

Coatsworth Townscape Heritage Initiative Consultation Feedback Analysis

What is the Coatsworth Road Townscape Heritage Initiative?

Gateshead Council in partnership with the North of England Civic Trust (NECT) is currently in the process of bidding for 1.4 million of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to set up a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) on Coatsworth Road.

THI schemes are undertaken across Conservation Areas across the country and Gateshead itself has recently completed a successful THI scheme in the Bridges Conservation Area in central Gateshead. The THI will deliver grants to individual commercial properties, specifically those that have historical and architectural value. The grants awarded are then spent on the restoration of the external features of the business to make it look attractive and the area unified.

It is planned that the Coatsworth THI will deliver shop front grants, building repairs, public realm improvements on Coatsworth Road and undertake business and property maintenance training for businesses.

As part of the THI program the Council has been undertaking a review of the existing conservation area and has created a Conservation Area Appraisal. As part of the review alterations are proposed to the current Coatsworth Conservation Area boundary.

From the 17th October to 4th November 2011 public consultation was undertaken on the proposed THI, character appraisal and draft Conservation Area boundary changes. Leaflets were sent to all residents and businesses located within the Conservation Area boundary. Public consultation meetings were held on the 18th and 20th October at Caedman Primary School and 2nd November at Bewick Centre, and the information was available on the Council's website with an online questionnaire.

In total 125 people attended the consultation events. The Council received 45 handwritten feedback forms, 38 online feedback forms and a further 42 attended meetings but did not fill in a feedback form.

The following feedback was received:

1. Do you support Gateshead Council's bid for funding to improve historic buildings along Coatsworth Road?

Out of those who responded directly to the question 89% agreed with the bid for funding improvements and 11% disagreed with the proposals.

2. Where do you think grant money should be prioritised?

When asked where the money from the THI scheme should be prioritised, out of those who responded, there was a clear desire to have businesses and shops invested in, often the frontages of the shops were mentioned specifically as needing increased uniformity and investment.

Along with the shopping area, pavements were also mentioned by a number, as was the provision of parking along Coatsworth Road.

3. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Conservation Area boundary?

From the respondents who answered the question 61% were in favour of the changes with 39% against. (Note that this percentage is made from those who did respond to this question, and 45.6% of the total people consulted did not show an opinion.)

The general feeling portrayed by the responses is one of positive indifference.

Out of all those that responded negatively to the proposals for extending the conservation area (25), 15 gave no reason as to why they disagreed with the plans. None of the residents who responded negatively to the conservation area extension actually lived in the proposed extensions.

There was only one response from a property within the proposed extensions, and this was positive and agreed with the proposed extension.

The feedback indicated that there was often a misunderstanding that Conservation Area's in general create a ban on any development or alterations in the area.

Many of the positive responses came with comments suggesting further extensions to the conservation area. The Management Plan will in that case seek to include training in some form for people of the area regarding the changes brought by the Conservation Area extensions. Also included in the plan will be a Window Dressing scheme, whereby an external consultant is hired to advise businesses on how best to present them on Coatsworth Road.

4. Do you think the Character Appraisal and Management Plan will help manage development within the Conservation Area?

Out of those who responded to the question 79% said that the Character Appraisal and Management Plan would help the development of the area, leaving only 21% negative responses.

5. What issues would you like to see included in the Conservation Area Management Plan?

In response to this question there was a wide range of responses. There was only one response that showed any consistency across the respondents. That is the parking on Coatsworth Road. Issues such as this will be analysed in the Management Plan and further works on the public realm and streetscape of Coatsworth Road.

Other comments referred to the need for shop owners and landlords to be more proactive in the up keep of their properties, assistance for those affected by the new Conservation Area boundary and for improvements to the current streetscape and street furniture

Appendix A: Breakdown of responses

Question 1: Do you support Gateshead Council's bid for funding to improve historic buildings along Coatsworth Road?		
	THI Agreement (%)	Conservation Area Boundary (%)
Yes	89	61
No	11	39

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Conservation Area boundary?		
	Agree With THI Scheme (%)	Agree With Conservation Area Boundary Changes (%)
Yes	62	33.6
No	8	20.8
No Opinion	30	45.6

For more information on the proposed Coatsworth Road Townscape Heritage Initiative please the following websites:

www.gateshead.gov.uk/Building%20and%20Development/conservation/TownscapeHeritageInitiative.aspx

www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/townscapeheritageinitiative.aspx