

## **Derby Cathedral Quarter Conservation Area**

In 2016 Derby's Cathedral Quarter scooped two national accolades, a fitting reward for ten years of partnership working. In that time, the conservation area has benefited from repairs to shopfronts and historic buildings, designation as a Business Improvement District (BID) and an on-going campaign of branding and marketing to shoppers and businesses.

The awards, for Britain's 'best city location' in the Great British High Street competition, and the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) award for National BID of the Year, show what truly integrated town-centre regeneration can achieve.

In 2007 Derby was facing the consequences of years of gradual decline. Empty leasehold properties were pulling down the rental values of neighbouring properties, and entire streets were in localised recession. The trend would only be exacerbated by competition from a new indoor shopping centre nearby, which opened that year. The city-centre Conservation Area was added to the Heritage at Risk register in 2009.

Already however, the city was starting to take action. A Townscape Heritage Initiative began in 2001. A second such scheme, also funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and City Council, is now regenerating the south side of the city centre.

Across the city centre in the north-west quadrant in 2007, traders formed a Business Improvement District (managed by BID consultants Partnership for Better Business Ltd) to make the 'Cathedral Quarter' a destination in its own right. Local businesses saw that if they clubbed together to celebrate its heritage, they would exploit its unique selling point.

### **Creating a Place of Distinction**

Derby City Council and Historic England played a major part in the Cathedral Quarter's regeneration. Through a nine-year partnership scheme in the Conservation Area (PSiCA) each contributed £844,000 and raised an additional £900,000 of private investment, enabling 97 properties to be refurbished. As a result nearly 2,800 square metres of floorspace have been brought back into use, 42 new jobs created and 166 more safeguarded.

To ensure high standards of design and detail, an architect oversaw the scheme and worked closely with local contractors for whom this was often their first experience of conservation. As the scheme progressed, these contractors took pride not only in the unique character of the buildings they repaired, but also in the conservation skills they developed.



Detail of renovated shopfront on the Strand, Derby. © Anarchitecture

When the judges of the 2016 Great British High Street arrived, they singled out the BID's integrated approach to place branding for praise. There are many elements to the Cathedral Quarter's branding strategy: destination signage and street furniture, targeted advertising and editorial in local magazines, and a programme of cultural and leisure events and activities. The BID is also proactive in curating a judicious mix of independent local traders and premium national brands: it publishes promotional literature to businesses and engages proactively with potential newcomers who fit the brand.

The payback of this complementary approach can be seen in footfall trends in the five years from 2008 when the BID was founded and the PSiCA began. In the UK as a whole, high streets suffered an average 26% decline, owing to the worldwide recession, the rise in out-of-town retail and growth in online shopping. But the Cathedral Quarter remained vibrant: footfall fell by only 7-9%, helping to make Derby much more resilient than similar cities.

### **Harnessing the Value of Heritage**

The Cathedral Quarter's success is at least in part attributable to its value as a Conservation Area. Local businesses recognised that the historic character of their streets was an asset to prize, and the most effective way to release its value was to co-operate at an area-wide level.

The area is set to benefit further now that Derby Museums Trust has received Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding to refurbish the nearby Silk Mill. The historic factory will

become Derby's Museum of Making and act as the Southern gateway to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, attracting 120,000 new visitors and an estimated annual economic impact of £4.2 million.

The combined effect of Conservation Area status and interventions from the BID, City Council, Historic England and Heritage Lottery Fund has been to create a virtuous circle of improvement. As the economic value of the heritage was recognised and harnessed, and public funding primed the pump of regeneration, confidence returned, releasing on-going investment and an uplift in value from which the city as a whole is now reaping dividends. Derby has now attracted over £29 million of HLF funding, the 4th highest amount for a local authority area in the East Midlands.



The Strand after shopfront renovation. © Anarchitecture

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 0607

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk)