


Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee report 27 October 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of Anna Zucchelli	Classification: Unrestricted
Historic Buildings Grant to 57 Brick Lane for shopfront improvements	

Lead Member	Councillor Asma Islam (Environment & Planning)
Originating Officer(s)	Anna Zucchelli - Heritage at Risk Project Officer Michael Ritchie – Place Shaping Team Leader
Wards affected	Spitalfields & Banglatown
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	28 September 2021
Reason for Key Decision	Impact on Wards
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in

Executive Summary

Authorisation is sought from the Grants Determination Sub-Committee to offer a Historic Buildings Grant of £10,000 to Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane. The grant will contribute towards the restoration of the historic shopfront and associated architectural features on the Fournier Street elevation.

The works are an opportunity to restore a significant Georgian Grade II listed shopfront in a prominent corner location next to the Grade II* Brick Lane Mosque and to enhance the appearance and historic character of the Brick Lane & Fournier Street Conservation Area.

Recommendations:

The Grants Determination Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to issue a formal offer of Historic

Buildings Grant, subject to conditions, of £10,000 to Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane, towards the cost of shopfront improvements on the Fournier Street elevation.

2. Authorise the Corporate Director Place to enter into the grant agreement and any such other agreements required to affect the grant and the use of the grant as detailed in paragraph 1.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The shopfront on the Fournier Street elevation is in a poor condition, with severe timber decay on the stallriser and doorway surround, as well as broken glazing. These are considered harmful to the special character of the grade II listed building in a prominent location within the Brick Lane & Fournier Street Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The proposed works will improve the condition of the shopfront and reinstate or repair architectural features. The works will improve the shopfront's integrity for the coming years. The works will enhance the historic character of a listed building in a prominent and highly visible location on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street, opposite the grade II* listed Brick Lane Mosque.
- 1.3 The restoration or repair of missing/ damaged architectural features on shopfronts are supported by the Historic Buildings Grant as they are recognised as generally expensive and of little practical benefit to the owner but help to enhance the character and appearance of the historic building and conservation area.
- 1.4 Most of the cost of the works will be met by a shopfront improvement grant as part of the Brick Lane Regeneration Programme, which requires a percentage contribution from the business owner. Because the building has a large shopfront area and is a listed building, the cost of the works is relatively high and beyond the financial means of tenant. It is for this reason that a Historic Buildings Grant of £10,000 is requested.
- 1.5 Whilst the shopfront improvement works will support the business by making the premises more attractive for customers, the works are targeted to achieve maximum visual benefit to the general community.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The shopfront restoration works are not carried out. This would mean the condition of the shopfront and ground floor would continue to decline, resulting in a loss of irreplaceable historic fabric. The building would continue to blight the conservation area and could attract anti-social behaviour. The owner and/or tenant could be subject to an enforcement action, e.g., through a section 215 or a Listed Building Enforcement Notice.
- 2.2 The scope of the restoration works is reduced. This would be considered a lost opportunity to enhance the historic character of an important listed building in a highly visible location in a conservation area. If quality materials are not used to carry out the repair, then this could limit the longevity of the repair. Whilst Listed Building Consent has been granted for the works, the associated conditions have not yet been discharged - these require the detailed design to be of a high conservation standard.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Historic Buildings Grant scheme

- 3.1 The Council operates a Historic Building Grant scheme to assist owners and occupiers of listed buildings and buildings within conservation areas in meeting their responsibilities for the care and maintenance of the irreplaceable cultural asset which these buildings represent. The provision of this type of grant is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and section 57 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 3.2 With over 50 conservation areas and approximately 2,000 listed buildings, demand in the borough for grant-aided assistance in meeting the costs of buildings repair is high. The terms of the grant scheme require funded works to have maximum public benefit.
- 3.3 Grants are considered for specific works of external repair, which the Council considers necessary to protect the specific interest of the building and to maintain or restore its structural or architectural integrity. This includes grants for small-scale visible improvements to listed buildings or buildings with conservation areas, including the restoration or replacement of missing architectural/ ornamental features, to include shopfronts, doors and doors surrounds, balustrades, cornices and railings.
- 3.4 Grants are also targeted to assist in the regeneration of the urban environment, with preference given to buildings and structures on the national

Heritage at Risk register or are considered “vulnerable” (i.e., they could be added to the list if their condition worsened). These buildings blight the local environment and inhibit regeneration.

Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane

- 3.5 Rajmahal Sweets sells a range of Indian, Bengali and other sweets and savoury snacks, such as samosas, paneer rolls, jalebi and gulab jamun. The business owner has been in this location for around 20 years and has a long lease (125 years).

- 3.6 Rajmahal Sweets is located in a prominent corner position, facing Brick Lane on one elevation and Fournier Street on the second elevation, and is opposite the grade II* Brick Lane Mosque. The building has three storeys of brown brick and a slate mansard roof. It is grade II listed, built by the builder Worrall in 1728; the shopfront is later and dates 1815-25. Dan Cruickshank describes it as “potentially one of the best Georgian shopfronts in Spitalfields” – an inventive and slightly abstract early 19th century design, a little in the manner of Soane, containing Doric columns with attenuated plain square shafts and capitals topped with an abacus and unusual cylindrical echinus. The entrance to the residential upper floors is via a doorway, no. 30 Fournier Street, flanked either side by columns with round shafts and capital.



Historic photograph, taken 1955 (London Picture Archive)

- 3.7 The shopfront has been altered over time and its condition, on the Fournier Street elevation, especially, has deteriorated in the last couple of years. The condition of the timber in the stallriser and columns of the doorway surround are suffering from decay due to water ingress and what appeared to be malicious damage. Some of the glazing is also broken. Because of the urgency of the situation, the tenant carried out some emergency repairs to the shopfront in spring 2021.



Fournier Street elevation, March 2021



2021

Fournier Street elevation, September

- 3.8 The shopfront was highlighted with the shopfront enhancement scheme as part of the Brick Lane Regeneration Programme in 2019, which offers grants to owners to make improvements to their shopfronts, with a percentage contribution from business owners.

- 3.9 Jan Kattein Architects were appointed by the Council in 2019 to carry out a detailed design, planning and costing for the shopfront to cover
- Reinstatement or repair of hardwood shopfront and associated architectural features, including signage, with laminated security glass on the Fournier Street elevation
 - Minor structural repairs at ground floor level



Design ambitions for 57 Brick Lane (Brick Lane and Fournier Street elevations)

- 3.10 Listed Building Consent was granted for works in 2019 with conditions, which have not yet been discharged.
- 3.11 In 2019, the work was quoted at £50,000. The condition of the shopfront, however, has deteriorated since the initial listed building consent application, which means that the architects need to revise the tender drawings and specification and may be reflected in a higher cost of the works. Structural cracking has also been observed to the upper floors and a structural engineer has been appointed to carry out a structural survey in November 2021.
- 3.12 Because 57 Brick Lane is statutorily listed and has a large shopfront area, the cost of the work is higher than for many other shops on the street and beyond the financial means of the business owner, even with a shopfront grant from the Brick Lane Regeneration Programme. It is for this reason that a request for £10,000 for a Historic Buildings Grant has been made.
- 3.13 The architect will provide a maintenance manual to the business owner providing guidance on future maintenance and minor repairs. This will hopefully prolong the longevity of the proposed repairs, therefore offering better value for money

Offer of a Historic Buildings Grant

- 3.14 Each year the Council makes £25,000 available for its Historic Buildings Grant scheme. The money is allocated from the Planning & Building Control budget. Funds are now rolled over from previous years where they have not been allocated to specific projects.
- 3.15 The current Historic Buildings Grant budget is £67,000. Of this, £12,000 is reserved for Greenlight Youth Club (GDSC decision on 21 April 2021) and £10,000 to Colombia Market School (GDSC decision on 23 June 2021). This leaves a remaining budget of £45,000, so there are sufficient funds available should the Grants Committee approve the current grant application. This will leave £35,000 in the Historic Buildings Grant budget in 2021/22. There are currently no further applications for Historic Buildings Grant.
- 3.16 The application meets the grant criteria to be less than 60% of the overall cost of the works. 57 Brick Lane is considered a vulnerable building and if works are not carried out to the building soon, there is a chance that the condition of the building will decline, and Historic England may decide to place it on the Heritage at Risk register.
- 3.17 As a condition of the offer of grant, three comparable quotes along with clear drawings/ photographs of the proposed works are required. These are inspected and approved by the Conservation Officer or Heritage at Risk Project Officer.
- 3.18 A sign will be displayed on the building during the course of the works, indicating that the Council has made a Historic Buildings Grant.
- 3.19 Payment of the grant is conditional on the inspection, by the Conservation Officer or Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, of the work contained within the application to ensure it has been carried out satisfactorily to a good conservation standard. An annotated photographic report will be prepared and kept on file.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An offer of Historic Buildings Grant to Rajmahal Sweets, 57 Brick Lane, will have no adverse impact upon any of the protected characteristics as identified within the Equality Act 2010.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 LBTH receives grant funding of £25k per annum for use on Historic Buildings. This grant is ringfenced and cannot be used for other purposes. Where the grant is not spent in full during the year, it is moved to reserves for use on future projects. The balance on the reserve at the 31st March 2021 is £43k.

6.2 The Council has received a further grant of £25k in 2021/22, giving total funding of £67k for use on projects meeting the grant conditions. There are commitments against this funding totalling £22k as detailed in para. 3.15 of this report, reducing the available balance to £45k.

6.3 This report is seeking approval to allocate £10k of historic buildings grant funding to 57 Brick Lane for shopfront improvements. There are sufficient funds available to meet this cost, which if approved would reduce the funding available for other schemes to £35k.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council has the legal power to make the grant described in this report.

7.2 The evaluation of the grant application was made in compliance with the Historic Building Grant scheme criteria and the Council will constantly monitor the grant to ensure that such criteria are always met, and funding distributed fairly.

- 7.3 The grant monitoring will be supported by appropriate agreement terms. The agreement will ensure that the funding is used in compliance with the purposes stated in the grant application and the conditions highlighted in this report. This will assist the Council achieving Best Value in line with the law. A condition of the grant is that the Council must review the specification/ method statement, drawings/ photographs relating to the works and comparable quotes from three contractors and must be satisfied that these are compliant with the grant criteria. This to confirm that the cost of the works represents Best Value.
- 7.4 There are no immediate legal equality issues arising from this report. However, the grant monitoring process will assess any equalities issues that may arise and ensure that these are dealt with appropriately.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Historic Buildings Grant application- 57 Brick Lane

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

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