

High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Evaluation

Case Study Appendix: Harlesden




Historic England

HSHAZ Evaluation

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June 2025

Reviewed and approved by:	
Signature:	_____
Name:	<u>Graham Russell</u>
Job Title:	<u>Chief Executive</u>
Date:	<u>June 2025</u>

Purpose of the report

This case study is not an evaluation of the Harlesden HSHAZ scheme. The purpose of the case studies as a whole is to provide insights to inform the overall HSHAZ programme evaluation.

This case study appendix reviews the outputs achieved through the HSHAZ scheme against its stated targets and assesses likely value for money using government compliant methodologies. The review is based on:

- the monitoring data collected by project teams within submitted scheme plans;
- a facilitated discussion with the local project team and HSHAZ Project Officers using an agreed consultation guide to review successes, challenges and lessons learned;
- a site visit; and
- the expression of interest submission.

1 Strategic context

1.1 Context and need for investment

The Harlesden HSHAZ scheme was allocated £740,000 of funding from Historic England for the capital strand and £93,000 of funding from Historic England for the cultural strand. The capital strand was expected to generate £520,000 of match funding from Brent Council¹. The Harlesden HSHAZ capital strand was one of the few schemes which ran for three years, instead of the four-year programme.

The HSHAZ is focused along the Harlesden High Street and is the gateway to the area. Harlesden is located in the London Borough of Brent in north west London. The area boasts a long history, experiencing significant development in the 19th century. As such, there are a number of key historic assets and listed buildings along the High Street.

High streets across the UK face similar challenges. Competition from online shopping and retail parks, rising vacancy rates, and the negative consequences of deprivation—such as homelessness and crime—are widely recognised as contributing factors to the difficulties experienced by high street communities and businesses.

Although Harlesden is one of the more deprived areas of London, it has a distinctive and unique character. At the outset of the HSHAZ, it was identified that a number of vacant and derelict buildings required investment to drive change in the borough and bring more vibrancy to the high street. It was envisaged that the HSHAZ investment could start a programme of regeneration across the Conservation Area, in which the HSHAZ was located.

1.2 HSHAZ scheme objectives

The focus of the Harlesden HSHAZ was identified as **creating a ‘gateway’ to Harlesden town centre and the conservation area** which contains a significant amount of designated heritage assets. Although the overall condition is poor, strategic intervention can provide an architecturally strong group to form an exemplar scheme to raise the profile of the town centre.

The key objective for the scheme was to deliver collaborative interventions in the best interest of Harlesden residents, businesses and visitors to push forwards a programme of work designed as a catalyst for the entire area and to attract footfall and dwell time from neighbouring areas. Works aim to renovate shop fronts in the Conservation Area as well as public realm and pavement improvements. One of the key benefits was intended to be increased community space, as set out in the initial application.

The skills development of young people was a key strand for the scheme and the HSHAZ team worked closely with the Young Brent Foundation who acted as enablers and facilitators, to work alongside a network of members to deliver a wide range of capacity building activities for young people.

¹ These allocations are from the first available scheme plans (Y2Q2 for the capital strand and Y2Q2 for the cultural strand)

1.3 Strategic alignment

Table 1-1: HSHAZ – Alignment with strategic priorities		
Policy/Strategy	Objective/Description	Alignment
Brent Local Plan	<p>The Local Plan for Brent sets out the vision for development to make Brent a vibrant place to live and work in, setting out a long-term vision for the borough.</p> <p>The steps to deliver this good growth include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong and inclusive communities: addressing spatial inequalities, building on the status as London Borough of Culture 2020, strengthen the existing sense of community and ensure the delivery of a wide range of essential social infrastructures. • Making the best use of land: prioritising residential development in new and more efficiently developed growth areas, encouraging greater access and recreational use of open spaces, identifying appropriate change that complements Brent’s character and sense of place. • Creating a healthy borough: stimulating greater activity, improving physical and mental well being for residents, reducing health inequalities. • Growing a good economy: support Brent’s priority high streets in adapting to changing lifestyles including the way people shop, promoting and supporting a string and diverse night-time economy, continue to support Brent’s high-level entrepreneurship and small business formation by encouraging new creative industries and affordable workspace. • Increasing efficiency and resilience: provide a safe and inclusive environment, continue to support Brent’s street tree planting and greening of the built environment and enhancing the capacity of existing green and blue infrastructure. • Delivering the homes to meet Brent’s needs: providing new homes in inclusive communities and maximising the provision of affordable housing. 	<p>This vision is supported by the HSHAZ objectives and the integration of heritage regeneration and cultural activities on the high street.</p>
Moving Forward Together 2023-2027, Borough Plan	<p>The Borough Plan sets out the direction of travel Brent Council will take over the coming years, acting as a guide for the areas of focus to make Brent the best place it can be.</p> <p>Five priority areas are identified in the Borough Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prosperity and Stability in Brent 2. A Cleaner, Greener Future 3. Thriving Communities 4. The Best Start in Life 5. A Healthier Brent <p>Working with communities and underrepresented groups is of upmost importance within the Borough, ensuring equality in provision of local services and opportunities to thrive. Collaboration between these community groups and with the</p>	<p>The HSHAZ programme uses heritage led regeneration and cultural/community engagement to ensure focused action in town centres.</p>

	local council will ensure that Brent is actively tackling barriers to development for individuals and communities	
Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan (March 2017)	The Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan (March 2017) highlights the well documented pressures facing the Town Centre, with high levels of deprivation, including relatively high levels of unemployment, homelessness, and overcrowding. These social and economic issues are in addition to a wider Harlesden Town Centre urban fabric that suffers from a lack of coherence and identity. Of relevance to the HSHAZ, the Neighbourhood Plan identified the lack of community space in the area.	The HSHAZ scheme looks to directly address the lack of community space in the area, as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.
Complementary funding	<p><u>Brent Council</u></p> <p>Brent Council offer various funding initiatives that support the cultural and heritage ecosystems across the borough. For example:</p> <p><i>Love Where You Live Grants</i> – offering funding for community projects that improve the local area, allocated to local organisations and community groups.</p> <p><i>Voluntary Sector Support</i> – the Council also provides small grants for voluntary and community groups. The focus of this funding is often on supporting local grassroots initiatives.</p> <p><u>National Lottery Heritage Funding</u></p> <p>The National Lottery Heritage Fund have funded some notable projects in Brent. For example:</p> <p><i>Windrush Stories and Pral Histories</i> – a project documenting the experiences of the Windrush generation, promoting understanding of the local history of migration and diversity.</p> <p>Brent Museum and Archives Initiatives – the museum secured funding for various exhibitions and initiatives highlighting the borough’s rich history</p> <p><i>Brent Borough of Culture 2020 Legacy Projects</i> – some of the cultural initiatives delivered by the Brent’s London Borough of Culture year have been sustained through additional NLHF funding.</p> <p><u>Arts Council England (ACE)</u></p> <p>As part of the ACE’s Delivery Plan for 2021-2024, 54 places across England were identified as having low engagement and investment from ACE and were labelled as ‘priority places’. Of these 54 priority places one was Brent, and the ACE sought opportunities to work with the borough and increase investment into arts and culture within its communities.</p>	Harlesden has not previously seen large amounts of investment into its cultural and heritage sectors. The HSHAZ programme will see recognition of the cultural and heritage infrastructure in the town and attempt to increase the opportunities for engagement of the local community.

1.4 Activities

1.4.1 Capital strand

The largest project for the Harlesden HSHAZ was the shopfront improvements scheme under which four historic shopfronts were restored or reinstated on Harlesden high street. The other of the major projects delivered under the capital projects was the restoration of the HSBC bank into a supportive space for young people to be run by the Refugee Support Network.

The other projects delivered by the Harlesden capital strand are as follows:

- **Project 1 - Historic Shopfront Restoration Scheme** – engaging local property owners and restoring/ improving the appearance of shopfronts
- **Project 2 - Brent Cultural Centre Restoration**
- **Project 3 - 60-62 High Street Restoration Work** – internal and external renovation of the HSBC bank building including improvements to the exterior, reinstating historic facades, feature paving, dropped windowsills, a new entrance and feature lighting
- **Project 4 - Community Engagement/ Consultation** – community design workshops to engage local people in activities including CV writing, and signage workshops. Additional activities undertaken included footfall counters, photographer, and conservation area extension appraisal
- **Project 5 - Public Realm Improvements** – highways interventions including changing road markings, reviewing zebra crossings, introducing additional disabled bays, speed limit reduction, bollard implementation, and general maintenance of roads and pavements
- **Project 6 - Apprenticeship Skills Training** – recruitment of two Brent residents as apprentices for shopfront restoration project delivery
- **Project 7 - Shopfront Design Guidance**
- **Project 8 - Project Officer, HAZ Lead**
- **Project 9 - Architect Fees and Accredited Conservation Professional** – fees for project 1 and 2
- **Project 10 - Legal/ Planning Fees**
- **Project 11 - LB Brent Officer Time**
- **Project 12 - Restoration of Jubilee Clock** – reinstating and repairing lost features of the Grade II listed Jubilee Clock

The forecasted expenditure of the capital strand over the four-year programme is set out in **Table 1-2**. As previously mentioned, as the HSHAZ scheme attracted further match-funding, the total cost of the HSHAZ scheme increased to match these ambitions. Analysis of the costs incurred against outputs is presented in Section 3.

Table 1-2: Capital Strand Forecast Expenditure					
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Historic England grant	£165,050	£422,767	£147,800	Delivered over three years	£735,617
Local authority funding	£310,799	£160,701	£49,500		£521,000
Other matched funding	£0	£0	£0		£0
Total	£475,849	£583,468	£197,300		£1,256,617

Note: Forecast expenditure is from the Y2Q2 scheme plan, which is the first record of the forecasted costs. The evaluation of the programme would be enhanced by accurate forecasts from the start of the programme.

1.4.2 Cultural strand

Harlesden cultural programme was delivered by the cultural consortium, which was made up of nine local organisations, led by the Young Brent Foundation where activities built on those delivered through the London Borough of Culture 2020 activities. The programme reflected and highlighted the rich, diverse heritage of Harlesden. As well as getting young people involved and excited in the cultural life of the area, the programme gave participants the opportunity to build digital skills, host workshops and other events. The cultural strand consisted of the following activities, engaging with community and their cultural potential:

- **Project 1 - Young Brent Foundation Salary Costs**
- **Project 2 - Creative Producer** - to deliver the cultural commissions and overall programme monitoring
- **Project 3 - Creative Commission Fees**
- **Project 4 - Youth Skills Training Programme** – marketing, room hire, facilitators, speakers and more
- **Project 5 - Communication** – marketing and promotion of cultural strand events
- **Project 6 - Digital Content Production and Management**
- **Project 7 - Photography, Audio and Video Documentation**
- **Project 8 - Evaluation and Monitoring**

There was no forecasted expenditure for the cultural strand during the early stages of the programme, prior to actual delivery. The first scheme plan made available was in the third quarter of 2022/23. This forecast expenditure is presented in the below table.

Table 1-3: Cultural Strand Forecast Expenditure					
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Historic England grant	£0	£16,815	£75,765	£1,230	£93,810
Local authority funding	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other matched funding	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total	£0	£16,815	£75,765	£1,230	£93,810

Note: Forecast expenditure is from the Y3Q3 scheme plan, which is the first record of the forecasted costs. The evaluation of the programme would be enhanced by accurate forecasts from the start of the programme.

2 Project delivery and management

The Harlesden HSHAZ works were delivered and overseen by the London Borough of Brent Council. As the main beneficiary of the project, Refugee Education UK (REUK) led and managed the delivery of refurbishment works to the old HSBC Bank at 60-62 High Street which it now owns freehold and uses as its headquarters.

Key project individuals included the following:

- Head of Service Employment and Enterprise Service at Brent Council
- Head of Capital Programmes at Brent Council, specifically responsible for the capital elements including the shopfronts project
- Principal Heritage Officer at Brent Council
- Community and Projects Manager, Refugee Education UK (REUK), specifically lead the refurbishment works at the old HSBC Bank and the subsequent operation
- The Historic England team supporting the delivery of Harlesden HSHAZ including a Project Officer (paid by the HSHAZ grant allocation), a Project Lead, and a Senior Responsible Officer.

The above team appointed architects Donald Insall Associates (DIA) to design the works for the old HSBC Bank at 60-62 High Street.

Although many projects managed to be delivered in the end, there was significant disruption throughout the programme due to Covid-19, maternity leave of key individuals, long-term sick for the HAZ officer, and cost of living crisis. In particular, the project team changed three times over the delivery period. This meant there was a lack of continuity throughout the programme as new individuals had to learn about the progress to date and create new connections with local stakeholders such as businesses. This inconsistent delivery team may have led to some of the delays in the project, which were also exacerbated due to the pandemic.

The cultural strand was separately administered. The Harlesden cultural strand was, as noted above, led by the Young Brent Foundation, heading a cultural consortium of a total of nine local organisations. This consortium created and delivered a series of cultural programmes that built on those from Brent's year as London Borough of Culture.

3 Project progress

3.1 Overview

This section assesses the Harlesden HSHAZ against its stated costs, outputs, and objectives.

As set out in Section 1, the earliest capital scheme plan was in Y2Q2, and the earliest cultural scheme plan was in Y3Q3. The target costs and outputs have changed over time due to change requests.

To allow a comparison against the envisaged targets at the start of the HSHAZ programme, our assessment focusses on the delivered outputs and outturn costs against the targets from the earliest available information. Therefore, the original target figures for the capital strand are from Y2Q2 and cultural strand are from Y3Q3.

3.2 Capital strand

The Harlesden HSHAZ capital strand invested £1,295,000 on into its various projects, which was slightly above the forecast spend of £1,256,000.

The inflexibility of Historic England funding between 2021/22 to 2022/23 meant that the Harlesden HSHAZ underspent on its allocation, which is considered a lost opportunity. Additionally, the scheme was one of the few with a three-year programme. This shortened programme meant it was hit harder by the Covid-19 pandemic, and that flexibility between years would have helped manage this situation.

The programme managed to increase local authority funding and attract some private sector investment to offset this shortfall in spending.

Table 3-1: Harlesden HSHAZ Capital Strand – annual spend performance					
	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Total
Forecast expenditure					
Historic England Grant	£165,050	£422,767	£147,800		£735,617
Local authority funding	£310,799	£160,701	£49,500		£521,000
Other matched funding	£0	£0	£0		£0
Total forecast spend	£475,849	£583,468	£197,300		£1,256,617
Outturn expenditure					
Historic England grant	£165,050	£206,986	£164,800		£536,836
Local authority funding	£310,799	£158,701	£266,975		£736,475
Other matched funding	£0	£0	£22,000		£22,000
Outturn capital spend	£475,849	£365,687	£453,775		£1,295,311

In terms of Historic England spend, the majority of projects came either in on or below budget in comparison to the original forecast. Five of the originally detailed projects were not delivered by the Harlesden HSHAZ, three of which had been removed from the scheme by Y2Q2 (completion of the first monitoring document) – *Public Realm Improvements*, *Apprenticeship Skills Training*

and LB Brent Officer Time. Restoration of the Brent Cultural Centre and production of a Shop Front Design Guide were removed between the second and third year of the programme delivery with allocated funds (£30,000 and £2,000 respectively) redistributed.

The inflexibility of the Historic England funding, combined with the time requirement to gain buy-in from shop owners, led to an underspend on the historic shopfront restoration scheme. During the programme's second year, the London Borough of Brent updated their financial system (September 2021), meaning Purchase Orders were not raised in time to be paid in the quarter/invoices were left outstanding. This accounts for the underspend on project 12 and project 9 with spend caught up over the rest of the year on other projects.

Table 3-2: Harlesden HSHAZ Capital Strand – Spend performance by project				
	Outturn expenditure	Forecast as of Y2Q2	% of forecast target (RAG)	% of new target
Project 1 Historic Shopfront Restoration Scheme	£138,250	£228,000	60	100
Project 2 Brent Cultural Centre Restoration	£0	£30,000	-	100
Project 3 60-62 High Street Restoration Work	£211,141	£211,142	100	100
Project 4 Community Engagement/Consultation	£5,000	£5,000	100	100
Project 5 Public Realm Improvements	£0	£0	-	-
Project 6 Apprenticeship Skills Training	£0	£0	-	-
Project 7 Shop Front Design Guide	£0	£2,000	0	
Project 8 Project Officer – HAZ Lead	£104,972	£88,875	118	
Project 9 Architect Fees and Accredited Conservation Professional	£51,133	£61,600	83	100
Project 10 Legal/Planning Fees	£1,000	£1,000	100	100
Project 11 LB Brent Officer Time	£0	£0	-	-
Project 12 Restoration of Jubilee Clock	£25,340	£108,000	23	100
HE Grant (sub-total)	£536,836	£735,617	73	102
<i>LA Funding</i>	£736,375	£521,000	141	114
<i>Other match funding</i>	£22,000	£0		81
Total	£1,295,211	£1,256,617	103	108

Note: Assessment status is green for <=100%, 100%<amber>=110% and red for >110%

The key output for the Harlesden HSHAZ was the restoration of 60-62 High Street, enabling REUK to bring this significant heritage asset back into use as their headquarters. The final scheme plan does not indicate this asset has been brought back into use or signal the amount of floorspace however, our assessment considers that this can at least partly be attributed to the HSHAZ scheme despite being delivered after the HSHAZ timescales due to considerable project delays. The scheme was supported by other external funding (including the Architectural Heritage Fund)

and the Council's Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver a major asset for the community. Engagement with REUK has highlighted that up to 50 jobs could arise from the headquarters and two leased spaces in the facility, which has operated for nearly a year since its delivery. Additionally, REUK have established a business plan which indicates that around 70 visitors will attend community/cultural events per week and 10 youth ambassadors will meet monthly. Staff will also give 1 to 1 support to young people at the building, which has been well received. **Therefore, this scheme has achieved a key objective of delivering increased community space for local people.**

The programme upgraded four locally listed buildings (No 97 to 103 High Street Harlesden) which are located within the Harlesden Conservation Area. The buildings form part of the stretch of terraces which comprise nine listed or locally listed buildings. The buildings are book-ended by two pubs of significant architectural merit, the Green Man Public House (Grade II Listed) and the Royal Oak Pub (Locally Listed). The intended works programme originally targeted seven properties including 105 to 109 High Street Harlesden. By the end, the project team had agreed improvement works with six of the shop owners. However, the first four shops used the entire budget allocation for the shopfront restoration scheme as they needed major high-level repairs to prevent falling masonry and failure of rainwater goods which. Regional budgets were not allowed to be used on principle. Therefore, the decision was made to ensure full works were delivered at four buildings, to ensure some outputs were achieved.

The restoration of the Jubilee Clock Tower was completed. However, this was after the HSHAZ outputs period and therefore, has not been noted as an output in the final scheme plan. The delays in the project were caused by engineering practicalities, as reinstating a fountain was considered but ultimately deemed not feasible. Despite this, the project team committed to the restoration after the HSHAZ outputs period, which has been well received by residents.

Lastly, 152 sqm of public realm was improved through the HSHAZ, which was not forecasted in the first available scheme plans.

Table 3-3: Harlesden HSHAZ Capital Strand – Output performance				
	Achieved outputs	Forecast as of Y2Q2	% of forecast target (RAG)	% of new target
Number of historic building or heritage asset repaired/conserved	0 (see note)	3	0	0
Number of historic shopfronts restored or reinstated	4	7	57	67
Public realm area improved (sqm)	152	0		100
Supplementary planning or design guidance	3	1	300	43
Number of consultation events/activities (including online)	1	0		50
Number of engagement events/activities (including online)	5	0		33
Number of public events/activities (e.g. open day)	3	0		50
Number of apprenticeship schemes	0	2	0	0

Note: Assessment status is green for <=100%, amber for 65-100%, and red for <65%

Note: The final scheme plan did not include 60-62 High Street as a completed historic asset as it was completed after the HSHAZ timescales. The building has now been repaired and brought back into productive use with employment opportunities and community engagement therefore, this has been considered in the value for money assessment as it is largely attributable to the HSHAZ funding.

3.3 Cultural strand

As stated above, the evaluation of the cultural strand performance is made difficult by a lack of information in terms of original targets and expected spend. The only scheme plan made available was in the final year, with virtually all costs and outputs in line with expectations but no method to verify this over time.

The overall spend for the cultural strand was in line with its target of £93,811.

Table 3-4: Harlesden HSHAZ Cultural Strand – Spend performance			
	Outturn expenditure	Forecast as of Y3Q3	% of forecast target (RAG)
Cultural strand			
Project 1 Young Brent Foundation Salary Costs	£9,000	£9,000	100
Project 2 Creative Producer	£32,000	£32,000	100
Project 3 Creative Commission Fees	£30,810	£30,810	100
Project 4 Youth Skills Training Programme	£10,000	£10,000	100
Project 5 Communications	£1,000	£1,000	100
Project 6 Digital Content Production and Management	£3,500	£3,500	100
Project 7 Photography, Audio, Video Documentation	£1,500	£1,500	100
Project 8 Evaluation and Monitoring	£6,000	£6,000	100
HE Grant	£93,811	£93,811	100
LA Funding	£0	£0	-
Other match funding	£0	£0	-
Total	£93,811	£93,811	100

Note: Assessment status is green for <=100%, 100%<amber>=110% and red for >110%

Overall, the majority of output targets for the cultural strand were met or exceeded. In particular, the total number of professional training activities and the total number of engagement activities, the majority of which were delivered through project 3.

Volunteer training sessions were delivered in line with project 4's youth skills training programme, where a total of 36 sessions were delivered, slightly less than the 37 that were forecasted.

Table 3-5: Harlesden HSHAZ Cultural Strand – Output performance			
	Achieved outputs	Forecast as of Y3Q3	% of forecast target (RAG)
Cultural Strand			
Number of consultation events/activities	9	9	100
Number of engagement events/activities	11	4	275
Number of other professional training activities	6	2	300
Number of volunteer training sessions	36	37	97

Note: Assessment status is green for <=100%, amber for 65-100%, and red for <65%

4 Value for money

A value for money assessment has been undertaken in line with HM Treasury Green Book, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Appraisal Guide, and relevant departmental guidance such as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Capital and Heritage Framework. As set out within the MHCLG Appraisal Guide, projects should be appraised based on a **Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)**².

Monetised costs and benefits from over the HSHAZ programme have been converted to 2024/25 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators. As all benefits and costs have been inserted in Year 0 with appropriate 2024/25 values applied, there is no discounting required in the analysis. Zero optimism bias has been applied as the costs are known and have been expended. Additionally, no optimism bias has been applied to the benefits as the analysis is based on actual outputs. However, the uncertainty in any values is explained.

The following benefits have been monetised, with 71.5% additionality applied based on guidance for regeneration through capital projects and image/culture:

- **Amenity (capital strand):** Consistent with the MHCLG Appraisal Guide, new open spaces in an urban environment have an economic benefit of £128,658 per hectare per annum (2024/25 prices). Based on project information, it has been assumed that the public realm delivered as part of the programme relates to pavement enhancements. In line with recent appraisals, 50% of per hectare value (£64,329) has been applied to the public realm improvements.
- **Labour supply (capital and cultural strand):** The employment generated by the floorspace brought back into use at the old HSBC bank within the capital strand has been calculated using industry-standard employment densities and from data provided by the REUK. The jobs supported by the cultural strand has been estimated using the fees spent on creatives to deliver the programme. The number of jobs created have been calculated using employment densities and in line with MHCLG guidance, a local GVA per worker figure is applied to the jobs taken up by new entrants. In line with guidance, it is assumed 10% of jobs will be occupied by new entrants and there will be a 40% welfare impact for these jobs with the benefit experienced across five years.
- **Wellbeing benefits from new employment (capital and cultural strand):** Investment is likely to generate permanent employment opportunities onsite, which are known to have a positive impact on individuals' wellbeing when moving from unemployment into employment. Values from Green Book's Supplementary Wellbeing Guidance have been applied to the new entrants.
- **Cultural use (capital and cultural strand):** As set out in the Culture and Heritage Capital Evidence Bank, which is cited in the Green Book Wellbeing Guidance, these benefits relate to the willingness to pay of local residents to attend cultural events and assets. This value has been applied to the attendees to engagement and cultural activities, as well as forecasted attendees to artworks/installations. Cultural use benefits have also been calculated for the

² The BCR can be interpreted as the estimated level of benefit per £1 of cost. It is used as the core element in the measure of Value for Money (VfM) when interventions involve a net cost to the public sector.

projected community event attendees at the REUK, which have been supported by evidence to date by the main delivery partner.

- **Heritage use and non-use – historic buildings conserved (capital strand):** Use and non-use benefits from the historic buildings or heritage assets repaired/conserved have been estimated using benefit transfer approaches from the DCMS Cultural and Heritage Capital Evidence Bank. ‘The Economic Value of Heritage: A Benefit Transfer Study’ considered use and non-use values from works to improve the maintenance and conservation of historic buildings in various cities, a similar initiative to the historic building conservation works in the HSHAZ programme. We have applied the use value to the estimated footfall in each HSHAZ from the mobile phone data and the non-use value to residents in the local authority (minus the users).
- **Heritage use and non-use – shopfront improvements (capital strand):** The restoration and improvement of historic high street shopfronts is a key component of the capital element of the HSHAZ programme. This aspect of the programme cannot be accurately valued using a benefits transfer approach in which the use and non-use economic benefit findings of an existing similar study, for example from the DCMS Evidence Bank, would be applied. For this reason, AMION has undertaken a bespoke contingent valuation and benefits transfer study to assess the use and non-use economic benefits attributed to the restoration and improvement of historic high street shopfronts delivered across England through the HSHAZ programme. We have applied the use value to the estimated footfall in each HSHAZ from the mobile phone data and the non-use value to residents in the local authority (minus the users).
- **Wellbeing benefits from volunteering (capital and cultural strand):** As set out in the Green Book Supplementary Guidance for Wellbeing, volunteering is associated with enhanced wellbeing, with the value estimated using the subjective wellbeing valuation approach cited in this government guidance. The core from the Wellbeing guidance has been applied to the volunteer hours.
- **Wellbeing benefits from education and social programmes (capital and cultural strand):** The Green Book Supplementary Guidance for Wellbeing shows that life satisfaction improves based on participation in education and social development programmes. The core value from the Wellbeing guidance has been applied to attendees at education events and training sessions. Education and social wellbeing benefits have also been calculated for the projected number of young people supported at the REUK, which have been supported by evidence to date by the main delivery partner.
- **Strategy development (capital strand):** There has been resource allocated to feasibility, research and planning studies (three supplementary planning or design guidance documents as identified in the final scheme plan). Our assessment has assumed that future development studies are likely to at least deliver benefits in line with their costs, given that they have been led by local partners in line with need.
- **Distributional benefits (capital and cultural strand):** The approach used to calculate distributional effects is that set out in the HM Treasury Green Book, based on equivalised disposable household income and welfare weights (the estimate of the marginal utility of income). The Green Book distributional weighting framework is constructed using data from

the DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI) dataset. For Harlesden, there is a distributional weight of 1.2:1.

The monetised benefits from the capital and cultural strand are shown below. The main capital strand benefits arise from the heritage benefits from the series of shopfront improvements along the high street as well as the cultural and education/social wellbeing benefits from the redevelopment of the Old HSBC Bank into a new headquarters for REUK.

The cultural strand benefits arise from attendees to events delivered during the HSHAZ programme and wellbeing benefits from education sessions for volunteers.

Table 4-1: Harlesden HSHAZ – Evaluation Summary Table (£000s)			
	Capital strand	Cultural strand	Total Harlesden HSHAZ
Amenity	£12	-	£12
Labour supply	£123	£10	£133
Wellbeing from employment	£1	£1	£2
Heritage Use	£1,191	-	£1,191
Heritage Non-Use	£194	-	£194
Cultural use	£214	£22	£236
Wellbeing from education	£397	£20	£417
Wellbeing from volunteering	£1	£5	£6
Strategy development	£95	-	£95
Distributional	£538	£13	£551
Total benefits	£2,767	£69	£2,836

The below table demonstrates the results on the cost-benefit analysis. Harlesden HSHAZ is assessed to have an **overall BCR of 1.74:1**, considered ‘**medium**’ value for money ($1.5:1 < \text{BCR} < 2.0:1$). The capital strand has a BCR of 1.82:1 and the cultural strand has a BCR of 0.65:1.

Table 4-2: Harlesden HSHAZ – Evaluation Summary Table			
	Capital strand	Cultural strand	Total Harlesden HSHAZ
A. Present Value Benefits (£m)	£2.77	£0.07	£2.84
B. Present Value Costs (£m)	£1.52	£0.10	£1.63
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B)	£1.24	-£0.03	£1.20
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.82:1	0.65:1	1.74:1
E. VfM category	Medium	Poor	Medium

We have also considered the following non-monetisable benefits using a seven-point scale from ‘large adverse to large significant’ within the MHCLG Appraisal Guide. These non-monetised benefits include:

- **Legacy impacts** – moderate beneficial (important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM)

- **Image and community perceptions** – moderate beneficial (important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM)
- **Social inclusion** – moderate beneficial (important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM)
- **Cultural sector development** – slight beneficial (Small benefit unlikely to have material impact on VFM)

In conclusion, the overall Harlesden HSHAZ project is most likely to represent '**medium**' **value for money** based on the monetised BCR and the non-monetised benefit assessment. The capital strand delivered a noticeable change to the area through the shopfront improvements to locally listed buildings on the high street and redevelopment of the Old HSBC Bank.

5 Insights lessons learned, and legacy impacts

As set out in the Purpose of the Case Study section, this document is not an evaluation of the Harlesden HSHAZ scheme. Its main purpose is to review achieved outputs, assess likely value for money, and identify successes and challenges arising from a facilitated workshop.

5.1 Key successes

The focal point of the programme was the **transformation of a disused former bank to support young people, provide workspaces and community meeting places**. HSHAZ funded internal works have enabled the old HSBC bank to be brought back into use as a space for young people supported by the REUK. The bank at 60-62 High Street was purchased by Refugee Education UK to be converted for use as a headquarters (a public and private funding partnership).

Shopfront improvements were undertaken on four key buildings along the high street, enhancing the visual appearance of the street in line with objectives. Additionally, the public realm scheme was delivered in line with the required timelines. Although the Clock Tower finished after the HSHAZ deadline, and as such was not considered an output, the Historic England funding provided the impetus for this restoration.

The cultural strand successfully engaged with the local community. The **Brazilian Brent Communities Festival saw the interaction of all communities living and working in the Borough of Brent**. The event created a welcoming atmosphere. The delivered activities engaged residents of all ages through storytelling, games workshops, capoeira workshops, drumming workshops, dance workshop capoeira performance, percussion performance, traditional food stalls, information stalls and a children's art exhibition.

5.2 Challenges

A lack of flexibility in terms of funding made delivery very challenging, both in terms of specific schemes and over multiple years. The scheme was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was worsened in the case of Harlesden as it was only a three-year programme. The programme was not able to move money from year two to year three, which limited output delivery in year three due to a lack of available funding.

The Covid-19 pandemic also made it very difficult to undertake the level of engagement required for a community focussed programme, particularly in relation to the shopfront improvement scheme which was only completed on four of the seven shopfronts. There were several other challenges, including a slowing down of the construction sector combined with the Ukraine-Russia war and the subsequent cost increases for materials.

The team felt that there was a **significant amount of management required across multiple aspects of HSHAZ**, including designing capital works, managing stakeholders, undertaking negotiations, providing monitoring and reporting updates, and being on the ground presence. In addition, the invoicing process and monitoring requirements to the central Historic England team was considered inefficient and tiresome. These requirements were made more difficult due to issues such as maternity leave and sick pay. Overall, the range of skills required to deliver the scheme was more than could be expected from one person, but the HSHAZ funding only

supported one officer. In the future, it would be helpful to have resource to support a project manager who delivers the practical activities required for the capital programme and an engagement officer or town centre manager.

5.3 Legacy impacts

REUK have created a refugee education centre people for young people and a community hub for the Harlesden community. This has included meeting and coworking spaces including homework clubs and activities. The space is also available for other charities and social groups to meet and collaborate. A business case created by REUK proves the possible reach of the newly refurbished bank. **Initial usage and bookings of the centre indicated that up to 50 jobs will be supported through REUK staff headquarters, as well as leased space to two London-based charities.** Additionally, the community spaces hold regular events for Harlesden community groups and charities, with an estimated 250 monthly attendees. The renamed Lighthouse is now a beautiful light-filled space, providing a safe and welcoming place for young people, housing the charity, and hosting their partners.

The shopfront improvement scheme demonstrated the benefits of heritage-led regeneration to local businesses. The **quality of the improvements has led to two surrounding shop owners delivering their own works** after the HSHAZ programme to ensure they were not left behind. It is hoped the legacy impact will be enhanced in the future as other local businesses witness the benefits started by the HSHAZ scheme and fund their own improvements.

The team has developed and maintained good working relationships throughout the programme with Historic England project officers, using monthly meetings to provide updates. The success of the Lighthouse scheme is testament to the collaboration between the project team, Historic England, and other funders including Architectural Heritage Fund. The long-term implication of the HSHAZ scheme is that it has demonstrated the ability to attract other investment to showcase the importance of maintaining the shopfronts, keeping the character of the area, and delivering visible community space within the Conservation area.

5.4 Lessons learned

The project was slow to utilise the HSHAZ marketing banners and products. Due to the shortened timeframe, and the complications provided by Covid-19, the team was focussed on delivery. Therefore, they did not use the marketing materials to promote the scheme as much as possible, which could have helped with buy-in. It is felt that **Historic England needed to provide a dedicated budget to build in marketing/promotions at the start of the scheme.** In addition, a clear guidance document at the outset of the scheme would also help simplify delivery within future projects. This document should be written by individuals who have led previous projects and programmes, accompanied by liaison meetings.

The project demonstrated the **amount of time required to gain buy-in from stakeholders** relating to capital works. It was a huge achievement to get the shop owners to agree to the works however, this took longer than envisaged. The programme was perhaps too ambitious with its outputs in the first couple years, and this could not be made up in later years due to inflexible funding protocols. Because of the inflexibility in spend between years, the decision was made to

focus on four shopfronts to ensure that some crucial outputs were delivered to the streetscape. However, greater flexibility in terms of timing, particularly recognising the enormous disruption due to Covid-19, would have likely increased the level of outputs delivered.

A key lesson learned was the need for **a wider variety of conservation and heritage architects on the existing frameworks**. Three tenders were ranked based on quality and price, leading to DIA being appointed. There were challenges during delivery, particularly due to the cost increases mentioned above. The procurement for the contractor considered five possibilities, with only one in a sufficient position to deliver the main component of the works. It is felt that a wider choice of heritage-focussed companies would help future projects.

The fundamental lesson learned from the cultural strand is that establishing and maintaining a **closer working arrangement between the Consortia Lead and the accountable body/lead partner is crucial for successful design and delivery** of a HAZ Cultural programme. An effective working association across the full partnership will ensure that the full potential of the project, benefitting from all stakeholders, can be implemented and delivered. Once Brent Council extended their input into the programme, this resulted in a programme that benefitted from more clarity, a closer reference to the HAZ Cultural themes, and a more coherent process of informing actions for proposed production.