



Haverhill Area Working Party 11 November 2010

Queen Street Shop Front Grant Scheme: Update

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members in respect of current progress with implementing the Shop Front Grants Scheme in Queen Street, Haverhill and to consider how the implementation of the scheme could be improved.

2. Background

- 2.1 In December 2009, the Working Party indicated its intention to award grants for shop front improvements at nine business premises in Queen Street, following the submission of 11 applications (Report A387 refers).
- 2.2 The award of the grants was subject to specific time restrictions for implementation, requiring the work to be carried out within six months from the notification of the award of the grant, or six months from the grant of planning permission or advertisement consent, where applicable.

3. Present situation

- 3.1 To date, none of the schemes which were successful in their grant applications have been implemented. Of the successful applications, seven were required to seek planning permission or advertisement consent before any works were carried out. Only two businesses have so far sought and obtained the necessary consents. Investigation by officers has revealed that a further application is close to being submitted, and currently being considered is an application which has been the subject of pre-application discussions with officers and forms part of a larger proposal with its neighbour which has already received planning permission. Appendix A attached to the report, contains a tabular list of grant awards and their current status.
- 3.2 Although time limits were imposed between the award of the grant and implementation, or between obtaining the necessary consents and implementation, it was not thought necessary to impose a time limit between the award of the grant and the submission of the application for the necessary consent. However, experience has proved that this is where significant delays appear to be occurring.
- 3.3 Officers have been working with the applicants and have been helping them to complete and submit the necessary applications. As a result, there are three cases where an application is expected shortly and another where officers are working with the applicant on finalising the necessary details. Usually, when grants are

awarded, officers wait for the applicants to carry out preparatory work and respond to any requests. Because of the delays that are being experienced, officers have now taken a different approach and have been proactively contacting the applicants and reminding them about the grant and then offering to help them with any problems and paperwork. Implementation has been disappointingly slow, however, despite the large amount of officer time given to the scheme. Part of the problem is that many of the traders involved have found applying for the necessary consents very difficult. Another problem is that the lack of a time limit for the submission of applications has meant that traders have no sense of urgency. Introducing a time limit to the process may therefore be helpful both in encouraging traders to make progress and in ascertaining whether all the money committed to the first phase of the scheme is in fact likely to be used.

- 3.4 The one business which has obtained its advertisement consent for a hanging sign in good time has not implemented the work as it has since experienced problems with the original supplier. As this is the same supplier who quoted for a number of the other applicants, officers are currently seeking to assist by locating alternative suppliers. However, in this instance the time period for implementation of the work for this business has expired.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 It is considered that it would be appropriate to now introduce a time limit for the submission of necessary applications for planning permission or advertisement consent and for undertaking the work that is to be grant assisted. It is suggested that applicants should be given up to March 2011 to prepare the necessary submissions with a period no greater than six months to be allowed for the approved works to be implemented.
- 4.2 If the Working Party is in agreement with this approach then all applicants who were successful in their original applications will be written to and advised of the new timetable for taking up the grant.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:-
- (1) a time limit to March 2011 be given for the submission of planning/advertisement applications and this limit be added to the Queen Street Shop Front Grant Scheme; and
 - (2) all applicants be advised of the timescales that will now apply.

For further information, please contact:-
Chris Rand, Principal Planning Policy Officer,
Planning and Economic Development Services.
Telephone: (01284) 757352 or email: chris.rand@stedsbc.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

Haverhill Shop Front Grant Scheme Progress: November 2010

No	Applicant	Grant	Consents Needed	Progress
28A	USA Chicken	£6728	Planning consent	An application has been submitted (linked with 28)
28	Haverhill Tandoori	£7245	Planning consent	An application has been approved but work can't start until the neighbour's application has also been approved as the two are linked.
30-32	C&B Beautiful	£1540	Advertisement consent	Officers are assisting the applicant and an application is expected.
36	Samuels	£1609	Advertisement consent	Officers are assisting the applicant and an application is expected.
15	Haverhill Pizza & Kebab	£666	None needed – repair & redecoration – could apply for further grant	The work has not happened and the grant offer has expired.
17	Top Chef	£1600	Advertisement consent	Officers have had discussions with the applicant and he is reconsidering whether he still wants to go ahead with the original proposal.
4	Hav. Weekly News	£7000	Planning consent	Officers are assisting the applicant and an application is expected.
5-5A	Sonia's	£2460	Further details needed	Officers are assisting the applicant finalise the details.
11	Quick Service Shoes	£372	Advertisement consent	Advertisement consent application SE/1-/0165 granted 31.3.10, but owner is experiencing problems with supplier.
	Total	£29250		