

Front cover Title: "My Letchworth" Over strong local photo.

Corner flap exhorting reader to open and appreciate the benefits to come!

Our vision:

**To make the world's first Garden City a first class, inspirational destination for all to enjoy:
attractive, social, innovative, creative, convenient and most of all thriving.**

Our mission statement:

To work tirelessly for the businesses in the BID area to transform the economy and vitality of Letchworth Town Centre.

www.lgcbid.com

The initial exploration of the BID concept was undertaken by Letchworth Town Centre Partnership (LTCP) who then set aside a budget to cover the cost of Town Centre Management time and the part-time employment of a BID specialist consultant to work up the BID proposition to the stage you see at the moment. The Partnership was successful in acquiring a small grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government which was also used to cover some of the cost. There is no intention of recouping the money invested by LTCP in the BID's development from the BID Company when it is voted into existence or seeking financial compensation if the vote goes against the establishment of a BID.

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Chairman's welcome and introduction

A Business Improvement District for Letchworth Town Centre

Letchworth Garden City, the world's first, has a proud past and an enviable present. We have great architecture, a rich community life, generous green spaces and a robust commercial scene catering for a diverse customer base.

Nevertheless, Letchworth's town centre, like that of many other similarly sized towns, is suffering. We are spared the sight of boarded up shops and graffiti, but the decline in footfall over recent years has resulted in many empty units with other businesses struggling to survive. A lengthy recession, changes in consumer spending and competition from the internet, mean that Letchworth businesses cannot continue as they have in the past if they wish to remain trading. Quite simply we need to do something different.

This prospectus, to create a Business Improvement District (BID) for Letchworth, is a call to arms for town centre businesses. It offers an opportunity to change the future of the town for the better, by working more smartly and in genuine partnership with one another, and the wider community, for mutual benefit.

Now is exactly the right time to be doing this.

There are plans in the pipeline to develop the town as a significant cultural centre. This has the potential to bring large numbers of visitors from across Hertfordshire and the wider Eastern region. The process is underway already, with a new audience being drawn in, bringing with it significant opportunities to develop the night-time economy here.

North Herts College (NHC) is expanding its Letchworth activities and the Da Vinci Studio School opens September 2013, both of which will increase footfall during the working week.

Working together, we will have a powerful voice to influence and support to these plans to ensure they bring the greatest possible economic benefit to all our existing businesses.

It is clear that successful town centres are those which give people reasons to visit and make their visit convenient and enjoyable, extending far beyond traditional shops and services. They are becoming social hubs for their community, providing activities and experiences that build interest and support from residents.

In Letchworth, there is already a vibrant social and civic life, but we in the town centre must do more to connect with it for the benefit of our businesses. The internet offers us an unprecedented opportunity to do this - but only if we embrace it and use it to develop a mutually beneficial dialogue with our potential customers.

In developing the BID proposal, we have come to think of Letchworth as rather like a department store - offering our customers a wide range of different but overlapping products and services. In a successful department store, the various sections and concessions have to work together to make the whole a success, and we must do the same.

To do this requires your support and a financial commitment to the BID, which for many will be less than £3 per week. In total this will give us around £135,000 a year. During the next five years that is

over £650,000 additional investment into our town centre. We believe that we will be able to attract additional funds from external organisations on top of this so that number may very well exceed £1M.

The power of the BID lies not just in this additional investment over the next five years, but also the strength of our collective voice and a shared single goal.

As fellow investors, owners and operators in Letchworth, I hope that you, too, will want to welcome customers to our new “department store” and I urge you to **VOTE YES to the creation of our own BID Company in the postal ballot which will take place in October this year.**

Yours sincerely

Chair, Letchworth Garden City Town Centre BID Steering Group

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What is a Business Improvement District?

A BID is an arrangement under which local businesses come together to plan and deliver additional services and amenities to further benefit their own trading activities. It is business led, measurable and apolitical.

BIDs have developed nationally over the last 12 years and are now seen as a highly effective method of delivering positive change to a business area.

All businesses within a proposed BID area are eligible to vote for or against its creation. If the majority of those businesses voting, both by number and by aggregate of rateable value, agree to support the BID, it then gains statutory status, and all businesses are required to pay the BID levy. This provides sustainable funding for the BID area for the next five years. The BID is managed by a Board, elected by the businesses in the BID area. BIDs already exist in local towns such as Hitchin, Royston, Cambridge, Bedford and Huntingdon.

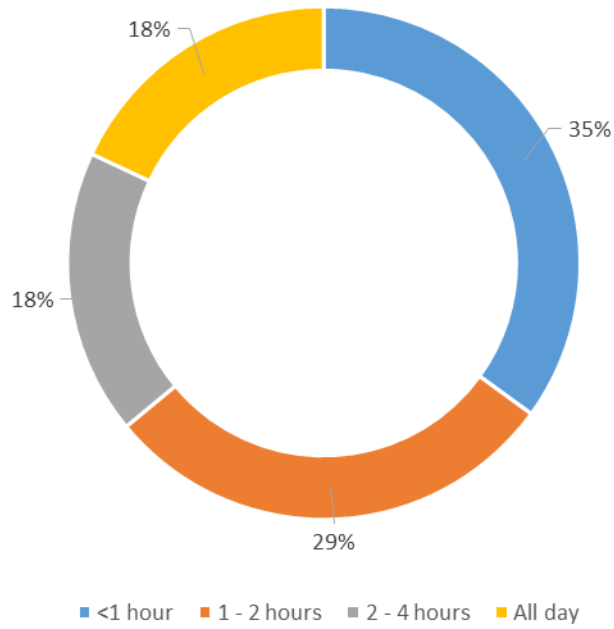
Why is a BID right for Letchworth Town Centre?

The current challenges

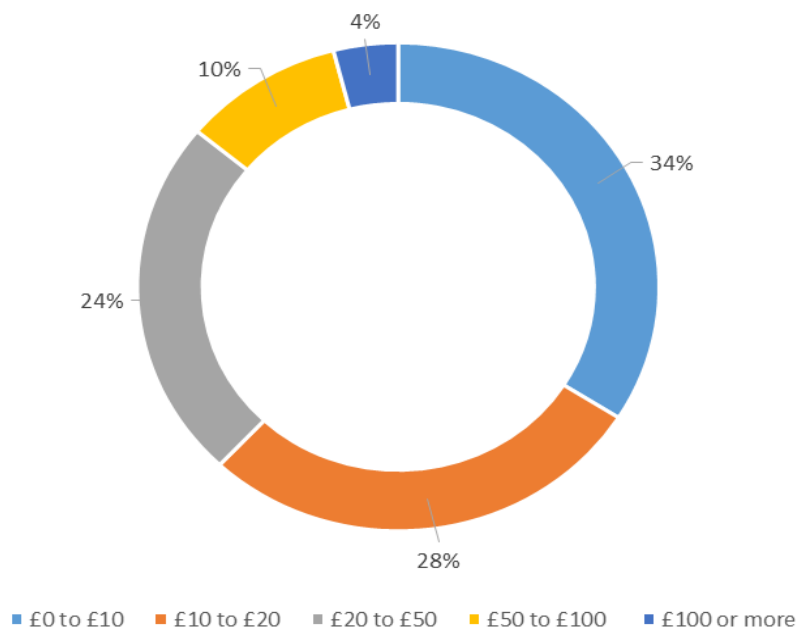
Letchworth Town Centre has suffered from declining footfall in recent years, accelerated by the recession. With strong and increasing competition from neighbouring towns and the growth of online retail, businesses have closed and others are under threat.

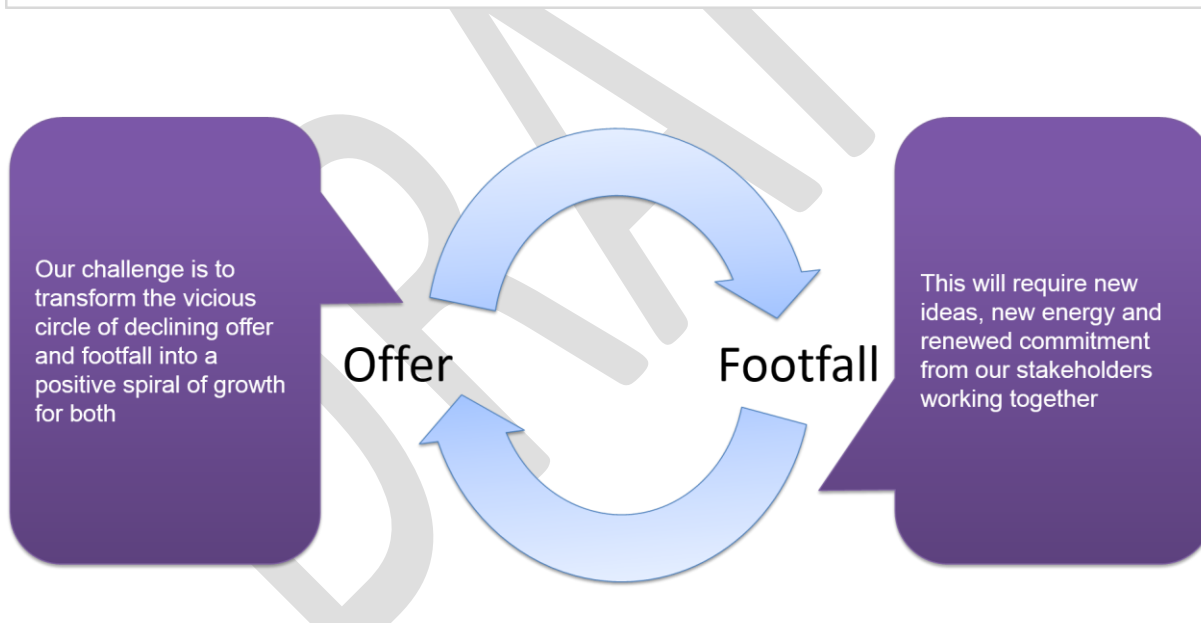
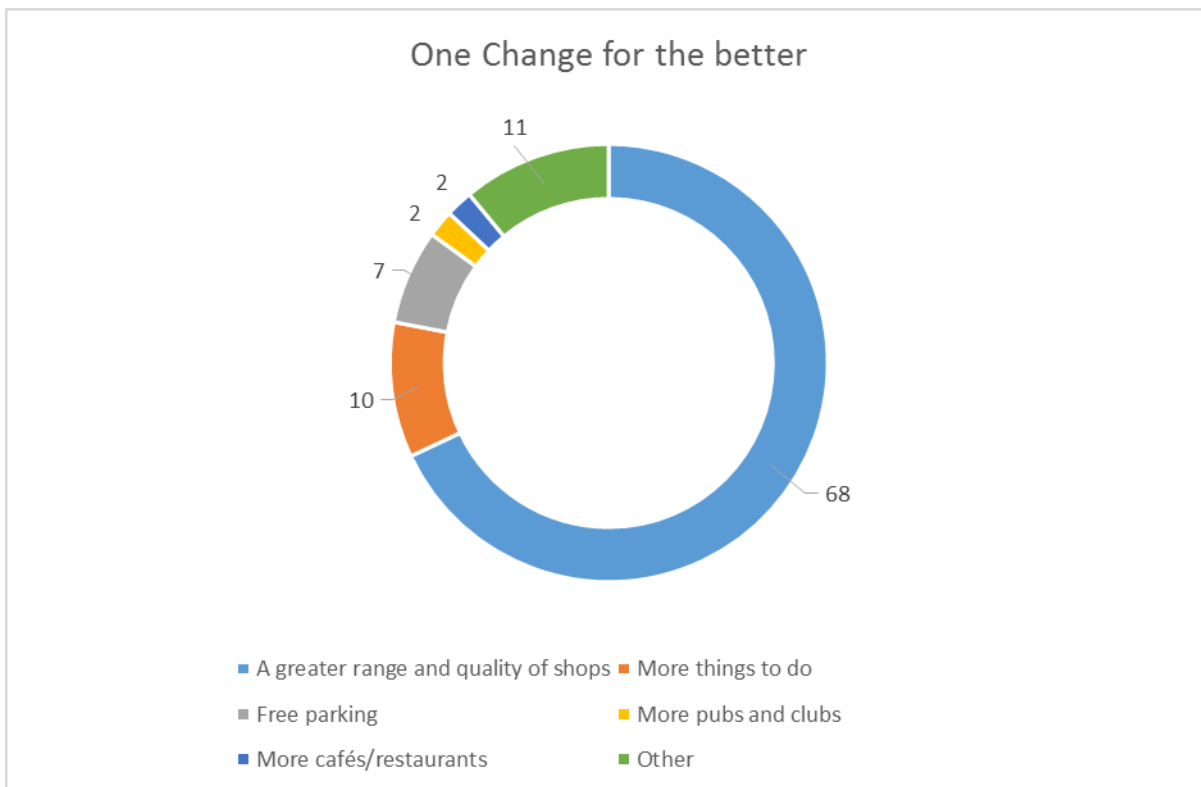
The Letchworth BID Steering Group commissioned a feasibility study into the creation of the BID. This took the form of a series of surveys and forums within the town:

Dwell Time



Consumer Spend





How will the BID make a difference?

The BID will act as a voice for local businesses to tackle the issues of, both, footfall and offer. It will create, coordinate and deliver a plan of direct action and, at the same time, influence and work together with other partners.

Unlike BIDs in most towns and cities, we do not have to spend our money on issues such as vandalism, graffiti, anti-social behaviour or littering, as these are already dealt with by local authorities and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (The Foundation). We have in place “statements of additionality” drawn up with the Foundation and North Herts District Council (District Council) to make sure existing standards will be maintained, for the duration of the BID. Thus we are

able to focus all our expenditure and effort on items such as promotion, inward investment and tools to help our businesses to help themselves.

The key elements of the BID work-plan are set out in the next section. However, the principles behind the plan are just as important as the plan itself and they will drive our BID activities:

- This BID will **not** divert any of its resources to maintaining a green, clean environment or ensuring a high standard of security and well-being –these are the responsibility of others who do it all well. Your BID money will be exclusively focused on **building up footfall, dwell time and local spend**
- The **customer's experience** in a town centre is paramount - if we offer a convenient and enjoyable package of **social, leisure, and retail activities**, customers will want to come back for more
- Letchworth residents want to support the town centre - we must **build dialogue** with them to understand and respond to their needs and to tap into Letchworth's vibrant community life
- **The internet is an opportunity** - we will support BID businesses to embrace social media and e-commerce and use them to our mutual advantage
- **Money spent locally helps** to grow our local economy. We need to think local first; BID money spent with local businesses is much more likely to return to the town centre
- The BID cannot be successful unless **businesses engage** with the activities - if we work together to protect and develop Letchworth's brand, we can weather the economic uncertainty currently sweeping the high streets of the UK
- **Working in partnership** will deliver more - all stakeholders within Letchworth benefit if the town centre succeeds; we must build our relationships with them, and one another, and actively develop projects for mutual benefit
- **Letchworth has a unique identity** - the history and architecture of the town is unlike any other - if we work with and respect this then we will have a distinct advantage over other towns in the vicinity

Who will deliver the BID activities?

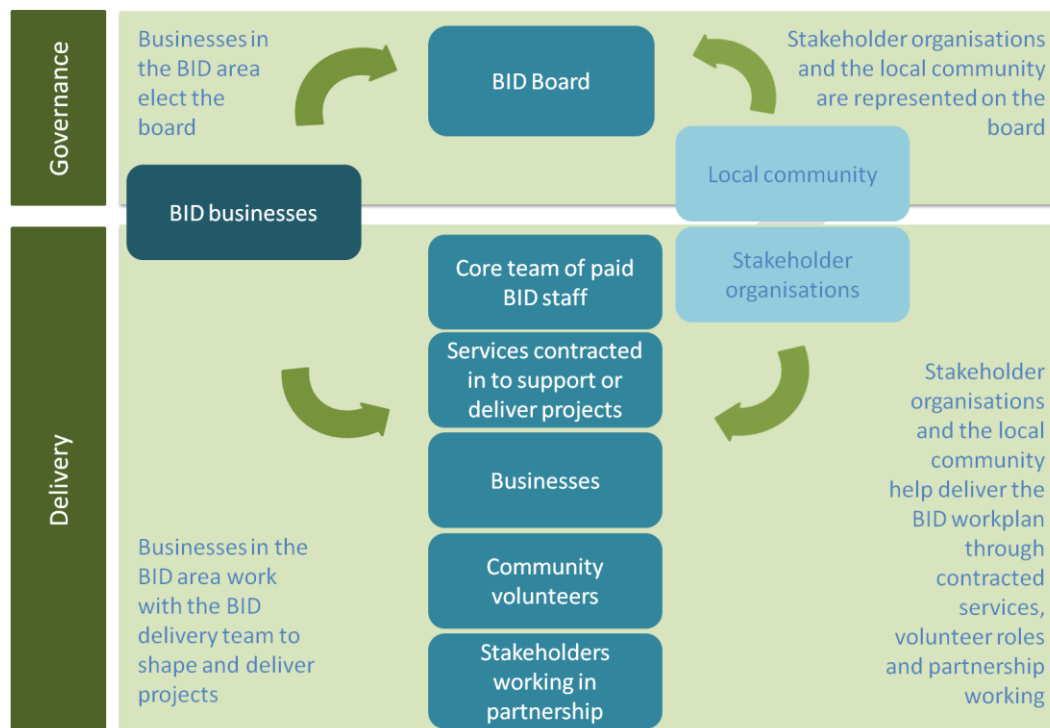
At the core of the BID will be a small team of paid staff.

However, key to the success of the BID will be others working alongside the core team. This partnership approach will mean:

- Businesses participate in developing and delivering activities, so they can be tailored to work for their businesses
- Potential users of the town have an increased sense of ownership of the town and therefore commitment to it
- More can be achieved because partner organisations bring additional resources and skills to bear

All activity will be overseen by a Board, comprising business members elected by businesses within the BID, representatives from local stakeholder organisations and two observer members from the local community. See page 20 for details.

The diagram below illustrates the proposed structure.



How will we know that the BID is working?

Making a difference to the businesses within the BID area is critical. We have included costs in the budget to allow the BID team to spend time talking to businesses so that they can understand from you what is working and what is not, and make changes as necessary. Further details on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will be used at BID Board meetings to monitor success and hold the BID team to account are included in the governance section later too.

Some essential facts about the BID:

- The BID will commence in March 2014 and run for five years when it could be eligible for a renewal vote
- The activities the BID engages in will be **additional** to the existing services provided by the local authorities and The Foundation
- It will be **managed independently by business people** who pay the BID levy, elected by the town centre’s businesses

- The District Council has given its full support to the Letchworth BID and, subject to a positive ballot, will contribute via levy payments just the same as other business ratepayers. It will collect the BID levy without charge and hand it over in its entirety to the BID Board to administer
- The levy collected from local businesses will be supplemented by additional income attracted by the BID mechanism through grant aid, sponsorship or the selling of services, information or access to market
- The BID will work to deliver all it promises. If it does not then it can be simply switched off at the end of its five-year term by not voting in favour of renewal
- The BID output and performance will be constantly monitored with regular feedback to keep businesses in the picture at all times
- A successful Letchworth BID will be formally and legally committed to deliver only the additional activities articulated in this business plan. The BID Board may not spend the levy monies for any other purpose or agenda without conducting an alternation ballot first

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BID workplan

Events and promotional activities

A proposed programme of varied weekly events and promotional activities held throughout the town centre.

What's it all about?

The goal of events and promotional activities are to:

- Drive awareness of Letchworth, especially to those who are not regular visitors
- Showcase the town's core offer to consumers in order to build new customer relationships and consumer habits
- Build our relationship with residents of the town and surrounding areas by inviting them to act as partners in putting on events in the town centre
- Increase vibrancy of the town including as a social and leisure destination
- Increase footfall in the town, both for the duration of the event and in the longer term

Specific actions include:

- Ensuring there is an event or promotional activity in the town every week of the year, seeking to ensure that the current Town Centre Partnership's large events programme is retained whilst investing in improvements to existing activities (e.g. craft market, farmers' market)
- Working with BID businesses to help them maximize the benefit from events and promotions
- Supporting businesses and community groups to develop their own events and promotions where these will add value to the economy of the town centre

How much will it cost?

Our aim is to continue to seek additional support for our events programme through existing grant-making channels to supplement the expense. Initially though, **£270,000** has been identified to be spent on this element over the five years.

Access and parking

Reviewing those aspects of parking which are most important to visitors and businesses and then addressing outstanding problems in order to increase footfall and dwell time in the town centre.

What's it all about?

The Government sponsored Portas review has suggested that parking arrangements in town centres significantly influence their fortunes. Our conversations with Letchworth businesses also confirm that parking is a priority for action within the BID.

We believe that the wide array of different parking options and price structures confuse customers and leads them to cut their visits shorter than they would otherwise, and that charging for parking deters visits.

Our aim is to:

- Work to ensure that parking issues never deter footfall or dwell time in the town

Specific actions include:

- Bring together relevant stakeholders to review town centre parking, pricing and signage and take action as needed to:
- Provide additional free parking provision within the town centre
- Ensure a uniform pricing structure is in place in the majority of town centre car parks
- Increase parking signage to ensure customers access is made as simple as possible
- Seek to improve the availability of more short-term free on street parking
- [Optimising visitor dwell time in Letchworth by championing alternative car parking payment mechanisms](#)

How much will it cost?

The cost of these actions will depend significantly on what changes to the pricing of car parks is needed. We have allocated up to **£130,000** over the life of the BID.

Marketing

Promoting our core offer to our primary and secondary catchments via all media formats with an increasing focus on digital media.

What's it all about?

Our aims are to:

- Increase the penetration and geographic range of current town centre marketing in order to tell more people about the positive changes taking place in Letchworth Town Centre
- Develop the Love Letchworth brand to communicate that Letchworth is attractive, sociable, innovative, creative, convenient and thriving
- Make it easier for potential customers to find out what is on offer in Letchworth

Specific actions include:

- Introducing and promoting a new Love Letchworth website with individual pages allowing each business to amend their own information as well as provide unique offers for consumers.
- Increase use of radio and print advertising to promote town centre activity and offer
- Increasing use of social media including using community members as town centre reporters and champions
- Improving information available to consumers about specific products and services available in Letchworth

How much will it cost?

We believe that the increased use of the internet will allow us to keep costs to a minimum and still have an impact so we have allocated **£205,000** for this activity from 2014 to 2019.

Developing our offer

Developing the core offer of the businesses in the town centre

What's it all about?

The range, relevance and quality of the social, leisure, service (business and personal) and retail offer in Letchworth Town Centre is key to improving the footfall in the town and trade for its businesses.

We aim to:

- Support existing businesses to develop what they offer customers, in terms of product, service and experience
- Work with landlords to improve the range of businesses and organisations present in the town centre, on a temporary or permanent basis
- Work with The Foundation, North Herts College, The District Council and others to develop a programme to identify and support local fledgling entrepreneurs

Specific actions include:

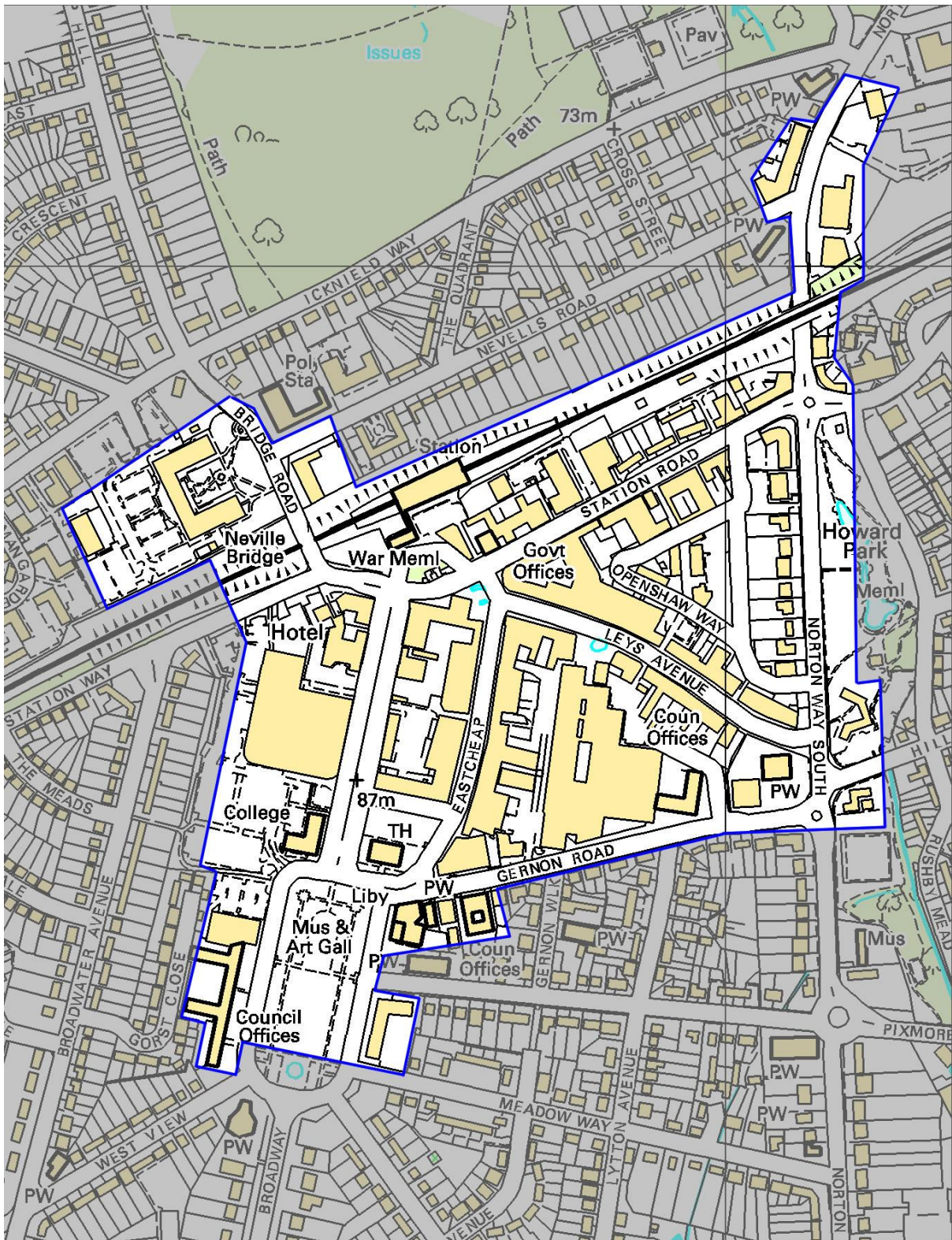
- Establishing a business skills training programme to provide easy access to sector expertise
- A moderated online forum for residents/potential customers to develop a dialogue with the BID team and BID businesses about our offer
- Establishing a mystery shopper programme to improve customer experience
- Support for brand placement through use of Love Letchworth by each member of the BID in their external literature/stationery
- Improve the digital presence and accessibility of BID businesses in Letchworth to ensure that they are able to benefit from the marketing, engagement, and sales power of the internet
- Working with landlords to develop an attract and retain strategy for businesses which form a key part of our desired offer
- Working with potential partners to establish “pop-up” temporary stores
- Working with landlords to improve the assessment and support offered to potential new businesses in the town centre during the lease negotiation process

How much might it cost?

£135,000 has been identified to be spent on all elements of this strand of activity over the five years of the BID.

We are also conscious of the substantial commercial area around our town centre where there are many successful companies that trade nationally and internationally. The future strength and appeal of Letchworth sits as much with them as it does with the town centre and consequently we expect to develop dialogue with key commercial companies drawn from outside the BID boundary on the topic of the strategic positioning of Letchworth. We intend to develop the concept of being a “Friend of “Love Letchworth”, inviting some of the bigger organisations to support and sponsor some of our activities, particularly where they have an appeal to their employees or can help them achieve their own business goals.

The BID area



Street listing within BID boundary:

Arena Parade
Eastcheap
Leys Avenue
Commerce Way
Central Approach
Gernon Road
Broadway
Station Road
Station Place
Station Parade
Norton Way North (part thereof)
Norton Way South (part thereof)
Howard Park Corner
The Arcade
The Wynd
Openshaw Way

The boundary has been created to encompass as many businesses in the town centre as possible that will gain a direct benefit from the BID process for a very modest outlay in terms of the levy to be applied. Stretching the area covered beyond this boundary would considerably dilute the influence the BID might have while keeping it very tightly to the obvious trading streets would not give us sufficient budget to have any meaningful impact.

Income and Expenditure

Income and expenditure projection

<u>INCOME</u>	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	Total
	£K	£K	£K	£K	£K	£K
BID levy	135	139	143	147	152	716
Voluntary	10	10	15	15	20	70
External Funds	25	50	50	75	75	275
TOTAL INCOME	170	199	208	237	247	1061
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	Total
	£K	£K	£K	£K	£K	£K
Events and promotional activities	40	50	55	60	65	270
Access and parking	30	25	25	25	25	130
Marketing & engagement	30	40	35	50	50	205
Developing our offer	20	25	30	30	30	135
Internal communications	6	7	7	9	20	49
Overheads						
BID Manager and staff	25	30	35	40	40	170
Office/ power/ telephone/ rent/ stationery/ services/ insurance	5	5	5	5	5	25
Audits / legal/ accounts	3	3	3	3	3	15
Contingency	10	12	13	13	14	62
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	169	197	208	235	252	1061

Budget notes

25% will be spent on events and activities

12% will be invested in car parking incentives

19% will be spent on marketing and promotion

13% will be retained to develop our offer

5% will be spent on internal communications

20% has been set aside for administration and overheads

6% will be secured for contingency which ultimately may be used to finance a renewal ballot

Likely matched funding and additional income of c£345,000 has been included. External income is based on similar experiences in the more successful BIDs around the country. See 'Additional Income' below
Internal communication spend in year five includes provision for a renewal ballot marketing
Levy at 1.5% of rateable value for all town centre properties
Year on year inflation will be included at the acknowledged RPI rate at the time. Currently it is running at +3%
No allowance made for the inclusion of new properties
VAT equity is assumed

The levy

The income to drive the activities outlined earlier mean that the annual BID levy needs to be set at **1.5%** of your current business rateable value as shown in The District Council's RV listing as at the 1st January each year. The levy will be payable for the whole year in one payment. There will be no adjustments during the year to reflect changes to the liable party's property or status. Where a property is taken out of rating (e.g. due to demolition or a split or merged assessment), the BID levy will be due up to the day before the effective date of the removal from the Rating List and will be apportioned accordingly. If any property within the BID boundary that is currently unrated enters the Council's listing then it too becomes liable to pay a BID levy from the day it is listed. The statutory framework on which BIDs are based means that **it will be compulsory for all business rate paying companies within the BID boundary to pay the annual BID levy**, regardless of whether or not they voted in the ballot or however they voted, if they did. Payment will be regulated in the same manner as that for business rates collection.

The BID arrangement is for five years. At the end of that time the BID can be renewed by ballot for a further term or simply switched off if it has not delivered all that it has promised.

Call 01462 486999 to find precisely how much your levy will be.

The levy of 1.5p in the £ of rateable value will generate approximately £135,000 each year. The table below gives some examples of the typical cost to local businesses:

Property Rateable Value	Annual levy at 1.5%	Weekly cost of the levy
£5,000	£75	£1.44
£10,000	£150	£2.88

£20,000	£300	£5.76
£50,000	£750	£14.42

We are grateful to North Hertfordshire District Council for their support for the development of the BID and their agreement to provide electoral services and levy collection without any additional charge to the BID Company. Similarly we must express our thanks to The Foundation for their wholehearted commitment to the town centre and its future development through a BID.

The BID Board will aim to increase the available funds through grants and other sources by a further £345,000 in five years (or more), making available to Letchworth businesses an investment pot of over £1,000,000 over the next five years. ***Without a BID in place, additional funding of this magnitude would simply not be possible***

Additional Income

Illustration of typical additional funding raised by other town centre BIDs to augment the levy income added here:

Exclusions

All hereditaments will pay the full 1.5% levy apart from the following:

- The library
- Religious organisations
- Public toilets
- Individual single parking spaces
- Communication masts
- Advertising hoardings
- Police, Fire & Ambulance stations

Ballot and voting

Businesses within the Letchworth BID area will be asked to vote on whether or not they wish Letchworth BID to become operational and to implement this Business Plan over the coming five years (i.e. until March 2019).

Letchworth Town Centre Partnership is the instigator of the 28 day postal ballot and it will be administered and overseen by electoral services department of The District Council, under statutory conditions as laid down in the Statutory Instrument - Business Improvement Districts 2004 - No. 244.

Ballot papers will be sent out in late September to the person identified in the register held by the Council. Completed ballot forms are to be returned no later than the 29th October 2013 by 5pm. The result will be announced within 24 hours.

Each rateable property has one vote. A proxy vote is available.

Where a property is vacant, undergoing refurbishment or being demolished, the property owner will be entitled to vote.

To succeed the ballot has to meet two tests:

- **A simple majority of those who vote must register a 'Yes' AND**
- **The aggregate rateable value of those that vote 'Yes' must be greater than that of those that vote 'No'**

As with all local and national ballots, the BID ballot is statutory and binding and will apply to all businesses inside the BID area regardless of whether or not they intend to vote and how they might vote.

Governance

Proposed Board Structure

We intend that the BID Board ultimately will be elected by the levy payers themselves but for the first six months of operation the current BID Steering Group will assume control of the new company to enable it to start work quickly and effectively. After this time an Extraordinary General Meeting will be called during which elections will be held to determine BID Board members. For the purposes of Companies House regulations, three of the Board will be invited to be returned as formal Directors of the Company. Their position and role will be reviewed and renewed (or not!) each year at the Annual General Meeting.

Elected Business Members	SEATS	VOTES
Retail & retail services	4	4
Banking & commerce	1	1
Legal & property	1	1
Hotels, restaurants, pubs and cafés	2	2
Art & culture	1	1
Stakeholder Members	SEATS	VOTES
Shopping centre management	1	1
North Herts College	1	1
North Hertfordshire District Council	1	1
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation	1	1
Observer Roles	SEATS	VOTES
Letchworth community (including college student union representative)	2	0

The Chairman of the Board will be elected from within the nominated Elected Business Members only.

Our intention is wind down the existing Letchworth Town Centre Partnership and create a new BID company entitled “Love Letchworth” with a fresh, elected Board of members and directors. The assets of the Partnership will be transferred into the new company together with any essential work programmes for which there is a budget available to sustain them. Both The Foundation and The District Council have agreed to continue to provide grant funding to cover all retained services provided by the present Town Centre Management team so that the BID’s income can be directed solely to incremental activities and added value. **The Board will be totally independent** and enter into a “memorandum of understanding” with key partners.

This business plan complies with the British Retail Consortium and Inter Bank Rating Forum guidelines for a the formation and operation of a Business Improvement District

Exit strategy

It will be the BID Board's responsibility to generate an exit strategy. The BID programme lasts for five years. It is our hope and intention that these projects will prove so successful that the town would wish to continue with them and/or set up additional projects delivered by sustaining the BID for a further five-year term. The Board will consult with the levy payers on this and, if there is not to be another BID, will formulate an exit strategy via its major partners with a view to continuing these projects as far as is possible under a different guise.

Key Performance Indicators

It will be important to monitor the progress of Letchworth BID. Performance data will give you, our key levy payers and investors, evidence that we are delivering the targets identified in this Business Plan.

Setting performance targets will motivate BID staff and give information about progress and achievements.

Our Key Performance Indicators will include:

- Footfall counts
- Business and customer surveys
- Vacancy rates
- Parking statistics
- Increasing dwell time
- Post event analysis
- Web analytics
- Business performance sampling
- Mystery shopping output

Steering Group

For further details contact our Steering Group members: -

Lee Boswell	LTCP	Chris Gerard	Innventure
David Pitcher	North Herts College	Cllr David Levett	North Herts District Council
John Lewis	Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation	Chris Stafford	Morrisons
Maria Iredale	Arts Centre	Thomas Humfrey	Postal Pursuits
Maureen Davison	Just For Me	Michael Humphris	Tri Sports
Emma Doherty	Caketopia	Paul Haynes	GSSC
Frank Seldevig	Your IT Studio	Richard Vernon	Annie's Glass
Camilla Hamilton	Community Rep	XXXXX	Student Rep

Our thanks for helping preparing this document and other supporting literature go to Chris Hollins of Pfbp UK LLP

The design and artwork for the prospectus was created by Ross Walpole and Ryan Gaston from North Herts College

TCM contact details:

Website and Facebook references

In summary

Voting Yes will establish Letchworth businesses' desire to work together in a managed, professional and commercial fashion to tackle our greatest challenges and to seize every opportunity to grow the town and the businesses trading in it. Here are some very good reasons for putting a tick in the yes box on the ballot form when it arrives:

Ten good reasons to vote YES:

- **Gives** local business a **voice** -a way to be heard
- Unique opportunity to assume a leadership role and **take ownership**
- Delivery of tangible projects to give people a **reason to visit**
- **Raise awareness** of Letchworth's offer
- An opportunity to **build footfall** through events and promotional activities
- **Improve access and dwell time** for customers
- **Provides** additional sustainable **resources**
- Building **stronger links** with our community
- A chance to **improve local business skills**
- An opportunity to **transform** our **local economy** for the better

Outline timetable

Date	Action description
30 July	District Council cabinet to ratify BID BP and potential company formation
August	Voting electorate confirmed and hustings begin
10 September	Formal launch of Business Plan and vote YES campaign
16 September	Intention to hold a ballot notices issued
2 October	Postal ballot papers issued and 28 day voting period commences
29 October	Formal Day of Ballot, post-voting announcement
January 2014	BID Company commences operations and the first BID term starts
March 2014	First levy bills issued