

Conservation and development of 116 High Street, Boston

Short description of the project

The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire is a buildings preservation trust with over 20 years experience of repairing historic buildings at risk and bringing them back into use. The Trust works with partners including local authorities, English Heritage and communities across Lincolnshire to identify priority cases and is adept at finding solutions for the most intractable cases. However, the situation at 116 High Street, Boston was by far the largest and most complex case the Trust had ever been involved in.

This Grade II* listed Georgian townhouse had been on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register for 15 years. The building was in a derelict state and in danger of collapse. It had also been a target for vandalism and antisocial behaviour, causing problems for the local community. Another local BPT had begun a project to save the building, but the rising cost of repairs had caused them to go into administration, leaving the building in receivership.

Heritage Lincolnshire was approached in 2008 by English Heritage and Boston Borough Council to take on the project and immediately set about devising a scheme for its repair and conversion. The Trust worked with the High Street South Neighbourhood Group and the local authority to find a viable new use for the building and there was a huge amount of support and interest from local residents to restore the building. A total of £2.4 million was raised from English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Lincolnshire County Council, the Architectural Heritage Fund, the John Paul Getty Junior Trust and the European Regional Development Fund. In November 2012, the building was re-opened as a centre for social enterprise and is now owned and managed by the Lincolnshire Community Foundation.

What would have happened without this project?

116 High Street was listed as Grade II* due to the rare survival of early 18th century architectural features and because of its historical significance. In 1754 the Garfit family established the first private bank in Lincolnshire in this building, and capitalised on the thriving trade and industry of the area for the next 150 years. The southern half of the High Street was a hub for the wealthy merchant class of the age, and as a result the historic buildings in this area of Boston are of a high quality.

The condition survey undertaken by conservation architect Mary Anderson in 2009 showed that the building had major structural failure and required a comprehensive scheme of repair. Urgent repairs were required to prevent the collapse of the building, which was judged to be imminent. This was literally the last opportunity to save this important historic building.

The building stood on the High Street with a large site to the rear. The former garden had been concreted over and poor quality commercial sheds had been built for its most recent use as a potato merchant. If the historic building was lost, there was also a risk of an inappropriate development within this part of the Boston Town Conservation Area.

What has the project achieved, or difference has it made?

The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire raised £2.4million for the conservation and development of 116 High Street, Boston and the project was completed within budget and with a short extension to the anticipated timescale. The professional team, led by Mary Anderson, worked with Lindums Plc as the main contractor to complete the challenging scheme of repairs and conversion and the project was completed to a very high conservation standard. A small new build development was added to the rear to increase the potential for revenue from the site and the gardens were reinstated to restore the setting for the historic building.



116 High Street, Boston before regeneration 2009 © Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire and Gleeds



116 High Street, Boston after regeneration © Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire and Gleeds

A project evaluation was commissioned from DC Research on the economic and social outcomes of the project and they concluded the following:

- 116 High Street is a sustainable development which has conserved and enhanced a nationally significant heritage asset.
- The partnership between the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire as ‘developer’ and the Lincolnshire Community Foundation as ‘end user’ has been successful in securing a future for this community asset.
- Funders and partners showed a high level of commitment to the project, particularly during a period of significant budgetary pressure.
- The project benefitted hugely from excellent support from the local community in and around the High Street South area. (The community managed ‘U Decide’ fund offered £2,000 towards the project following a public vote which was gratefully received by Heritage Lincolnshire.)
- Economic impacts included the provision of 526 sq m of new/upgraded floor space and the redevelopment of 0.19 hectares of brown field land. The centre is expected to sustain up to 30 FTE jobs and 6-8 small to medium enterprises.

What were the main lessons learnt or challenges overcome?

Heritage Lincolnshire’s trustees were conscious of the risks involved in taking on this project and have learnt from previous experience to discuss the terms of the partner agreements with all major stakeholders in advance. Restrictions on developing the rear yard were removed by Boston Borough Council, English Heritage approved a significant sum of funding with payment terms that enabled the Trust to manage cash flow and Lincolnshire County Council provided an essential loan so that the Trust had sufficient capital to start the project. The Heritage Lottery Fund also approved a grant increase on the original offer which allowed the project to progress quickly.

Challenges faced during the construction phase included poor ground conditions, the precarious condition of the structure of the historic building and challenges in sourcing the conservation materials required. The Trust held regular site meetings with the professional team and the contractors and kept all funders aware of changes that needed to be made to the scheme of works. This partnership working was crucial in achieving the project aims within budget.

The community engagement work was a major focus of the project throughout the project development and delivery and worked very well. However, there was a delay in the transfer of ownership between Heritage Lincolnshire and the Lincolnshire Community Foundation and more could have been done to keep the community informed during that period. This has been resolved with a series of events held at the property since the transfer was completed.

What is the future of the project?

The conservation of 116 High Street was comprehensive and the new owners have a detailed maintenance and repair schedule to help them to look after the building in the long term. Energy efficiency and flood management measures were incorporated

into the project so that the building can deal with challenges that it may face in the future.

The residential flat in the 2nd floor flat of the property is let to a property manager and the remaining commercial space is currently running at 60% occupancy. The Lincolnshire Community Foundation's business plan for the property aims for 100% occupancy by their 3rd year of management.

The wider economic impact of the project will be felt in the medium to long term but it is reasonable to expect (based on recent research on heritage led regeneration), that it will serve to raise investor confidence and encourage the private sector to invest in the area.

The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire is now working on other Building Preservation Trust projects in the County and is also offering advice and support to other community based organisations who are working to save historic buildings in their local area.

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer

Services Department:

Telephone: 0370 333 1181

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk