

23 JULY 2019

KEY DECISION: No

REPORT NO. EPSH1938

## ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Council is currently reviewing the Borough's eight Conservation Areas, in line with a commitment given in the recently adopted Local Plan. An opportunity has arisen for funding to be made available for heritage projects within Aldershot town centre through Historic England's High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme. In order to qualify for funding, the area in question must form part of an existing or prospective Conservation Area. This report seeks confirmation that the proposed Heritage Action Zone is an area of study in relation to the review of the existing Aldershot West Conservation Area.

### **Recommendation:**

That the proposed Heritage Action Zone which includes High St, Union St, Nelson St and Short St and Princes Hall in Aldershot town centre, is confirmed as an area of study for the purposes of the Aldershot West Conservation Area Review.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The recently adopted Local Plan gave a commitment that the Council would review the Borough's eight existing Conservation Areas in terms of their special architectural or historic interest, to establish whether any changes were required. This process has already begun with informal presentations to member groups in March/April and a member workshop earlier this month.
- 1.2 Since the review was initiated, the Government has announced a new £44m fund to allow Historic England to work with partners to find new ways to revive high streets through the High Streets Heritage Action Zones scheme. The scheme is intended to support sustainable economic and cultural growth and enhance local historic character. Guidance on how to submit Expressions of Interest by the deadline of 12 July was published at the end of May.
- 1.3 In order to qualify for funding, the Heritage Action Zone in question must form part of an existing or prospective Conservation Area and evidence of this must be provided to support the funding bid. Therefore, this report seeks confirmation that High St, Union St and connecting streets and Princes Hall in Aldershot

town centre is an area of study in relation to the review and possible expansion of the existing Aldershot West Conservation Area.

## **2. Aldershot Heritage Action Zone**

- 2.1 The section of High St and Union St west of the intersection with Short St and Cross St is within the Aldershot West Conservation Area, which was originally designated in 1980 and is centred around Municipal Gardens. The existing Conservation Area includes high quality Victorian terraced housing together with public buildings such as the Old Town Hall and the West End Centre.
- 2.2 As part of a 2006 review of Conservation Areas, there was a proposal to extend the Aldershot West Conservation Area to include the commercial town and Princes Gardens, together with the rail station and its environs. However, the proposal did not proceed and no boundary changes were approved.
- 2.3 The current proposal for a Heritage Action Zone is focussed on the whole length of High St together with Union St, Short St and Nelson St, and Princes Hall. The intention of the zone is to improve the heritage buildings and associated public realm surrounding the two major wholesale redevelopment schemes which are coming to fruition. It will ensure these complement rather than detract from the impact of the new development in Union Street East and the Galleries. The inclusion of the Union Street East site also provides the potential to support retention of the Burton's Façade a locally listed building subject to further feasibility and viability work. This is the only part of the two redevelopment schemes which is included within the HAZ bid. Funding of up to £2m is available to set up a four-year partnership to run a Heritage Action Zone scheme, beginning in April 2020. The funding would focus on:
  - Replacement shop fronts to reflect the town's Victorian and military heritage;
  - Repairs to historic buildings, including reinstating architectural features;
  - Works to the public realm, including the new High Street bus interchange;
  - Improvements to Short St to create more active frontage and better linkages between High St and Union St;
  - Options appraisals for key heritage buildings to encourage their conversion into alternative uses that better meet local demand;
  - Activities to help people engage with heritage, culture and regeneration;
  - Improvements to Princes Hall frontage;
  - A project officer to manage the scheme over its four-year lifespan.
- 2.4 In addition to the capital regeneration element, each Heritage Action Zone will have an embedded Cultural Programme which is currently being developed by Historic England, in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England.
- 2.5 The deadline for Expressions of Interest to be received by Historic England is 12 July. If successful, further work on detailed programme design would be required between Autumn 2019 and the project start date of April 2020.

### **3. Conservation Area Reviews**

- 3.1 In line with the recently adopted Local Plan's commitment to review the architectural and historic interest of the Borough's existing Conservation Areas, informal presentations setting out the background and how the review could be taken forward were considered by SHLP on 27<sup>th</sup> March and PPAB on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019. A workshop took place on 4 July to provide an opportunity for all members to give feedback on how the review should proceed.
- 3.2 Options for the outcome of each Conservation Area Review include: no change; extension/reduction of the protected area; and revocation. Options for future management could include Article 4 Directions to strengthen controls on development (e.g. replacement windows and other changes) which may be detrimental to the historic character.
- 3.3 The confirmation of Aldershot town centre as an area of study would carry no weight in planning decisions – such consideration would depend on the outcome of the Conservation Area Review, which would be subject to public consultation and formal approval by Cabinet in due course. The Heritage Action Zone bid provides the opportunity for higher-level engagement of the local community in carrying out the review, including the Civic Society, and the process is likely to take at least a year. In the event that the decision is made not to include the Heritage Action Zone within the Conservation Area, the scheme would cease to qualify and any funding would have to be repaid.

### **4. Implications**

#### **Risks**

- 4.1 There are not considered to be any risks associated with the implementation of the recommendations of this report. Should the proposed Heritage Action Zone not be approved as an area of study for the Conservation Area Review, it would not qualify for Historic England funding and the bid would be withdrawn.

#### **Legal, Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.2 There are not considered to be any legal, financial or resource implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations of this report.

### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 Confirmation of the proposed Heritage Action Zone as an area of study for the Aldershot West Conservation Area Review will support the funding bid which, if successful, will support the regeneration of Aldershot town centre.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

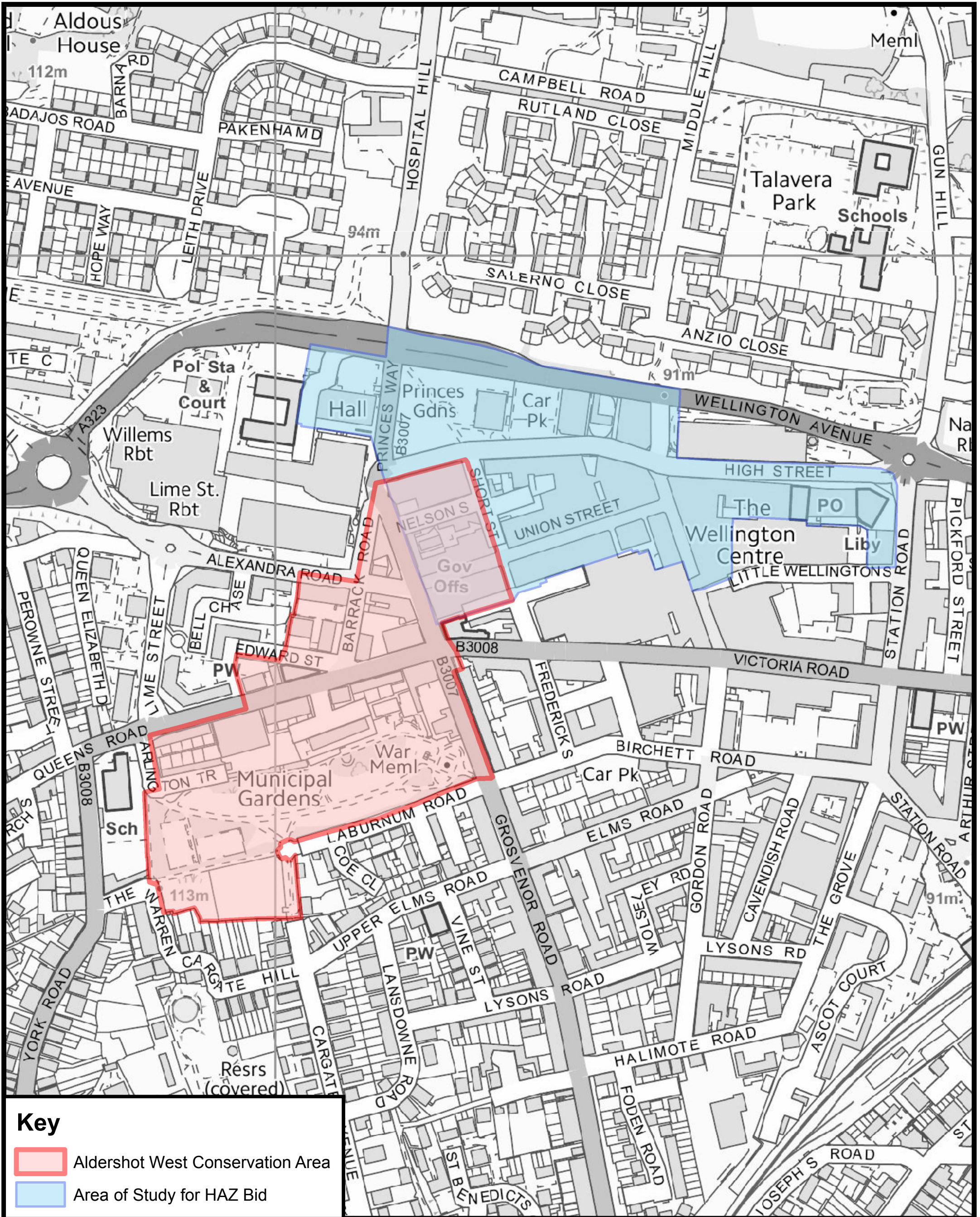
Further details about the High Street Heritage Action Zones may be accessed via the Historic England website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/>

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# Aldershot Town Conservation Area



## Key

- Aldershot West Conservation Area
- Area of Study for HAZ Bid

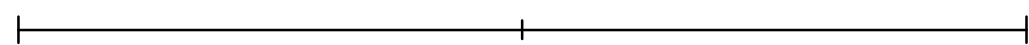
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