# Vision Unveiled: New Heritage Centre and Coliseum Theatre

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Architects' impressions of this vision can now be unveiled after the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) today confirmed a major grant to support part of the initial project development. The HLF grant of an initial £615,000 is for development funding for the heritage aspects only of this project. That will support a second-stage bid for a total grant of £3.9m.

The overall regeneration scheme seeks to complement the existing Gallery Oldham, Library and Lifelong Learning Centre and bring it together with new heritage, arts and leisure facilities in one integrated facility.

The plans supported by the HLF would see a new Oldham Heritage Centre housed in the former Oldham Library and Art Gallery on Union Street.

The refurbishment of this Grade II-listed building would enable it to become the new base for the Local Studies and Archives Centre and museum collections.

A separate application to Arts Council England Fund is seeking a grant towards a new-build Oldham Coliseum Theatre – including a state-of-the-art auditorium. This would be sited on the current car park on Southgate Street with its front-of-house operations, education and administrative functions based in the heritage centre.

Located at a prominent town centre gateway south of Union Street – and adjacent to the forthcoming Metrolink line – the development would enable the Coliseum Theatre, Gallery Oldham, Library and a new Oldham Heritage Centre to be seamlessly linked together to share audiences.

Jim McMahon, Oldham Council Leader, said: "We're delighted the HLF has confirmed this funding for a scheme that respects our heritage but also looks to the future.

"As our plans to regenerate the town centre gather pace we are conscious that reflecting our proud past must be at the heart of them. Street art and features will be part of that but an Oldham Heritage Centre – where we tell and celebrate the history of our borough – will be absolutely central.

"The wider regeneration scheme we're planning here is inspiring because it will bring all our cultural jewels together in one integrated facility. That will significantly enhance our leisure, arts and heritage offer and provide yet another significant catalyst for the wider regeneration of our town centre.

"This is a perfect location on the Metrolink line for a development of its kind and offers huge potential benefits for local residents, businesses and visitors alike. When you put this alongside plans for the Old Town Hall to become a cinema with restaurants and cafes you can see Oldham Council is deadly serious about providing facilities that attract a new kind of visitor here – and inspire a greater sense of pride in our town centre.

"After more than a year of hard work behind the scenes it is exciting to finally be able to go public with these plans."

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: "Oldham has a fascinating industrial past and these innovative plans for a heritage resource centre will help bring that story to a whole new audience.

“The Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to be giving its initial support for the Council’s project which has the potential to transform the town’s old library site into a centre for learning, leisure and social enterprise.”

The new Oldham Coliseum Theatre elements of this plan are the subject of a separate capital funding application to the Arts Council England Fund. A decision is expected in January 2013.

Oldham Council has also pledged capital funding support in principle and other sources – such as sponsorship and fundraising – would complete the investment package.

**Further information**

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