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**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07, RELEASE OF FUNDS:  
NORTHGATE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME IN CONSERVATION AREAS (PSCA)**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor David Lyonette,  
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek approval for the release of funds to provide grants for the improvement of older properties in the Northgate Conservation Area.

**Information and Analysis**

2. Over the past four years the Council has worked with English Heritage (and with One NorthEast for three of those years) to carry out repairs and the restoration of older buildings in the Northgate and High Northgate part of the Northgate Conservation Area.

**Description of Scheme**

3. The scheme, known as the Northgate Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSCA) provided grants to assist in the improvement of one of the most historic, but most economically run-down gateways into Darlington. Over the past four years significant improvements have been made and a momentum of positive change has been created with the resultant boost in confidence for the area. However, much more needs to be done to reverse decades of under-investment and economic decline in Northgate. English Heritage has offered to match-fund another year of grants under the aegis of the PSCA scheme. The sum offered by English Heritage is the maximum it allows of £100,000 for the year 2006-7. This grant reflects English Heritage's satisfaction with the achievements of the previous year's PSCA funding and the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) grants of the three years previous, and of the overall Council's management of the scheme.

**Objectives and Outcomes of the Scheme Including Performance Measures**

4. The objectives of the scheme are to encourage and implement restoration of historic and/or architectural features and to grant fund buildings suffering structural problems, in areas such as roofs and front walls, to repair existing features and to re-introduce historic features, which have been removed. The intention is to see as much of the proposed grant as possible used in these projects.
5. The cost of the scheme for 2006/7 is £200,000, of which, £100,000 is included within the Council's Capital Medium Term Financial Plan for 2006/7. The revenue costs for managing the scheme will be met from within the Planning Services Section budget. The

grants should generate private investment in the area by owners of up to another £200,000 per annum.

### **Methodology**

6. Grants are requested by owners of properties within the grant scheme boundary. The Conservation Officer follows guidance found in English Heritage's document 'Funding for Local Authorities Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas'; this document highlights which aspects of a repair or a restoration scheme are eligible for grant. Application forms are sent to applicants requiring three tenders for the works. The lowest tender is usually (but not always) approved.
7. If the scheme is to cost £20,000 or more, a conservation accredited chartered architect is required to be employed. The Council can fund this role at 12.4% (jointly with English Heritage) eligible costs.
8. When the works are completed, the Conservation Officer visits the property to inspect the works. When the works have been finished to the agreed standard, payment of grant is requested from the Corporate budget, to be paid to the applicant.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

9. This is not a scheme for which external consultation was considered necessary. No objections were raised following consultations within the Council.

### **Legal Implications**

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

### **Decision Deadline**

13. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Recommendation**

14. It is recommended that Members approve the release of £200,000 (£100,000 from English Heritage and £100,000 from the Council's Capital Medium Term Financial Plan) to support the second year of the Partnership scheme.

## **Reasons**

15. The recommendations will help to improve the condition, appearance and economic and social prospects of one of the most historic, but most run-down, gateways into Darlington.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

## **Background Papers**

The PSCA Delivery Plan was used in the production of this report.

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