at least 10 years remaining will be able to apply for a grant.

A project manager, Liz Woodhall, has been appointed by Walsall Council to co-ordinate the project and can be contacted on 01922 652198.

This project will complement other regeneration initiatives happening in Walsall such as St Matthews Quarter and the office corridor.

In order to satisfy the Heritage Lottery Fund's criteria for funding, conserve the heritage of the area and to protect this investment the Bridge Street and Church Hill Conservation areas must be extended to cover the THI area (please see Annex A).

Consultation

In order to engage key stakeholders, including the local community, throughout the project the Council is setting up the Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Heritage Partnership. This will have up to 8 members including a member of the LNP and representatives of other organisations with an interest in the scheme.

The purpose of the partnership is to steer the project and ensure ongoing communication with the project team. This will include helping to prioritise buildings, advising on consultation, commenting on applications, assisting in promoting the project, receiving reports from the project team and providing feedback to the local community. It is anticipated that the partnership will meet every three months but detailed terms of reference for the group will be prepared by the Council in consultation with the partnership.

The LNP is asked to nominate one of its members to join the Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Heritage Partnership. The role and responsibilities of this member will be to:

- provide a link between the LNP and the partnership
- update the LNP on progress
- promote LNP priorities within the partnership

Once the partnership has been established further consultation will be carried out with owners, tenants and the wider community.

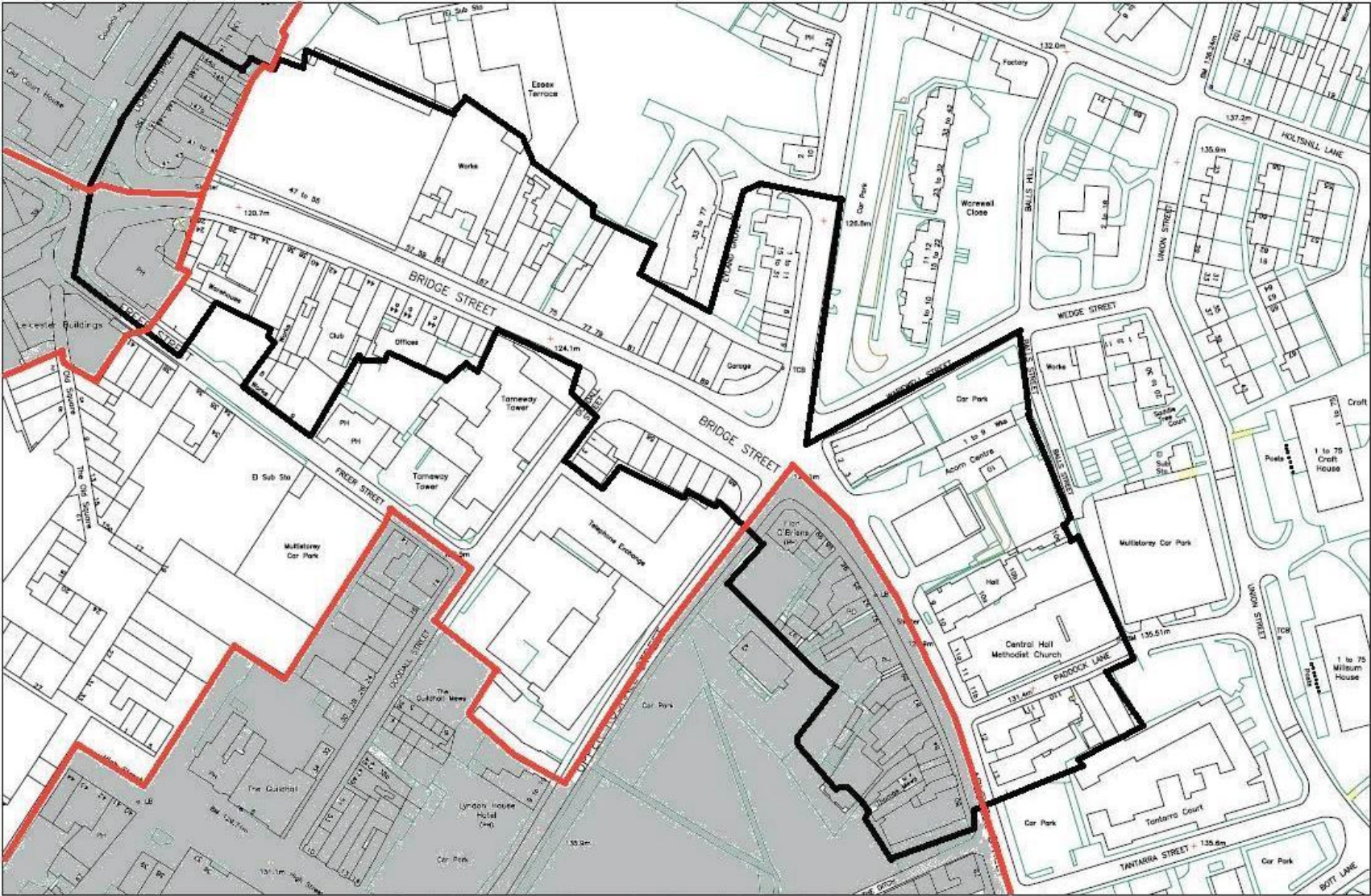
Timescales

After the partnership has been set up and the consultation is complete a detailed project plan will be produced. This will also identify the building projects for year one of the scheme. The THI will be open to applications from building owners from late summer onwards.

Contact officer:


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Annex A: Map showing area of Bridge Street/Ablewell Street Townscape Heritage Initiative and existing conservation area boundaries



1:2500

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 Conservation area

 THI area boundary

Annex B: Examples of projects from the Bloxwich Townscape Heritage Initiative

236 High Street

Before



After



179 - 181 High Street

Before



After



162 – 164 High Street

Before



After



240 High Street

Before



After

