

Welwyn Garden City
Business Improvement District (BID)
Proposal and Business Plan
2017 - 2022

DRAFT V1.0

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Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District (BID) Proposal and Business Plan 2017 – 2022

1. Foreword

Message from the Chair of the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership

The 'Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership' (TCP) was established in 2012 by a group of town centre businesses and stakeholders with a shared desire to work together to improve the area and attract more people to Welwyn Garden City town centre. This has been done through working together with businesses and organisations as partners, with a very limited budget. However, the TCP realised that the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in Welwyn Garden City would be even more effectively addressed through the development of the Business Improvement district or BID.

Having been designed as a Garden City on the founding principles of Ebenezer Howard to combine the benefits of the city and the countryside, the key challenge for Welwyn Garden City is how to make itself relevant to the residents and visitors of today.

Welwyn Garden City town centre relies heavily upon its retail offer and in particular, John Lewis but is often passed by in preference to larger centres. Due to its design legacy it also has a limited evening economy, a very limited office based business sector in the town centre and an understated and segregated leisure and cultural offer.

With all towns and cities across the country facing the challenges of changing lifestyles, increased mobility, increased competition from other retail destinations, greater customer choice and internet shopping, Welwyn Garden City is particularly vulnerable. In fact it will only be those towns which are able to offer a diverse retail, leisure and cultural offer as well as a pleasant experience and good quality customer service, which are going to thrive in the future.

This BID Business Plan sets out projects and initiatives which aim to address these challenges and build upon the unique environment the town centre has to offer. It aims to develop a clear identity for the town centre and develop the offer and the experience for visitors, residents and those who work in the town.

We feel that the investment from businesses in the BID is modest in relation to what collectively can be achieved. For the smallest business in the business improvement district, the daily cost is equivalent to a postage stamp and even for the very largest business the daily cost is less than the price of a single cinema ticket.

We believe this will make a positive difference to your bottom line as a business in Welwyn Garden City. This plan has been created by business people like you, with a wide range of business experience, representing your interests on the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership's, BID Development Board, which has guided the development of this BID Proposal and Business Plan.

Our cumulative investment will provide a business-driven focus to ensure that Welwyn Garden City starts to take advantage of its key assets, its businesses and acclaimed college, raise its

profile and in turn provide essential support to its businesses. This investment will also set standards in the town centre which reflect and are in line with our own aspirations as businesses with a budget, over the five year BID lifetime of over £1.4 million.

This is a realistic plan with realistic targets at a realistic cost. It is a chance for the town centre businesses to take the lead on the way in which Welwyn Garden City presents itself and is perceived, so don't let this unique opportunity slip by. We urge you to look carefully at the proposal and to give it your full support at the formal BID vote in October.

Chris Hooper
Chair of the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership
Head of Branch John Lewis Partnership

Current BID Development Board Members

The Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership's Board has been acting as the BID Development Board and Steering Group guiding the development of this BID and is the body which has proposed the BID for the purposes of the BID Statutory Provisions.

A totally separate and independent company will be set up, limited by guarantee and be responsible for the implementation of the BID plan. The membership of the board of the company will be open to all businesses in the BID area.

The members of the BID Development Board are as follows:

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Jonathan Carr | Solicitor | Crane and Staples |
| Chris Hooper (Chair) | Head of Branch | John Lewis Partnership |
| Colin Haigh | Head of Planning | Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council |
| Daniel Langhorne | Area Manager | The Two Willows |
| Emma Ramsdale | Owner | Kinetic Cycles |
| Jeff Cornish | Owner | KallKwik |
| Jeff Scott | Inspector | Hertfordshire Constabulary |
| John Beech | | Landlord representative |
| John Hughes | | Resident representative |
| Mike Paraliki | Owner | Stonehills Hair |
| Nick Brown | Chairman | Welwyn Hatfield Chamber of Commerce |
| Nicky Kendrick | | User representative |
| OJ Daya | Manager | Waitrose |
| Paul Haynes | Manager | Howard Centre |
| Sean Scully | Director of Student Experience | Oaklands College |
| Sian Chambers | Head of Housing and Communities | Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council |
| Terry Mitchinson | Editor | Welwyn HatfieldTimes |
| Greg Spicer | Store Manager | Sainsbury's |
| Bernard Sarson | Councillor - Portfolio holder for Business, Partnerships and Public Health | Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council |

The BID Development Board has been supported by the Town Centre BID Development Team: Mariana Bitonte / Nicola Wolff - Town Centre BID Development Manager (job share) and Clare Day – BID Development Officer

2. Executive Summary

BID background

Business Improvement Districts are created by businesses and organisations which come together to collaborate on initiatives that improve the location where they trade or do business. Business Improvement Districts are driven by participating businesses - who work together to draw up a business plan which is voted on and, if agreed, is then funded through a levy based on business rateable values, as well as trying to lever in additional funding where possible for investment into the delivery of projects for the benefit of businesses.

This levy is collected by the council and paid directly to the Business Improvement District company. This is a not for profit company which will be set up by the businesses and will be accountable to the businesses in Welwyn Garden City town to manage the business improvement district business plan.

The benefits of the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District

After a deep recession and now the economic turbulence of post 'Brexit', the need for businesses to work together for a better future has never been greater.

The benefits of a BID do not just come from the ability to deliver projects and services from a guaranteed budget but come from the collective influence of the businesses in the BID area. Influence to change perceptions about a place, of potential visitors to the town that it has something different, of new businesses that they will get a return on their investment if they come to the town and of residents that they have pride in the place once again.

The influence of the collective voice of businesses working together also translates into productive relationships and outcomes, when working with other organisations such as the local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the police, to meet the businesses' needs.

Welwyn Garden City is a special place, the second Garden City, but competes today with the neighbouring towns of St Albans, Hitchin and even Stevenage. Welwyn Garden City needs to redefine itself and build on its strengths of being a 'Garden City'.

As a consequence of the research and consultation with businesses, this plan reflects the clearly stated view that Welwyn Garden City has a lot to offer as a town and the potential to re-invent itself to meet the needs of its residents, visitors and its businesses as they are today.

Businesses have recognised that this is an important opportunity to develop Welwyn Garden City's identity and raise its profile for the benefit of all businesses.

This new business plan has been developed to ensure that it:

- is balanced to cover all business sectors
- clearly defines the role of the BID
- seeks to create and take advantage of new opportunities
- has focussed activity but remains relevant for next five years
- has deliverable and achievable objectives

It clearly lays out a business-led programme of investment to tackle issues identified by businesses with the aim of creating a positive and more profitable trading environment to

potentially benefit all business sectors. To achieve this, the BID levy will be 1.75% of rateable value for businesses outside the Shopping Mall and 1.5% for those businesses inside the Shopping Mall and all charges rising in line with inflation each year for five years.

The Area

The Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District covers the town centre from the Campus West and the College in the north, to the edge of the railway track in the east. It then extends down alongside the railway track to Church Rd and west to Parkway (see map in Section 5).

The Vision

Through this business-led programme of investment the vision is:

“To create a town centre which is innovative and modern, which builds on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a great place to visit, work and live.’

Strategic Objectives and Projects

The programme of investment will be delivered through the four strategic objectives and their related projects.

1. Animated and attractive

To create a place which has a strong sense of identity for residents, visitors and people working in the town centre to enjoy.

2. Promoted and celebrated

To promote and celebrate the great ‘Garden City’ and build the reputation of Welwyn Garden City as a great place to work, shop, relax and be entertained.

3. Welcoming and accessible

To provide a welcoming and easily accessible place for visitors, workers and residents to explore.

4. A great business and leisure offer

To encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of the Welwyn Garden City town centre promoting it as a great place to do business

Costs and funding

The budgeted income over the five year period of the BID is approximately £1.4 million. The yearly income will be made up of some £280,000 from the levy revenues and a sum averaging around £28,000 from voluntary, private and public sector contributions.

Subject to a successful vote in October 2016, the new BID will start on 1st April 2017.

3. What is a Business Improvement District?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a precisely defined geographical area within which the businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment.

BIDs were enabled by parliament through the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. This legislation was based on the experience of some twenty years of successful BID activity in America and Canada. Since 2004, over 220 BIDs have been proposed and approved by business communities in England and Wales. These include Watford, Luton, Bedford, Hitchin, Derby, Nottingham, Leamington Spa, Coventry, Bristol, Rugby, Birmingham and Lincoln and many London boroughs.

There are a more than 90 BID areas which have been operating for more than five years and have gone through a renewal ballot and a number have now entered their third term having gone through a third ballot. In most cases BIDs going on to a second term have received an even greater endorsement in the vote than they did the first time. BIDs have brought significant improvements to the trading environment of the businesses based in these locations. Further details are available on the Association of Town and City Management web site: www.atcm.org.

The lifetime of the BID is prescribed by the Regulations and is set at no more than 5 years. It is possible for a BID to be extended by proposing a new Business Plan at the end of the BID lifetime for a fresh formal vote by the businesses.

The purposes of a BID are to provide new or expanded works and services or environmental enhancements within the prescribed BID area, funded via a BID Levy charge. All services/improvements will be additional to those already provided by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. This charge is payable by non-domestic rate payers and is collected by the council in much the same way as business rates. The manner in which the BID Levy charge is calculated is defined in Section 12.

All works and services will be contracted by the Welwyn Garden City BID Company, the BID body for the BID area. The objectives and aspirations of the Welwyn Garden City BID are set out in this BID Proposal and Business Plan.

This BID Proposal and Business Plan has been prepared in line with best practice and guidelines of the 'Industry Criteria and Guidance Notes' prepared for the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the Inter- Bank Rating Forum (IBRF).

A set of definitions for terms used throughout this document is contained in Appendix 1.

The vote

To succeed the ballot has to pass two tests: A simple majority vote of those who vote must register a 'YES' and the aggregate rateable value of those who vote 'YES' must be greater than that of those that vote 'NO'. If these two criteria are met, the Business Plan is activated and all businesses in the area concerned will be required to pay the levy.

The persons entitled to vote, and be liable for the levy, are the ratepayers of non-domestic premises in the Business Improvement District. Properties with a rateable value of less than £5,000 will be excluded from the vote and levy.

The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Electoral Services returning officer will be the Ballot Holder for the Business Improvement District vote. Details of voting procedures and how you can confirm persons entitled to vote can be found by contacting Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Electoral Services on Tel 01707 357300 or by e-mail elections@welhat.gov.uk

Alteration of arrangements

The Business Improvement District, its boundaries, business plan and the levy percentage cannot be altered without an alteration ballot, although its board can adjust projects and spend as they feel appropriate, provided the basic tenets and budgets are not compromised.

The levy

A levy of 1.75% of rateable value (RV) is proposed for businesses with an RV of £5,000 or more and a levy of 1.5% of rateable value (RV) is proposed for businesses inside the Shopping Mall with an RV of £5,000 or more which fall within the levy criteria laid down in Section 12.

This levy arrangement will generate around £1.4 million of ring fenced funding over the five year life of the BID and will also be used to lever in additional funds where possible adding a further £140,000 over the life of the BID. This will be used to fund the projects identified in this Business Plan

Duration

Our proposal is for the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District plan to operate for five years and to commence, on the 1st April 2017. After five years, in 2022, it can be extended or renewed – but only after being subject to a renewal ballot.

Timescales

| Action Point | Action | Day and Date |
|--------------|---|--|
| 1 | Notice by BID Proposer to Billing Authority & Secretary of State of intention to hold ballot (at least 84 days before Ballot Holder requested to hold ballot Action Point 4) | Fri 20 May 2016 |
| 2 | Establish Register of Businesses as specified in BID proposal (must precede step 3) | Mon 25 August 2016 |
| 3 | BID Proposer requests Billing Authority to instruct Ballot Holder to hold a Ballot (BID proposals need to be completed) | Latest Date: Thurs 15 September 2016 |
| 4 | Billing Authority formally requests Ballot Holder to hold ballot | Latest Date: Thurs 15 September 2016 |
| 5 | Ballot Holder issues Letter to Business Ratepayers to give information about the ballot and identify named person to receive ballot paper (latest date is 42 days before Ballot Day) | Latest Date: Thurs 15 September 2016 |
| 6 | Ballot Holder publishes Notice of Ballot (latest date = 42 days before ballot day) also to send copy to Secretary of State, a copy of the published notice of ballot, as per Schedule 2 3(d) of the 2004 Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations | Latest Date: Thurs 15 September 2016 |

| | | |
|----|--|-------------------------|
| 7 | Ballot Holder Issues ballot papers (at least 28 days before Ballot Day) | Thurs 29 September 2016 |
| 8 | Last day to appoint a proxy (tenth day before Ballot Day) | Mon 17 October 2016 |
| 9 | Replacement of lost and spoilt ballot papers (from the fourth working day before the Ballot Day) | Fri 21 October 2016 |
| 10 | Ballot Day (up to 5pm) | Thurs 27 October 2016 |
| 11 | Count and announcement of result | Fri 28 October 2016 |

All businesses in the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District area will benefit from the BID initiatives.

4. The Welwyn Garden City BID - Working together will make a difference

A significant benefit of a BID is creating the opportunity for businesses in the town centre to work more effectively in partnership. The influence and advocacy of the collective view and voice of businesses working together is self evident when facing the common challenges that face all enterprises in today's trading environment.

Having started to recover from a deep recession from 2008 to 2013, the national economy, post 'Brexit' is facing uncertain times and many challenges lie ahead. Besides the challenges of the economy, lifestyles are changing and influencing the way in which we use our time and spend our money. Technology continues to develop and change the way we live, work and use our town and city centres both as individuals and as businesses.

By 2018, over half the population in at least 500 towns across the country, will be frequent e-commerce users. We need to think about ways in which we can work together to create multi-media opportunities for smaller businesses working together and create an experience in Welwyn Garden City town which makes people want to come to the town to shop as well as simply clicking and buying online.

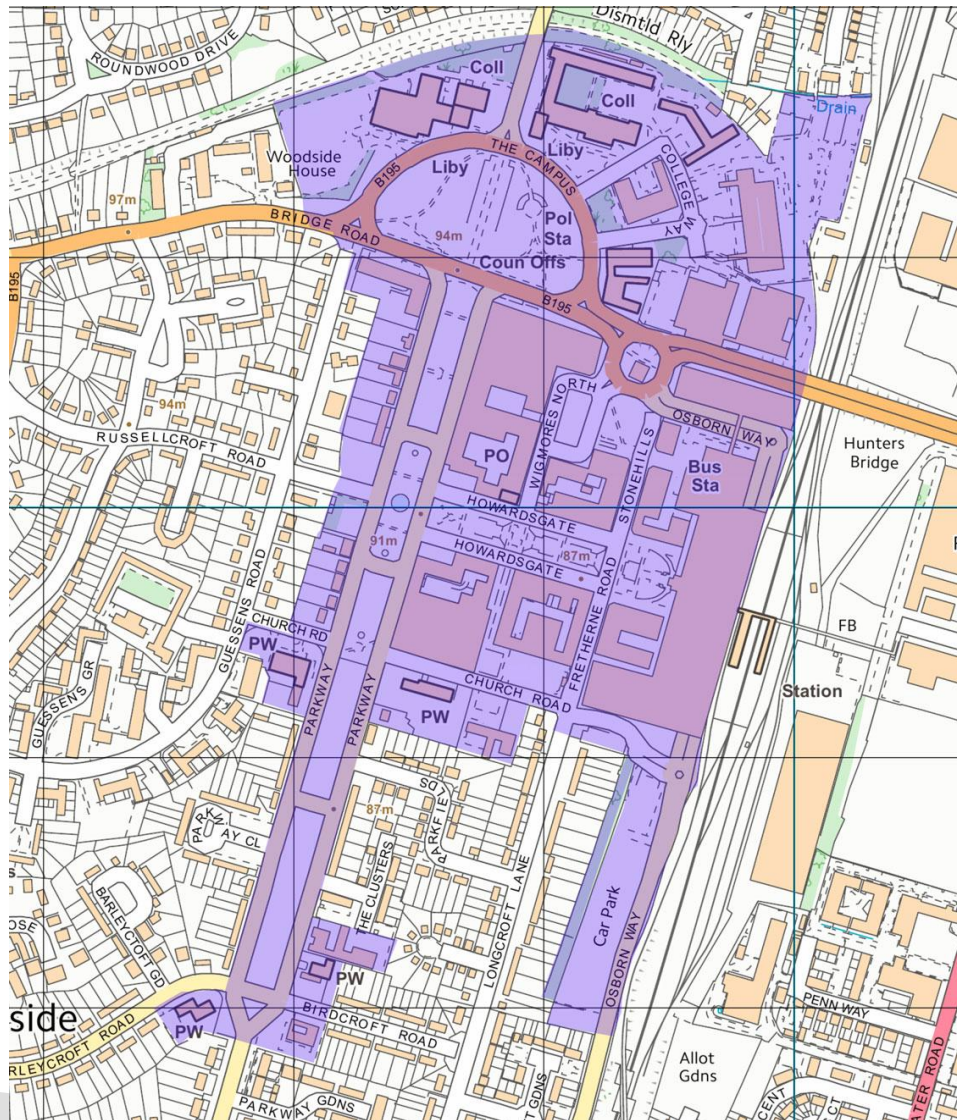
Nationally, e-commerce already accounts for 22% of all retail sales and will continue to increase. In the UK sales via mobile phone are rising dramatically, last year sales via mobile devices represented 40% of all e commerce transactions.

Over the last ten years volume of alcohol purchased per person in the UK from the off-trade increased by 38% while the volume of alcohol purchased on-site fell by nearly half. The future of a town's night life will not rely on an offer of drink-only establishments and provides new opportunities for businesses and organisations to develop their offer and encourage a wide range of people to enjoy the town in the evening and at night.

The UK professional services sector is by far the largest part of the economy, accounting for about three quarters of economic activity. It is also the sector which showed the first signs of recovery after the recession. This sector is completely hidden from view and although limited within the commercial core of the town centre, it is an essential part of the local economy of Welwyn Garden City. This sector provides Welwyn Garden City as a whole, with an opportunity to shape its identity and to promote itself as a centre of quality and internationally acclaimed professional service businesses.

This business plan has taken account of the needs, challenges and opportunities faced by all business sectors in Welwyn Garden City. By working together through a Business Improvement District there is even greater potential to successfully overcome the challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

5. Where will the Welwyn Garden City BID operate?



The shaded area represents the full extent of the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District. A list of roads and streets within the BID area is shown in Appendix 2.

A full list of streets within the BID area is shown in Appendix 2. All non-domestic hereditaments within the BID area will, if the BID is approved, be liable for the BID levy (as defined in section 12). The BID covers those businesses, whose rateable value is £5,000 or greater. Thus banks, building societies, car parks, council facilities, the college, restaurants, clubs and pubs, estate agents, leisure operators, charities, recruitment agents, retail and health and beauty outlets, office based businesses and organisations, and transport and travel agents and all other non-domestic hereditaments are included within the BID and will, subject to the detailed levy criteria in Section 12, contribute to the BID's collective funding and activities flowing from the combined budget.

6. Services provided by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Council's Support for the Welwyn Garden City BID

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council fully supports the Welwyn Garden City BID. In particular, it endorses the fundamental principle of additionality within the BID by agreeing to maintain the provision of existing services from the council to businesses at their current level (subject to budgetary constraints) across the Welwyn Garden City BID area. Thus, in line with BID legislation, BID services within the Welwyn Garden City BID will be additional to (not in substitution for) those provided by the council. If there is a need for any change in service levels provided by the council these will not be disproportionate to other parts of Welwyn and Hatfield Borough outside the BID area.

The council's commitment to the Welwyn Garden City BID and the working relationships between the council and Welwyn Garden City BID Company are set out in complementary documents agreed between the council and Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership currently acting on behalf of the Welwyn Garden City BID Company which has yet to be formed:

- A Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Agreement which defines the working relationship between the council and Welwyn Garden City BID Company and sets out the council's operational support to the BID on a number of specific issues
- A set of Baseline Agreements, each defining the benchmark for a specific service provided by the council and other agencies to the businesses in the area

Council's Vision for the BID

Beyond its clear commitments set out in the Memorandum of Understanding, the council welcomes the opportunity offered by the BID disciplines to develop a strong and more dynamic partnership between the council itself and Welwyn Garden City's businesses. The council intends that this forward looking evolution of its relationship with businesses should take shape along the following lines during the five year BID period:

- Establishing a serious dialogue with Welwyn Garden City businesses on issues that can promote a stronger trading environment for them.
- Exploring more effective means of delivering council services to businesses. This will include more cohesive ways of tailoring and delivering specific services to Welwyn Garden City

Council Services for Business

Businesses will continue to benefit from all the standard council services provided for the benefit of all stakeholders in the town (cleaning, access, safety, maintenance and public amenities). In addition, the council delivers a wide range of services either directly or indirectly specifically for businesses, these include:

Commerical Properties
and council land use
Planning and Building Control
Economic Development
Licensing

Environmental Health Commercial
Waste and recycling Business Rates
Tendering for council business
Parking permits

Details of these services can be found on the council's web site under the Business Tab
<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/business>

Individual Baseline Statements

In full support of the above commitments, Heads of Service within the council will draw up Baseline Statements on the specific services they are responsible for. These documents define the benchmarks for the provision of these services and the fact that any change will not disproportionately impact upon the BID area more than any other area outside the BID within the Borough's administrative boundary. They also cover how the services will be measured. The council attaches particular importance to the incorporation of value for money principles and measures within all the Baseline Statements.

The Baseline Services are defined below:

- Festive Lighting
- Town Centre Compliance (Environmental Health & Licensing)
- Environmental Services
- Parking Services
- Public Area CCTV and Community Safety
- Town Centre Management
- Fountain and Statue Operations/Maintenance
- Street Wardens

The process of creating the baseline agreements proves valuable to both the service providers and the BID company. The development of these partnerships and the additional focus on the services provided in the area, will give tangible benefits over and above those derived from the projects outlined below.

Council's Operational Support for the Welwyn Garden City BID

The council's support for the BID will take practical shape in the following specific ways:

- Conducting, through the council's Democratic Services, the formal BID vote in accordance with current BID legislation and procedures
- Assuming a positive outcome to the BID vote, collecting the BID levy defined in the BID Business Plan from Welwyn Garden City businesses and transferring the levy sums direct to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company. The council will pay the gross levy sums to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company within 30 days of collecting it.
- Nominate a Councillor to sit as a Director on the BID Company Board
- Provide a senior council officer to provide a business-focused dynamic link on all BID matters with senior council staff
- Paying the appropriate BID levy set out in the Business Plan in respect of all its own hereditaments within the Welwyn Garden City town BID area.

Monitoring and Review

The council is committed to the regular monitoring of the operation of the BID Operating Agreement and reviewing its effectiveness in conjunction with Welwyn Garden City BID

Company. This will be carried out as follows:

- The council monitors performance of key services through the council's Business Plan with monitoring reported to the Cabinet. Where there is a specific issue with service delivery within the BID area the respective Head of Service will discuss this with the Welwyn Garden City BID Company.
- An annual review of the overall effectiveness of the Operating Agreement. These reviews will be scheduled to best effect for the council's and Welwyn Garden City BID Company's yearly budgeting cycles.

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7. The Research and Consultation Process

Background

The last year has seen extensive research undertaken across a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the plan which has emerged has an in depth understanding of the views and aspirations of the businesses in the area as well as an appreciation of the perceptions of those who visit and also work in the area.

The research encouraged participation from all businesses across the town centre:

- All businesses in the proposed BID area were mailed survey forms and asked to complete them seeking their opinions on a variety of issues. [Fig 1.]
- All businesses were included in mail shots and publicity including BID newsletters and frequently asked questions and e-bulletins where e-mail addresses were available.
- Drop-in Coffee mornings every month for any business to come along and discuss the BID and contribute their thoughts and ideas to the development
- 72% of all businesses which meet the levy criteria, had a personal visit to discuss the BID
- 51% of businesses in the town participated in detailed one-to-one interviews and completed detailed four page surveys
- A launch and information event at the start of the project.
- A series of three Vision and Objective Setting workshops at the start of the development where all businesses were invited and discussed their challenges, opportunities and vision for the future of the town centre.
- A series of three Budget Setting workshops, where businesses were invited to allocate funds to projects emerging from the research process.
- Businesses were invited to submit their views via letters, e-bulletins and the Town Centre Partnership's BID website.
- Press releases in the local newspaper promoting all the events and workshops and providing feedback and opportunities for businesses to contact the BID development team.
- Active participation and decision making by the business representatives from the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership BID Development Board in all aspects of the development of this plan.

What were the aims of the research?

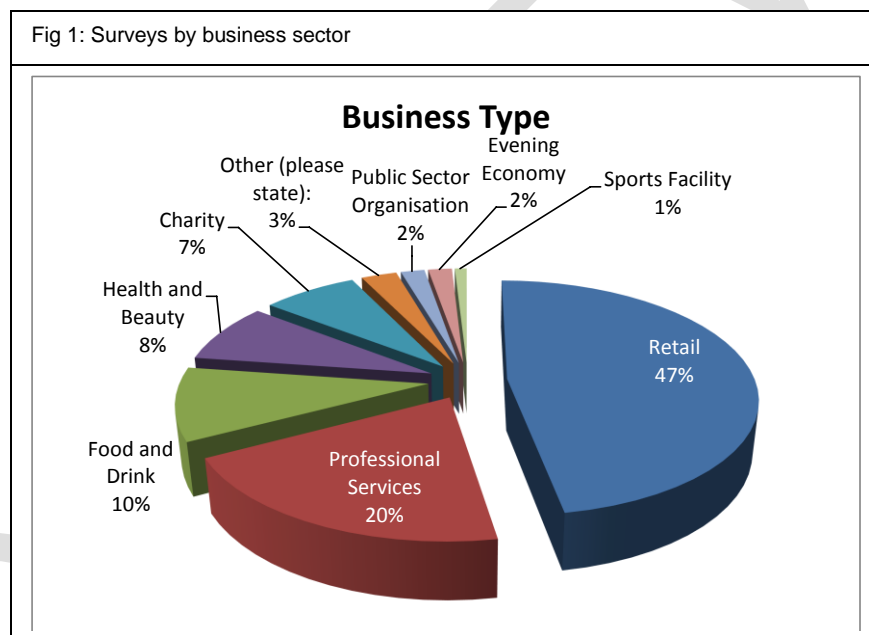
The objective of the research was to:

- Identify the key issues which impact upon all businesses in the area across all business sectors and to develop solutions to address the and which will help businesses achieve their own internal objectives
- Identify and assess the impact and the relative importance of different potential initiatives on businesses

Research results

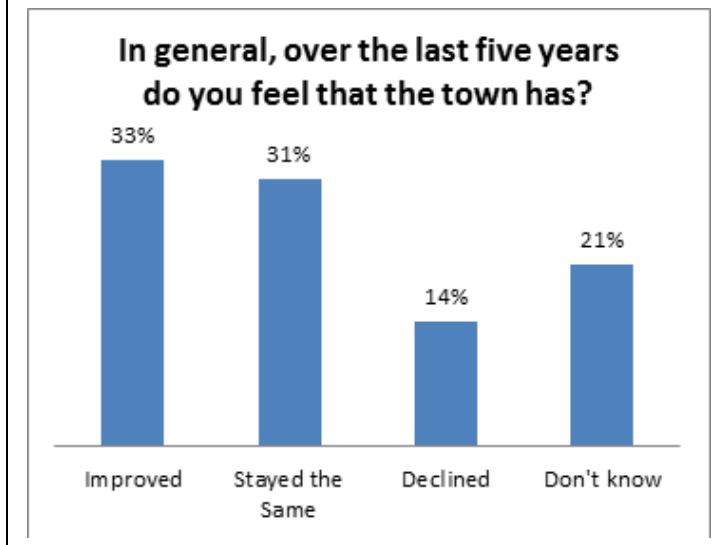
Business confidence in Welwyn Garden City

Surveys and interviews were carried out across a range of businesses from all sectors and all parts of the town centre.



Having faced the period of recession between 2008 and 2013, the overall view from businesses in the town centre was relatively positive in that 33% of businesses think that Welwyn Garden City has become a better place to do business over the last five years. However 31% think that the place has stayed the same and 14% feel that the town centre has become a worse place to do business. The fact that only a third of businesses feel that the town has started to see recovery, reflects the pressures and challenges facing all businesses in the town today.

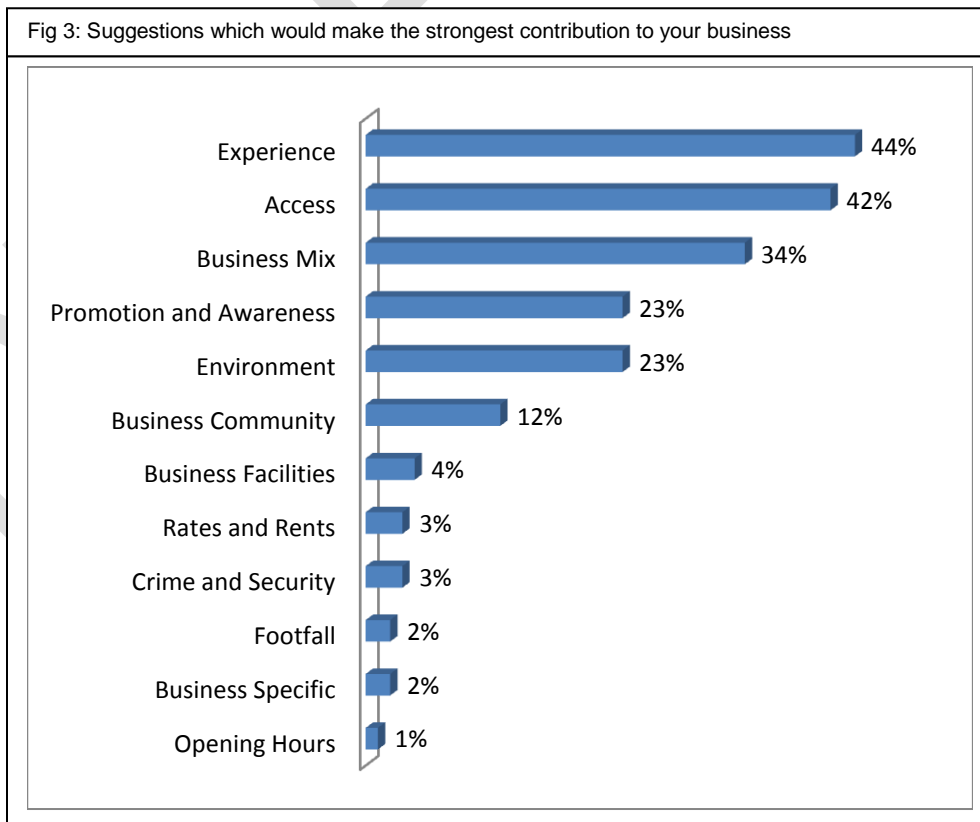
Fig 2: The town as a place to do business



'Great assets but we do not use them'

The overwhelming feeling that came out of the surveys, interviews and workshops was that Welwyn Garden City is a beautiful town with its green spaces but it is too quiet and the green spaces separate some parts of the town centre from others. In fact when businesses were asked the open question as to what would make the biggest contribution to their business, suggestions relating to improving the 'experience' of the town centre came at the top of the list.

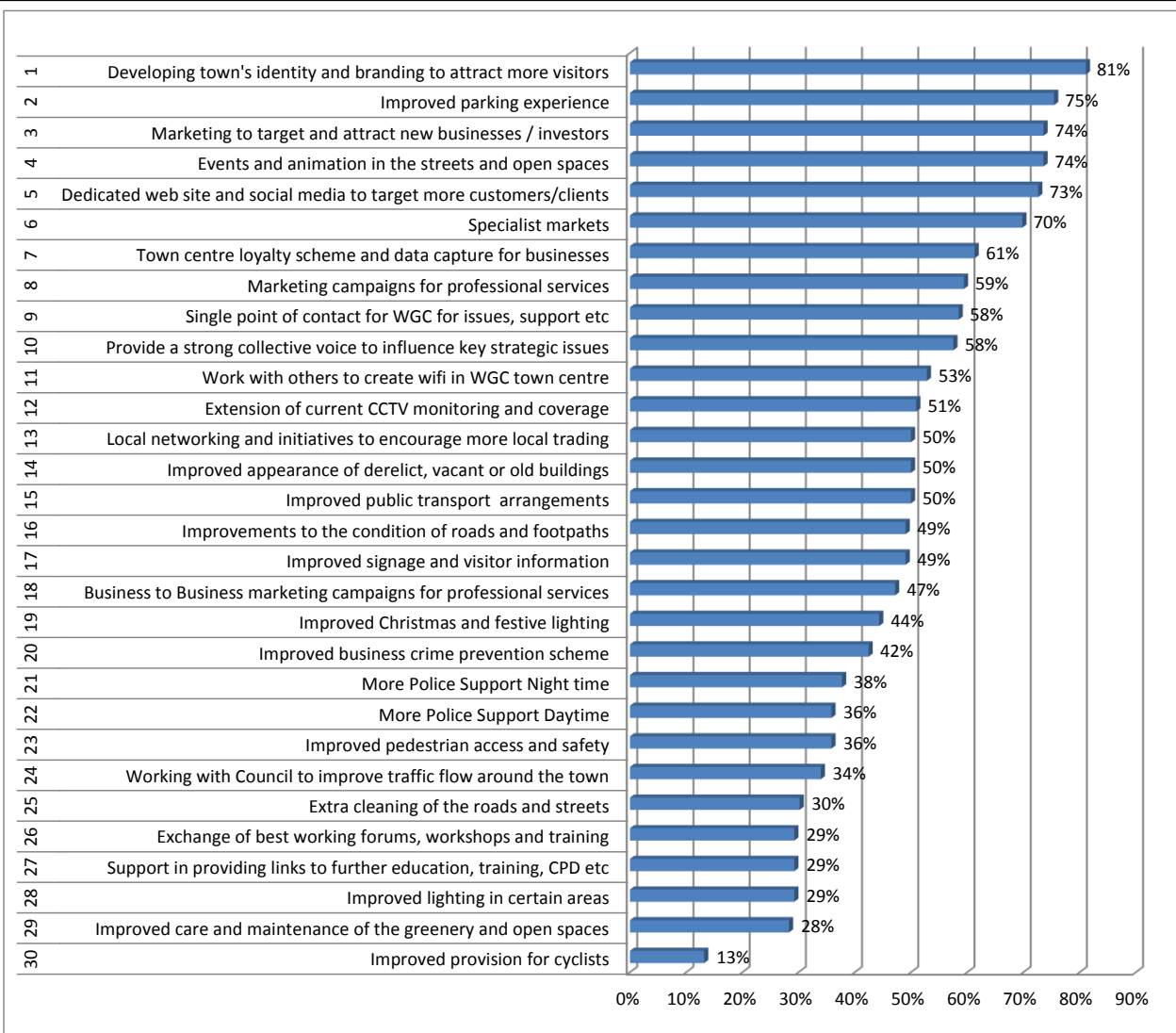
Fig 3: Suggestions which would make the strongest contribution to your business



When ranking various aspects of the town centre, 'Things to do in the evening and night time' was ranked third in terms of it being considered 'poor' or 'very poor' by businesses and 'Things to do in WGC for visitors and local people' was ranked sixth, just ahead of 'Availability of Parking for Customers' in seventh place.

Many suggestions related to making more of the open spaces and having more events and things going on generally in the town centre to make the place more interesting and attractive to visitors, encouraging them to stay longer and return more frequently.

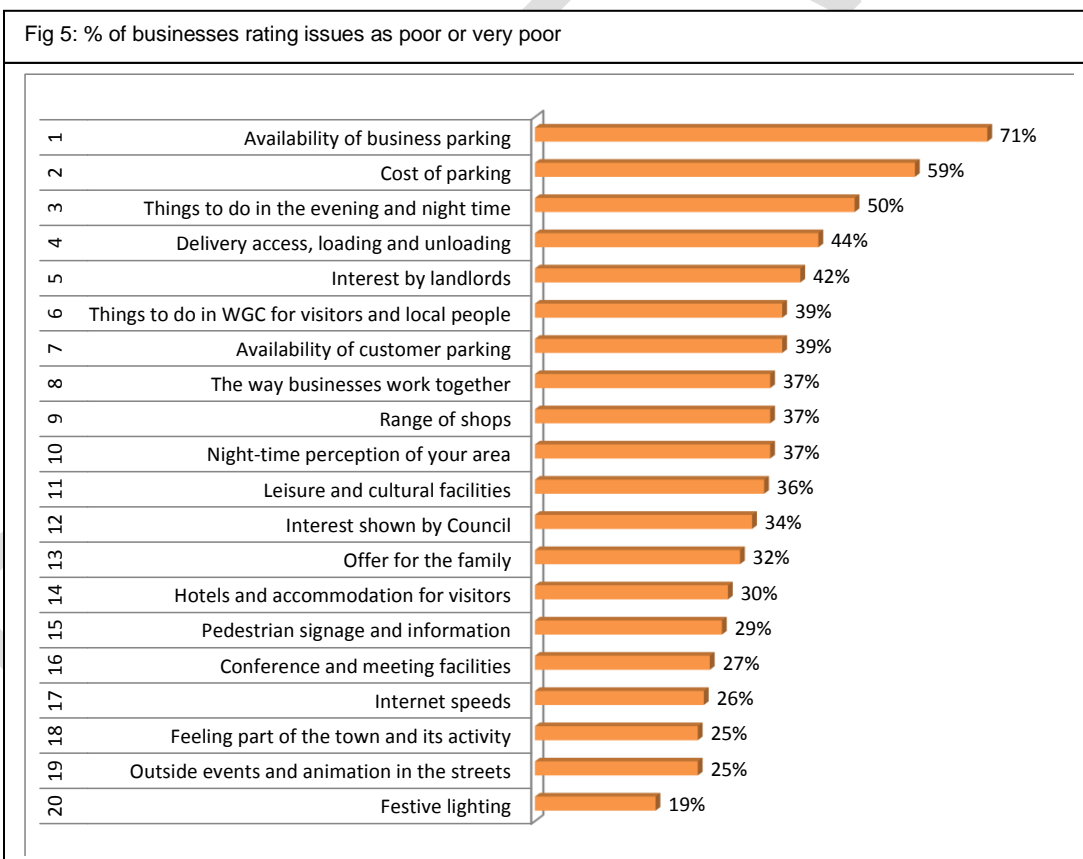
Fig 4: How would you rate the importance of the following set of measures in terms of helping your business?



Practical ideas which were voiced included making the green spaces more accessible for pedestrians by removing metal barriers and creating gaps and footpaths through hedges and creating an infra-structure within the green spaces such as power points and water and drainage so events and entertainment could be set up more easily. It was frequently suggested that if the green spaces were animated then this would help link different parts of the town centre together and encourage more people to explore different parts of the town centre, including the theatre and cinema campus.

In terms of improving the overall experience for visitors and supporting businesses on a day to day basis discussion in workshops favoured initiatives such as ‘Ambassadors’ or ‘Hosts’, uniformed people, who could support the running of events, welcome visitors and provide information and help to make the most of their visit and who had communications through radio and telephone to police and businesses.

The next most important group of suggestions related to access and in particular the challenges of parking both for business people themselves and their customers. This was followed by a feeling that the business mix needs developing, particularly in relation to retail and businesses geared to creating an interesting evening economy which is inclusive and attractive to all.



Parking and finding your way around

When businesses were asked to rank issues they considered to be poor or very poor in Welwyn Garden City, 'Availability of Business Parking' was identified as being poor or very poor by more businesses than any other (71%). This was followed by the 'Cost of Parking', and 'Delivery, Access, Loading and Unloading' was the fourth highest issue ranked by businesses as being poor, partly created by the challenges of parking around the town centre. 'Improve the Parking Experience' was also ranked as the second most important initiative (see Fig 4).

Access issues and in particular 'parking' and 'signage' were the most discussed topics in the workshops generating considerable debate with businesses clearly stating that 'Customer Parking' was even more important to them as businesses, than parking for business people themselves. However it was also clear that the two are completely inter-related.

Profiling the 'Garden City' and developing the offer

Businesses considered that Welwyn Garden City has something special but it needs to make more of its assets and make itself relevant to the needs of its residents and its visitors of today. This feeling was clearly expressed in terms of the most important initiative, identified by 81% of businesses as 'Developing town's identity and branding to attract more visitors'. In terms of developing an experience which is clearly identifiable and unique to 'Welwyn Garden City' this desire to develop the town's identity was possibly summed up by one of the comments made by a business in a workshop who said, "Welwyn Garden City is a lovely town but we need to 'fill it' and 'feel it'".

Businesses considered that a crucial aspect to development of the town's identity was the offer to the visitor. Businesses were clear that this is limited. In terms of ranking the worst issues in Welwyn Garden City, five of the top 14 issues ranked 'poor' or 'very poor' by businesses all related to the business offer: 'Range of shops', 'Night-time perception of your area', 'Leisure and cultural facilities', 'Offer for the family' and 'Hotels and accommodation for visitors'. When it came to ranking different initiatives needed to address the town's challenges, 'Marketing to target and attract new businesses/ investors', was considered the third most important initiative of all.

Welwyn Garden City has lots to shout about as it is and there is a clear desire to build upon its assets, with businesses identifying that four out of the top eight initiatives related directly to marketing the town and all it has to offer, including professional services.

8. The BID's response

Following our extensive research four key project areas of the Welwyn Garden City BID have emerged reflecting the key issues and opportunities identified by the businesses. The activities within each of the project areas have been specifically designed to address and take advantage of these.

It was clearly evident from the comments and feedback that Welwyn Garden City is currently exposed to the changing dynamics of the way in which people use towns and city centres in terms of its limited retail, leisure and evening economy offer. However in many respects it is well placed as an environment to take advantage of the desire for a 'great experience' if it can raise the profile of its beautiful environment, create a greater sense of animation and in turn develop its business offer. In fact Welwyn Garden City has many advantages over other competing town centres if it can address the issues identified by businesses.

If Welwyn Garden City can start to build upon its great environment, making itself relevant to the needs of its residents and visitors of today and if it can develop and profile its identity then the town will potentially, once again, act as a model of best practise and innovation for towns and cities across the UK.

The BID could act as a catalyst for a new and exciting era in the life of this town. This BID Proposal and Business Plan has been designed to ensure that the activities benefit as wide a range of businesses as possible. It will do this by 'creating a town centre which is innovative and modern, which builds on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a great place to visit, work and live.'

All businesses and organisations stand to benefit from these additional projects and activities which have been identified by businesses across Welwyn Garden City as being crucial to their future.

How will the delivery be monitored?

Monitoring and measuring the performance and effectiveness of the BID activities is an integral and essential part of the plan. Businesses need to be confident that their levy money is being invested as productively as possible to maximise results.

The effectiveness of the measures undertaken will be gauged by key performance indicators monitored and relevant for each project area, including footfall, customer surveys, business surveys, photographic evidence, vacant properties and footfall trends. These measures and key performance indicators are identified for each objective and need to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the life of the BID.

9. Vision and Objectives

Assuming a positive BID vote by a majority of businesses by both rateable value and number, BID operations will start on 1st April 2017 and will continue for a total of 5 years.

The Vision

Through this business-led programme of investment the vision is:

‘To create a town centre which is innovative and modern, which builds on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a great place to visit, work and live.’

Strategic Objectives and Projects

The programme of investment will be delivered through the four strategic objectives and their related projects.

1. Animated and attractive

To create a place which has a strong sense of identity for residents, visitors and people working in the town centre to enjoy.

2. Promoted and celebrated

To promote and celebrate the great ‘Garden City’ and build the reputation of Welwyn Garden City as a great place to work, shop, relax and be entertained.

3. Welcoming and accessible

To provide a welcoming and easily accessible place for visitors, workers and residents to explore.

4. A great business and leisure offer

To encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of the Welwyn Garden City town centre promoting it as a great place to do business

Objectives, Activities and Results

Objective 1: Animated and attractive

To create a place which has a strong sense of identity for residents, visitors and people working in the town centre to enjoy.

Amount the BID will spend:

An initial budget of £70,000 p.a, increasing to £72,500 by year 5 – a total of £356,500 over five years.

Activities

- a. Work with businesses and other organisations to develop and organise events and markets, to create an animated feel to the town as a whole and build the reputation of Welwyn Garden City as a great place to be entertained.
- b. Work with others to support the development of an infra-structure which enables the streets and open spaces to be used effectively for a wide range of markets and events and accessed by visitors, residents and workers to enjoy.
- c. Where appropriate, support the use of additional floral displays, public art and festive and creative lighting to improve the appearance and vibrancy of the streets and open spaces, in a way which complements and develops the characteristics of the Welwyn Garden City BID area.
- d. Provide cleaning services where appropriate and additional to services provided by the local authority, with a focus on targeted street cleaning and deep cleaning.
- e. Support the development and implementation of initiatives which improves and protects the public realm and the buildings of the town and which complement and develop the characteristics of Welwyn Garden City.
- f. Work with landlords, agents and others to ensure that vacant premises or derelict properties are maintained and presented in a smart and tidy appearance and do not detract from the appeal of the immediate environment.

Measures and Results:

- Footfall to the town centre which is stronger than national high street trends
- Increased number of locations across Welwyn Garden City town centre where markets, events and street entertainment can occur.
- Increased number of markets, events and street entertainment and a greater perception of things happening measured through surveys of visitors.
- Increased numbers of people visiting Welwyn Garden City from the catchment area and beyond

Objective 2: Promoted and celebrated

To promote and celebrate the great 'Garden City' and build the reputation of Welwyn Garden City as a great place to work, shop, relax and be entertained.

Amount the BID will spend:

An initial budget of £61,000 p.a, increasing to £63,000 by year 5 – a total of £310,700 over five years.

Activities

- a. Work with all stakeholders to define, develop and promote the identity of Welwyn Garden City town centre which reflects the strengths, characteristics and heritage of the town centre and creates a sense of pride in the town centre by its businesses, residents and visitors.
- b. Develop the use of digital and social media channels, traditional marketing and PR which informs and increases awareness of Welwyn Garden City as a town, its business sectors, its events and all it has to offer, in a way which is consistent with its identity, to visitors and businesses alike.
- c. Develop promotional campaigns and schemes which encourage regular use of the town centre's businesses and which captures market intelligence, develops marketing capability for the businesses and the BID and attracts even more shoppers and clients.
- d. Promote and develop customer service excellence through award schemes which profile businesses and individuals and celebrates, recognises and promotes a great shopping, eating and drinking experience in Welwyn Garden City town centre
- e. Develop effective communications between businesses to promote awareness of different issues which may affect trading conditions, opportunities and their immediate environment.
- f. Act as a collective voice and represent business interests with all stakeholders to influence any aspect of marketing and promotion of the town centre and its businesses to ensure that it is in line with the BID business plan objectives

Retail and Health and Beauty:

- g. Design and coordinate campaigns which focus on key trading periods, highlight the particular strengths of this sector in Welwyn Garden City and take advantage of new trading opportunities.

Culture and Leisure

- h. Raise the profile and awareness of the quality and diversity of the culture and leisure economy in Welwyn Garden City town centre increasing the numbers of visitors enjoying this aspect of the town centre at all times of day, evening and night.

Professional Services

- i. Develop specific campaigns to enable the professional service businesses in Welwyn Garden City to raise their profile locally and regionally and benefit from the association with the Welwyn Garden City town centre identity.

College

- j. Work closely with Oaklands College to raise its profile as a College at the centre of its community and work with the College to promote a greater sense of association between the town and its students.

Measures and Results:

- Footfall to the town centre which is stronger than national high street trends
- Increased number of active users of digital media promoting the Welwyn Garden City and its businesses.
- Increased levels of sales activity across the whole of the town centre
- Positive media exposure locally, regionally and nationally measured through numbers of articles, publications, click-throughs on digital media and value through using advertising value equivalent. (a.v.e)
- Numbers of businesses actively engaged in BID activities and the use of and their association with Welwyn Garden City in their own marketing and promotion.
- Numbers of businesses and public regularly engaged and involved in promotional schemes
- Increased awareness of the town centre what it has to offer measured through surveys of visitors and those who work in the town centre

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Objective 3: Welcoming and accessible

To provide a welcoming and easily accessible place for visitors, workers and residents to explore.

Amount the BID will spend:

An initial budget of £76,097 p.a, increasing to £78,778 by year 5 – a total of £387,000 over five years.

Activities

a. Uniformed day time Hosts to:

- I. help promote the area, to welcome visitors and provide support for the implementation of events and animation in the streets and open spaces
- II. support businesses in tackling and communicating issues which affect their business on a day to day basis.
- III. work closely with the Police, WHBC Street Wardens and other agencies in tackling antisocial behaviour and crime issues which impact upon the visitor experience.

b. **Parking and access**

Work closely with the council and Car Park operators to influence tariffs, availability, signage and access to car parks and the provision of a 'parking experience' across Welwyn Garden City for both visitors and those who work in the area, in a way which is commercially sustainable, increases patronage and meets the needs of the town centre's businesses.

- c. Work with others to improve pedestrian flow between different parts of the town centre and its businesses through information and improved signage which highlights the characteristics of each part of the town centre and encourages people to explore and make more use of the town centre and all it has to offer.
- d. Tackle anti-social behaviour and crime issues which impact upon the visitor experience and affect businesses in certain areas, by developing the existing business crime prevention schemes, such as the Welwyn Garden City Watch and working with partners and organisations in the town centre including voluntary organisations, the Police and the council's CCTV.
- e. Work closely with operators and authorities to influence and optimise the integration of transport links in respect of trains, buses, taxis, car parks and cycling within the BID area.

Measures and Results:

- Improved perception of attractiveness of the town centre measured through surveys of visitors and those who work in the town centre
- Increased numbers of cars using car parks and street parking in Welwyn Garden City town centre
- Improved perception of the 'parking experience' in Welwyn Garden City town centre
- Improved perceptions of visitor and business safety and feeling of welcome.
- Reduction of incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour

Objective 4: A great business and leisure offer

To encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of the Welwyn Garden City town centre promoting it as a great place to do business

Amount the BID will spend:

An initial budget of £20,000 p.a, increasing to £21,000 by year 5 – a total of £101,100 over five years.

Activities

- a. Influence, support and encourage plans and proposals for new buildings, signage, building refurbishments and public realm developments which build upon the town centre's strengths, serve to develop the town centre's identity and complement and develop the characteristics of the Welwyn Garden City BID area.
- b. Work with others to develop a retail and leisure framework for the town centre and support its implementation with partners.
- c. Work with partners, landlords and property agents to market the town centre to potential new retailers and investors in line with recommendations from an updated retail leisure framework for the town centre.
- d. Work with businesses and other partners including the Police and Local Authority to develop a diverse evening and night time leisure offer which appeals to people from all ages and backgrounds, which is distinctively Welwyn Garden City, in a safe, clean and attractive environment.
- e. Work with other organisations to monitor footfall, commercial performance, parking statistics, customer perceptions and other key measures across the Welwyn Garden City BID area and provide regular reports and performance updates for businesses.
- f. Explore the possibility of reducing business costs by joint purchasing initiatives.

Measures and Results:

- Increased range of retail, leisure and evening economy offer.
- Reduced levels of vacant properties and properties which appear neglected in Welwyn Garden City town centre.
- Numbers of business enquiries through commercial property agents
- Monitoring of footfall and sales performances across Welwyn Garden City town centre with regular reports and feedback to businesses.
- Increased numbers of people enjoying Welwyn Garden City in the evening and at night time.

10. Organisation, Resources and Delivery

The preparation of this plan has been managed by the Welwyn Garden City 'Town Centre Partnership' which is made up of a cross section of businesses and organisations from across Welwyn Garden City town centre together with representatives from Welwyn Hatfield Borough council. The 'Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership' which was set up 4 years ago will be dissolved.

A new and separate company will be set up to act as the BID Company. It will be a not for profit BID company, limited by guarantee which will be legally and operationally responsible to the businesses in the BID area, for the delivery of the BID business plan and its associated activities and will act on their behalf.

There will be a Board responsible for the governance of the BID Company and for creating a management structure which will aim to encourage continuous business involvement in determining priorities and shaping and evolving activities within the terms of this BID Proposal and Business Plan. All businesses will be encouraged to be actively involved in the BID and associated working groups to represent the levy payers.

The Board will be elected by the members of the BID Company, drawn predominantly from those paying a levy in the area and made up of a representative cross-section of the businesses and stakeholders of the area and key agencies associated with the successful delivery of the BID project. It will be driven by the private sector and will include one Councillor from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council as a Director and one council Officer who will act as a key operational link, but not as a Director.

The main role of the Board is to safeguard the interests of levy payers by ensuring that the business operates in line with the BID plan, is professional and offers consistent value for money in line with its targets. The Board will ensure that the implementation of the BID will be monitored and delivered cost-effectively, through keeping overheads to a minimum and using methods which will optimise the use of the revenue budget and add real value to the delivery of the plan.

The Board will provide a consistent, collective and effective voice for the businesses in Welwyn Garden City.

All roles on the Board and specific working groups are voluntary and are undertaken with a commitment to represent the interests of all businesses in the area.

Collaborative working will be actively encouraged to build upon the sense of the business community in the area and ensure that the skills and resources available for delivery of the BID are enhanced and deliver best value.

There will also be hands-on project and contract management to support the initiatives from the working groups. This support will provide administrative support to the BID Company, coordinate activity with partner organisations and ensure cost-effective delivery of projects through tendering and careful project and contract management.

The Welwyn Garden City BID financial accounts and governance arrangements will be audited annually and the effectiveness of the measures undertaken will be gauged by key performance

indicators for each project area, including footfall, customer surveys, business surveys, photographic evidence and retail turnover movement full measures are identified in this plan with each objective.

Besides regular newsletters and other forms of bulletins, there will be an annual report providing details on activities and performance of the company against the objectives of the delivery plan for the previous year.

All levy payers shall be entitled to be members of the BID Company. There will be an annual general meeting at which all members are invited to attend and vote and at which Directors will be retired by rotation and new Directors elected in accordance with the articles of the company.

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11. Welwyn Garden City BID Budget and Finances

“An uncertain economy, changing lifestyles, rapidly changing technology and increased options for shopping, mean that the way in which towns and cities are used is changing dramatically and quickly. A BID provides the opportunity for businesses to have a real influence on their local environment to ensure that collectively we can take advantage of the new opportunities these changes will bring.

In the next five years we will strive to lever in additional cash funding and value in kind to support the delivery of this plan and add to the investment made by the Welwyn Garden City businesses through the BID.

We feel that the investment we are seeking from businesses in the BID is modest in relation to what can be achieved. For the smallest business in the Business Improvement District, the daily cost is less than a first class postage stamp and even for a large business the daily cost is less than the price of a single cinema ticket.”

Emma Ramsdale
Member of the WGC BID Steering Group
Owner - Kinetic Cycles

With levy bands and a 1.75 % levy, the indicative costs to a business are:

| Rateable Value | Levy Rate | Annual | This equates to: Weekly | This equates to: Daily |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| £1 - £4,999 | Zero | Zero | Zero | Zero |
| £5,000 | 1.75% | £88 | £1.68 | £0.24 |
| £10,000 | 1.75% | £175 | £3.37 | £0.48 |
| £25,000 | 1.75% | £438 | £8.41 | £1.20 |
| £75,000 | 1.75% | £1,313 | £25.24 | £3.60 |
| £150,000 | 1.75% | £2,625 | £50.48 | £7.19 |
| £350,000 | 1.75% | £6,125 | £117.79 | £16.78 |

Welwyn Garden City BID 5 year Budget: 2017 – 2022

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Total | % to total |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Income | | | | | | | |
| BID levy revenue (Note 1) | £ 274,001 | £ 279,481 | £ 285,071 | £ 290,772 | £ 296,587 | £ 1,425,912 | 91% |
| Other Income (Note 2) | £ 27,000 | £ 27,540 | £ 28,091 | £ 28,653 | £ 29,226 | £ 140,509 | 9% |
| Total Income | £ 301,001 | £ 307,021 | £ 313,161 | £ 319,425 | £ 325,813 | £ 1,566,421 | 100% |
| Expenditure | | | | | | | |
| Objective 1 – Animated and attractive | £ 70,090 | £ 70,689 | £ 71,300 | £ 71,924 | £ 72,559 | £ 356,562 | 23% |
| Objective 2 - Promoted and celebrated | £ 61,084 | £ 61,606 | £ 62,139 | £ 62,682 | £ 63,236 | £ 310,747 | 20% |
| Objective 3 - Welcoming and accessible | £ 76,097 | £ 76,747 | £ 77,411 | £ 78,088 | £ 78,778 | £ 387,121 | 25% |
| Objective 4 - Great business and leisure offer | £ 20,030 | £ 20,201 | £ 20,376 | £ 20,554 | £ 20,736 | £ 101,897 | 7% |
| Central Management Costs, Administration, Office (Note 3) | £ 51,500 | £ 52,530 | £ 53,581 | £ 54,652 | £ 55,745 | £ 268,008 | 17% |
| Levy Collection costs | £ 8,500 | £ 8,670 | £ 8,843 | £ 9,020 | £ 9,201 | £ 44,234 | 3% |
| Contingency (Note 4) | £ 13,700 | £ 13,974 | £ 14,254 | £ 14,539 | £ 14,829 | £ 71,296 | 5% |
| Total Expenditure | £ 301,001 | £ 304,418 | £ 307,903 | £ 311,458 | £ 315,085 | £ 1,539,866 | 100% |
| Accrual for Renewal (Note 5) | £ - | £ 2,603 | £ 5,258 | £ 7,966 | £ 10,729 | £ 26,556 | |

Notes

- 1 Assumes a 95% collection rate and 2% per annum inflation
- 2 Including income from landlords, associate members of the BID and other sources (including in-kind)
- 3 Central admin, office and fixed overheads
- 4 Calculated as 5% of total levy billed
- 5 Accrual retained from levy revenue to provide for costs of renewal of the BID for any further term, otherwise they will be spent on additional projects in the final year

Cost of the BID Development

The costs incurred in undertaking the research, developing the BID proposals and holding the ballot are being met by the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, for which we give sincere thanks.

Sources of Additional Funding

The BID Company is committed to seeking additional funding where possible to increase the benefits that can be delivered by the BID to businesses. Other possible income sources will include grants where the criteria matches the aims of the business plan, voluntary contributions from property owners, companies and organisations outside the BID area and those not liable for the levy. It is estimated that this could be around £140,000 over the five year period.

Through discussion, developers, property owners and other stakeholders in the area will be invited to participate in the Business Improvement District and improve delivery against the business plan objectives even further.

Application of BID Funds

The BID funds will be ring-fenced and will be controlled by participating businesses. Details of the BID Company's accountability to businesses are given in Sections 10 and 13.

The budget headings and the project costs can be altered within the constraints of the revenue received through the levy. The BID Company will be empowered to move funds between budget headings to provide the services which best meet the requirements of the BID area. Such adjustments will be fully accountable to the businesses through the performance monitoring arrangements set out in Sections 6 and 8.

Governance and management of the BID Budget

In order to ensure that the projects remain relevant and continue to address needs and priorities of the businesses in Welwyn Garden City during its five year life, the various working groups may from time to time make recommendations to the Board that budget allocations are modified for each of the main projects and the management and administration of the BID.

It will be the responsibility of the Board to assess these recommendations and make adjustments to the allocations of expenditure budget as and when they deem appropriate. It will be the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the main aims of the BID, stated in Section 9, continue to be addressed and that all BID activity contributes towards the achievement of the vision. The Board will also monitor and gauge the effectiveness of the BID operations and activities.

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12. BID Levy Criteria for the Welwyn Garden City BID

Every BID has to establish its own levy rules. Reference has been made to the 'Industry Criteria and Guidance Notes' prepared for the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the Inter-Bank Rating Forum (IBRF) in developing the rules which will apply to the Welwyn Garden City BID.

The Welwyn Garden City BID Steering Group has tried to balance the ambitions of businesses in the BID plan against the affordability of the levy and the requirement to ensure that the BID is able to deliver best value.

1. Assuming a positive BID vote by a majority of businesses by number and rateable value (R.V) of those who vote, the BID levy will be charged on all hereditaments listed in the local Non-Domestic Rating List located within the BID area. This applies irrespective of whether or how a business has voted in the formal BID ballot. Legislation within the Local Government Finance Act (2003) enables the local authority to issue a bill for the levy. The levy is collected by the Billing Authority, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The Welwyn Garden City BID Company will invoice the Billing Authority, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, for the levy collected for exclusive use of the BID.
2. All businesses which will be subject to the BID will be entitled to vote for the BID proposal in a 28 day postal ballot which will commence on 29th September 2016, with the close of ballot at 5pm on 27th October 2016. The result will be announced the following day or as soon as possible thereafter.
3. If successful at the ballot, the BID will commence operation on 1st April 2017, and will be for a fixed term of 5 years
4. The levy amounts for ratepayers who have business premises which do not fall under the management of a shopping mall and who do not pay service charges to the shopping mall operator will be applied as follows:
 - a. The BID levy will be 1.75% of the 2010 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the Billing Authority's) NNDR billing system as at 1st September 2016 for each defined business within the scope of the BID, with the exception of those premises with a rateable value of less than £5,000 showing on the Billing Authority's system as at 1st September 2016.
 - b. Ratepayers with an R.V. of less than £5,000 will pay nothing for these properties and will not have a vote for these properties although they will enjoy the benefits that come with trading in the BID area
5. The levy amount for ratepayers who have business premises which do fall under the management of a shopping mall operator and who do pay a service charge to the shopping mall operator will be applied as follows:
 - a. The BID levy will be 1.5% of the 2010 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the Billing Authority's) Capita's NNDR billing system as at 1st September 2016 for each defined business (including any premises used and owned by the shopping mall operator for purposes relating to the management of the shopping mall, excluding car parks) within the scope of the BID, with the exception of those

premises with a rateable value of less than £5,000 showing on the Billing Authority's system as at 1st September 2016.

- b. Ratepayers with an R.V. of less than £5,000 will pay nothing for these properties and will not have a vote for these properties although they will enjoy the benefits that come with trading in the BID area
6. The levy will be due from businesses who are liable to pay business rates, including empty properties other than those that are exempt within the criteria laid out in Section 12 of this BID Proposal and Business Plan (this section).
 7. The liable person is the ratepayer liable for occupied or unoccupied premises. In accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1058) and the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1060), Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council will be responsible for the imposition, administration, collection, recovery and application of the BID levy. The council will also be responsible for any enforcement action that may be appropriate in case of non-payment of the levy.
 8. There will be an annual inflationary increase of all levy charges year on year for the duration of the Business Improvement District. This will be a minimum of 2% increase year on year or the inflation percentage as determined by the Consumer Price Index as at the 1st December of the year before the next billing process, whichever is the greater, rounded to the nearest tenth of a penny. (e.g. if a levy bill is £200 the inflation applied to this at a level of 2% would be £4.00 per annum). Negative inflation will not apply. Inflation will not apply for the first full billing cycle in 2017.
 9. The levy will be charged annually in advance, although businesses which cease to have liability for business rates during the year will be entitled to a refund for the remainder of the period, and the new occupier will be charged on a pro-rata basis provided that the amount due on charge or refund is £50 or more.
 10. Any changes during the life of the BID will be handled as follows:
 - a. New premises, or properties which were not on the rate valuation list but become subject to rates in the BID area or new streets raised in the BID area after the BID is in force will be expected to pay a BID Levy based on the % appropriate in relation to its new/current rateable value
 - b. Where property is split, two or more BID levies should be made on the revised premises from the date of split on the basis of the revised new/current rateable values
 - c. Where premises are merged the BID Levy should be charged at the appropriate % of the revised properties new/current valuation
 - d. Any change of use or ownership (or the creation of a new business within the BID (boundary) will be liable to the levy rate current at the time of the change.
 - e. Adjustments will be made for changes in occupation and if a property is deleted from the rating list and revised bills issued provided that the amount due on charge or refund is £50 or more. The charge or refund amount will be calculated pro rata between the date of the change in occupation and the date of the financial year end.
 - f. No amendments will be made to the rateable value of any property in the BID area as a result of any general or property specific re-valuation within the life of the BID other than for the criteria listed above.

11. No other relief will be given to any class of non-domestic ratepayer and there is no distinction made between occupied or unoccupied hereditaments, both occupancy status attracting the full BID levy, unless it is a hereditament: -
- a. whose owner is prohibited by law from occupying it or allowing it to be occupied;
 - b. which is kept vacant by reason of action taken by or on behalf of the Crown or any local or public authority with a view to prohibiting the occupation of the hereditament or to acquiring it;
 - c. which is included in the Schedule of monuments compiled under section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979(b);
 - d. where, in respect of the owner's estate, there subsists a bankruptcy order within the meaning of section 381(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986(c);
 - e. whose owner is entitled to possession of the hereditament in his capacity as trustee under a deed of arrangement to which the Deeds of Arrangement Act 1914(d) applies;
 - f. whose owner is a company which is subject to a winding-up order made under the Insolvency Act 1986 or which is being wound up voluntarily under that Act;
 - g. whose owner is a company in administration within the meaning of paragraph 1 of Schedule B1 to the Insolvency Act 1986 or is subject to an administration order made under the former administration provisions within the meaning of article 3 of the Enterprise Act 2002 (Commencement No. 4 and Transitional Provisions and Savings) Order 2003(e);
 - h. whose owner is entitled to possession of the hereditament in his capacity as liquidator by virtue of an order made under section 112 or section 145 of the Insolvency Act 1986.
 - i. where it is a place with the principal purpose of religious activity, a hostel, a place of refuge or a place of rehabilitation.

in which case the hereditament will be exempt.

12. For clarity a hereditament which is the subject of a building preservation notice within the meaning of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990(a) or is included in a list compiled under section 1 of that Act will be subject to levy unless its use is covered by any of the other exemptions listed in Section 12 of this BID Proposal and Business Plan (this section).
13. The BID levy contribution will not be reassessed if the rateable value is amended after the end of the BID. New or altered properties entered into the valuation list will become liable for the levy from the date they appear in the list.
14. Businesses with a rateable value of less than £5,000 will be exempt from the levy and will not be permitted to vote in the ballot. Any business with an R.V which falls below this will be encouraged to enter into a voluntary arrangement direct with the BID Company so that they can benefit from the full range of services provided by the BID.
15. Any hereditament where the occupier is a charitable organisation, will pay a levy as per the criteria outlined in this Section 12 of the BID Proposal and Business Plan.
16. The BID financial year will start on 1st April and last for 365 days (366 in a leap year). The BID charge is a daily charge based on rateable value. It is to be paid in full in advance, the payment date being the 1st April of that year. The daily BID levy charge for each individual

ratepayer is to be calculated by multiplying its rateable value by the BID percentage levy and dividing the result by the number of days in the financial year.

17. Subject to this criteria stated above and within the BID boundary as defined in this document, the BID levy is a statutorily compulsory payment regardless of whether the business exercised its vote or voted against the BID.

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13. Risk analysis

The responsibilities of BID Company

The BID Company will be a legal entity and a significant business in its own right. It will not only have all the attendant risks and responsibilities that go with this but also, subject to the vote in favour of the BID, will have a mandate from the businesses in the area to deliver the BID Business Plan. This is a significant responsibility which has an influence over the commercial prosperity of Welwyn Garden City, the businesses in the area and their staff who rely upon it for their living.

It is important therefore, to articulate some of the external and internal issues that have a direct bearing on the ability of the Company to trade successfully, as well as highlight the consequences of not adopting the principles of the BID and the benefits that accrue from the delivery of the plan.

BIDs have been proving their worth and commercial value across the UK over the last eleven years as effective mechanisms to improve trading environments for all sorts and types of businesses. Where BIDs have reached the end of their first term the majority have seen even greater votes in favour and larger turn-outs than the first time of voting. They are seen as providing businesses with very effective returns on investment. There are other towns and cities in the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire which now have Business Improvement Districts. These include Hitchin which successfully went through a renewal ballot and started its second BID term in 2014 and Bedford also went through a renewal ballot and started its second term last year, Luton which started its BID last year and. Watford who held a successful ballot in October last year.

Working with key partners

In order to deliver exceptional value for money within the framework of the aims and objectives of the plan, the BID will work closely with other key stakeholders such as property owners, developers, the Borough Council and the Police. It will seek, wherever possible to influence and shape larger projects to the benefit of its own aims while supporting others to achieve their own objectives.

In working with others, the over-riding principle of the BID should not be compromised i.e that the BID is providing services and benefits additional to those which would have happened if the BID had not been in existence.

Sustainable mechanism for the development of Welwyn Garden City

The BID is a unique mechanism which combines solid business support with a compulsory payment scheme which creates benefit for all on an equitable basis. It also guarantees constant cash flow to deliver the projects and priorities identified by the businesses. It provides a solid platform for the BID Company to control costs, plan over the longer term and rise to the expectations of its stakeholders.

A contingency is contained within each of the project areas, meaning, that should the income from the additional voluntary contributions fall short of those budgeted for any period, costs can be adjusted accordingly.

In the unlikely event that circumstances beyond the control of the BID Company mean that it fails to bring about the benefits envisaged, the business electorate will have the final say. At the end of the 5 years, if no discernible difference is detected then a vote against renewal can simply “switch off” the BID and with it all business contributions.

There is no plan to rely upon bank or other financial support other than the levy and so there is no prospect of financial insecurity. In any event, the Company will produce monthly management accounts and financial forecasts for information for the Board, nominated by the levy payers. Appointed auditors will produce end-of-year accounts, made available to all contributors and the local authority and these will be filed at Companies House in the normal way.

The Company will be VAT registered to ensure that the tax can be reclaimed on expenditure. It is also anticipated that it will benefit from mutual trading status meaning that it is exempt from any Corporation Tax liability.

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Final thoughts

“I have been privileged, over the last year to work closely with business people who have been committed to creating a new opportunity for all businesses across the whole of Welwyn Garden City town centre. It is a place which has a sense of community but is seeking direction, a sense of purpose and a clear identity in a rapidly changing world.

A Business Improvement District provides us with an opportunity to forge even stronger links between us and work on projects which we initiate and which are important to us as committed and hardworking business people. Towns and cities across the UK are changing rapidly and we need to ensure that Welwyn Garden City does not get left behind but takes advantage of its unique position in terms of its attractive environment, its green spaces and the strength of its people through their passion for the town.

This plan provides us with a clear direction for a new exciting era in Welwyn Garden City. I urge you to get involved and work together for the future of the town and our businesses by voting YES in the ballot in October”.

Chris Hooper

Chair of Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership (BID Development Board)

Head of Branch John Lewis Partnership

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions

- The following terms, used throughout this Proposal document, shall have the same meaning as provided in the Local Government Act 2003 and the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.
- “BID” means Business Improvement District.
- This document is a BID proposal for the purposes of the Act. If approved it will become the BID arrangements which govern the way in which the BID levy can be used.
- “the 2003 Act” means the Local Government Act 2003.
- “the 1988 Act” means the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- “BID ballot” means a ballot under section 49(1) of the Local Government Act, 2003.
- “BID body” means, the body (whether corporate or not corporate) responsible for the implementation of the arrangements in this case defined in the plan as the ‘Welwyn Garden City BID Company’ whose final company name has yet to be determined.
- “BID proposer” means a person who draws up BID proposals in the plan the ‘Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership BID Steering Group’
- “commencement date” subject to regulation 9(12) of the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004, means the day, pursuant to section 53 of the 2003 Act, the BID arrangements are to come into force.
- “hereditament” means anything which is or is treated as being a hereditament by virtue of the provisions of or any provisions made under section 64 of the 1988 Act including any hereditament to which regulation 6 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1989 applies but otherwise excluding any hereditament to which regulations made under section 64(3)(b) of the 1988 Act apply.
- “renewal ballot” means a ballot under section 54(2) of the 2003 Act.
- “BID Levy” means a charge imposed on the non-domestic ratepayers, or a class of such ratepayers in the district

Appendix 2 – Streets included in the BID Area listed alphabetically

| Property - Major St |
|---------------------|
| Bridge Road |
| Church Road |
| College Way |
| Digswell (part of) |
| Fretherne Road |
| Howardsgate |
| Longcroft Lane |
| Osborn Way |
| Parkway (part of) |
| Stonebank |
| Stonehills |
| The Campus |
| Theodore Way |
| Wigmores North |
| Wigmores South |

The BID area includes any and all of the smaller business areas, courtyards and parks located off these roads that are located within the boundary of the defined BID area as per the shaded area on the map shown in Section 5 in this Business Plan, even if they are not listed in the table. It will also include any roads yet to be constructed and named and any new development sites created within the shaded area of the map shown in Section 5 in this BID Proposal and Business Plan.

Acknowledgements

The Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership would like to acknowledge the support of the following in preparing this Business Plan:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Partnerships for Better Business Ltd

Further information

For more information about the BID or to discuss any aspect of this business plan please contact the WGC BID Development Team on 01707 357565 or e-mail bid@welwyngarden.co.uk or go to www.wgcbid.co.uk

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