

Economic Vision in Historic Towns – planning and regeneration

HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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The Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme – a suitable case for regeneration?

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Heritage-led regeneration - definitions

- ‘Successful regeneration means bringing social, economic and environmental life back to an area. It transforms places, strengthens a community’s self image and recreates viable, attractive places which encourage sustained inwards investment.’

Regeneration and the Historic Environment English Heritage leaflet (2005)

- ‘The improvement of a disadvantaged people or places through the delivery of a heritage-focused project.’

The Social Impacts of Heritage-Led Regeneration EPH report for the Agencies Co-ordinating Group (2008)

Conservation area grant schemes

- Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972 first introduced grants for conservation areas, administered by the Historic Buildings Council for England
- European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 – Civic Trust pilot grant scheme for conservation areas
- English Heritage funds 'Section 10' grant schemes, which are succeeded by Conservation Area Partnership Schemes (CAPS), Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes (HERS) and now Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSICAs) – *all reactive schemes*
- HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) schemes opened for bids in 1998 – *first proactive scheme*

THI evaluation-Oxford Brookes report

Summary of conclusions

THI schemes are likely to succeed where:

- The area has townscape and heritage quality
- There is a wider strategy and vision for the area
- The area is not too deprived, or is on an upward economic trajectory
- The target properties are sufficiently clustered to generate a critical mass
- There is clear leadership and a strong management team

What makes a THI scheme successful?

A successful THI can contribute to historic area regeneration – but 6 factors are key to success

Illustrated by two examples - Denbigh and Creswell Model Village



What makes a THI scheme successful?

I The THI area should have 'heritage merit'

- Historic areas can be attractive places in which to live and work
- Such areas often have identity, or at least distinctiveness, and provide a sense of place.
- Once their quality is understood/ revealed, 'heritage' locations generally enhance property values
- Greater potential for engaging local interest and involvement

What makes a THI scheme successful?

2 THI should be part of a wider strategy for the area, addressing any underlying issues

- THI /conservation can only *contribute* to the economy, sustainability and confidence of the area
- Location is critical – places cannot be ‘regenerated’ through heritage/conservation alone
- Social and other issues need to be addressed in parallel - eg loss of major local employer/regional unemployment, loss of retail vitality, concentration of HMOs with absent landlords, heavy traffic blight, etc.

What makes a THI scheme successful?

3 Ownership and leadership by local planning authority (LPA) is essential

- Appropriate planning policy framework and LPA’s use of statutory powers likely to be crucial to success of the scheme
- LPA generally only body that can effectively co-ordinate/‘coerce’ disparate owners and interests.
- LPA can act as conduit for funding private owners
- LPA has long term interest in the area and ability to protect investment through planning system.

What makes a THI scheme successful?

4 THI scheme must be pro-active rather than reactive, if issues to be addressed

- Crucial to build local confidence in the scheme/ future of the area, to encourage participation
- Active promotion, door-stepping, regular publicity and events, backed by political commitment.
- Persuasion first, but if that fails, use of statutory powers – particularly concerning critical projects

What makes a THI scheme successful?

5 Appointment of an experienced, active Project Officer is crucial

- To drive the scheme forward, implement the action plan, make the critical projects happen
- Project officer needs to have appropriate level of authority within organising authority and be key member of the team – external consultants rarely successful in the rôle
- Determination, good negotiating skills and persistence often more important than technical knowledge

What makes a THI scheme successful?

- 6 Overall life of scheme needs to be long enough to achieve lasting results
 - To create a perceptible impact, build confidence
 - To deal with the critical projects
 - To achieve sustainability – ie enabling the area to become self-sustaining, continuing to attract investment, without grant support/subsidy
 - To create, or re-invigorate, a sense of community ownership, 'civic pride'.

Successful THIs- examples





Model Village housing round the central green – before and after



Before and after

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Portland Buildings, Linton Road





Denbigh THI



Importance of location





High Street



Crown Square



THI critical project - Mostyn House, Vale Street (before)



The unveiling!





Mostyn House, Vale Street – finally completed outside!