

**ROYSTON FIRST**

**Royston Business Improvement District**

**Renewal Business Plan**

**April 2014 to March 2019**

**Royston First BID Company Limited –trading as Royston First**

**DRAFT**

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Will require updating once the text is formally approved>>>

## Foreword by the Chairman of Royston First:\*

### Commerce and Community together –a common purpose, to survive and prosper

*“BIDs have been working their magic across the UK for twelve years and for the last five of them Royston has used it as an important tool to keep the worst of the recession and criminals (with one of the lowest crime levels in the UK) at bay and in the process put back into this community something of the past that was valued but lost –a local cinema. (Based on the figures from the first 3 months, at least 5,000 local people a year will now bring their spend into Royston instead of heading out of town). Together we’ve made a real and solid difference and I want work to continue in the same vein for the next five years, bringing the town and its community together to continue its culture and heritage as well as make and sustain a local employment base.”*

Over the past five years, working together and pooling precious resources, we have created a fighting fund to help improve safety, modernise part of the physical trading environment of the town centre, simplify the access in and out of the Industrial Estate and helped to promote Royston to a wider audience of spenders and potential investors. All of this was done IN ADDITION TO the services and facilities provided for us by our statutory bodies.

Every penny of your valuable contribution has been spent on providing the projects you wanted to see to improve Royston as a place to do business. As we launched the BID for the first time, the sheer impact and duration of the economic recession in this country and across the world was an unknown dimension. It has touched towns and cities particularly harshly, robbing us of investment, flexibility and experience in both the private sector but most especially in the public sector where budget cuts and staff reductions continue to threaten service provision as well as local jobs. With the extra assistance of the BID, Royston has largely held off the recession – as illustrated by the fact that footfall in our town centre has remained constant (in fact improved by +4%) where as nationally a decline of 13% is the average.

With better times on the horizon for us all now is the time to consolidate what we have achieved over the last five years whilst also introducing new schemes and propositions that will give continued heart to our business community.

Next January you will be asked to vote in favour of the **renewing the business mandate to keep Royston First** BID operating for the benefit of us all. Businesses, large or small, local or national will have just one vote, one chance to say yes. Make sure you know who in your organisation is entitled to cast that vote and ensure they have the information they need to make this vital, positive decision for Royston. Without a yes the bills stop ... but so do all the good work and the town’s future state will sit with a local authority under pressure to maintain even its existing services.

Along with many other business leaders in the town, I have spent my time and company money backing **Royston First**. We enjoy the support of many local people as well a number from national organisations that trade here, together with the District and Town Councils. Together we can make sure our BID is the unique answer to many of the issues that still challenge us all now. Our website [www.Roystonfirst.com](http://www.Roystonfirst.com) will give you lots more information, check it out now!

Watch out for the ballot papers in the post and make sure you tick the box that says “Yes” to a better, brighter Royston, a town with promise, a town with a future.

With voting very close, please phone **01763 878242** if you have any queries or would like to discuss helping the BID to another five years with me or any of the Royston First BID renewal team.

Chairman.....XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

\*New text to come for the man himself....via Geraint!

**To remind you, here are the basics about Royston First and BIDs in general:**

- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a **tried and tested success**. There are over 164 now in the UK with more in the pipeline because of the track-record of achievement since 2002
- A BID is managed by an **independent business-led company** running a programme of additional services over and above already provided by the public sector which will increase footfall and trade in a tightly defined geographical area. For us, this includes, bringing the Industrial Estate to collaborate with the town centre
- **Businesses decide on the projects to be carried out** by identifying their key issues and agreeing the level of funds they will pay to make a real difference to the trading environment around their premises
- As happened here five years ago, **businesses show their approval through via the ballot box**. With a Yes vote, funds are made available through a statutory levy that comes equally from every business within the BID area. As we did for a number of projects in the first BID period, this funding is then used to attract in matched funding, building up the available pot of resources to tackle issues previously beyond our grasp
- After one **term of the BID of 5 years** we believe there is a willingness on behalf of a majority of businesses here to see the BID continue all the tasks it does now and to also launch some new projects. We seek another “yes” vote to let Royston First keep going until at least 2019
- While Royston town centre offers a selection of independent retailers, cafés, restaurants, bistros, and pubs, **when we recently consulted businesses they said that they want more vitality and customer choice to help compete with other towns in the vicinity with greater resources**
- The next phase of the Royston BID will generate in the region of three-quarters of a million pounds over 5 years from April 2014 to spend exclusively on measures to help the town progress

and compete. **Every penny will be spent on carrying out the projects suggested by the businesses here in Royston**

- The Royston BID area will continue to remain safe, will become more attractive and will be better promoted, so that **there will be tangible benefits for businesses, workers, residents and visitors**
- Our BID renewal proposal is put together with the understanding that the money contributed by all our businesses is hard earned and that a concrete pay-back is required, rather like a dividend on an investment. **Your BID renewal team is determined that the return will equal or ideally exceed the contributions received**
- As benefits from the BID accrue, we will make sure **you are kept in the picture** and bang up to date on what has worked and the impact it has had (something we perhaps didn't do so well in the first BID period). A twice-yearly review will be circulated and we intend to organise stakeholder meetings and business networking sessions where you can hear the results for yourself and feed in new ideas as they occur to you
- This will be a business led initiative – all businesses are once again invited to be proactively involved to ensure we maximise this unique opportunity to make our town a natural choice for local people to spend time and money here, as well as to have some fun too, in essence, ensuring that **Royston people feel involved and appreciated in their town**

### What are the benefits of a BID?

A BID has guaranteed income over a fixed period to invest in activities purely designed to enhance the business environment. There is no “free-loading” where companies enjoy all the benefits without paying a contribution to the cost. With a BID, everyone pays and everyone gains.

The renewed BID will operate for a further five years so we will know how much income will be generated and can be allocated to short, medium and long-term projects. We intend to continue to supplement the levy income by creating other funding streams too, such as public sector grants, earned income and sponsorship of particular initiatives. NHDC has agreed to run the ballot for the renewal process and collect the levy free of charge and they will pay their way on property in the area that they own or operate from. This means far more of the income can be directed towards actions that will make a real difference.

Because our BID is spread across the town centre and the Industrial Estate, we recognise that it is made up of various many different facets. We thought it would be useful to suggest exactly how each of these elements will gain from the BID process:

### **The corporate sector**

- An improved working environment, which will increase business ability to recruit and retain quality staff and in turn, minimise loss of expertise
- A reduction in staff turnover, to deliver an improved bottom line
- Continued low levels of criminal damage to property, both company and private
- Improved perception by clients following a more positive experience in Royston
- A strong, collective voice on key issues for businesses

### **The retail and professional services sector**

- A positive impact on footfall as a direct result of an improved business environment
- A reduction in retail crime and stock loss via our safety and security actions
- Longer dwell-time leading to increased visitor spend (which our surveys suggest has dropped over recent years)
- A safer and more attractive shopping environment which will optimise or chances of attracting new businesses to the town centre
- Sustained investment over a five year period

### **The community**

- A safer and more secure environment for residents and visitors
- Marketing and promotion projects will raise profile and footfall
- More activities and amenities to engage and entertain
- Better employment prospects for local workers
- Greater civic pride and pleasure in an attractive, green environment
- Family costs reduced by have to travel less to shop, spend leisure time or use amenities

### **Why keep the BID going in Royston?**

Despite the BID, the town centre is struggling to hold its own in the face of a national decline in retail sales, increased competition from online sites and other local outlets not subject to the same constraints.

As we have proved, together we are strong and can sustain our collective fight back. Alone many businesses stand little chance of surviving and the spiral of decline will take hold.

The Industrial Estate on the other hand, is in robust health with several new businesses choosing it for their regional base as well as some hugely significant international “names” scattered across the area. We must to continue to ensure that it is seen as an attractive location to invest in, particularly as a difficult target for criminals. Publicising the area’s successes more widely will ultimately support the wider town and the whole community.

## Our strategic objectives:

By working closely with our partners from North Hertfordshire District Council, Royston Town Council Hertfordshire Highways, The Trustees of The Royston Cave, Royston Museum and Hertfordshire Police, we seek to:

- Grow the economic health and well-being of the whole town
- Continue to improve community facilities and social cohesion
- Maintain the perception of safety across the entire town
- Increase and promote local businesses and the standards they trade by
- Increase the involvement of businesses in the broader, local community
- Work smarter with other organisations that are dedicated to raising the profile and appeal of Royston

## Renewal research, planning and preparation:

A new Business Plan has been created from research conducted over the last three months, sampling ideas and opinions from business owners and operators, their workforce, shoppers, residents and visitors to the town centre, all focused on how we can work together to help Royston survive and eventually prosper. We've found a few people who used to shop in Royston and now don't so that we can understand what needs to be done to attract them back.

We did this by employing two companies, **C4B Media and pfb UK** to conduct in-depth interviews with a statistically valid number of people, either at their place of work or out on the streets of Royston town centre. C4B also sought the opinions of all businesses throughout the town and the Industrial Estate via a detailed questionnaire that was specially prepared for use here.

From the ideas generated through the interviews and examining closely what has worked for BIDs of a similar size to Royston, we have come up with a range of potential actions. From a long list we have fine-tuned future activities down to those that feature here. The **BID will only provide services that you, the businesses, want and can see benefit from.**

Naturally we continue to monitor the output and activities of NHDC and Hertfordshire Police on a regular and consistent basis, so that we can guarantee that all our **new services and projects will be additional to those already provided.**

A database of eligible premises has been drawn up from on-street examination of the existing BID boundary and there have been some minor tweaks to the area and the businesses covered, largely so that we can concentrate on making a real difference without "spreading the jam" too thinly. We now **have 398 recorded** businesses that form the electoral base to which all communications will be directed. This database will be kept up to date to help with current and future communications. If you would like to acquaint us of your email address to facilitate future communications then our contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Our research and consultations were undertaken to identify:

- What services of those we currently provide should we keep and what can we dispense with?
- What should we tackle that is new or should be done in a different way?
- What would encourage existing customers to visit more often and/or to stay longer?
- What aspects currently prevent more people from using Royston more frequently that could be addressed to raise Royston's share of the local spend?
- Are there any other community or council-based actions that interviewees would wish a representative organisation to tackle?

Generally speaking, the consensus of opinion about the town centre from businesses in the town centre and on the Industrial Estate points towards identifying more resource for:

- Making the town a busier and more fun place to be, ultimately improving local and national appeal
- Further 'polishing' of more of the core areas of the town
- Working up and delivering a strategy to bring more traders into the town centre
- Further enhancement of the 'look and feel' of the town centre including a more proactive approach to the enforcement of standards
- Making it even easier and more appealing for people to get from the Industrial Site to the town centre at times that suit them
- Better communication, co-operation and commitment between the BID and businesses to work together as a cohesive force for change locally
- Even more for local people (especially the children) to do in and around the town
- Making Royston truly a market town and one that attracts stall-holders and customers from across the whole of the sub-region

As the town centre improves, we will conduct more extensive marketing and promotion to a wider circle of consumers and new businesses. This will spark a virtuous circle of expansion as Royston takes a larger share of the available market and more businesses tune into the increased profitability to be generated from it. In time, this too will increase demand for space from new entrepreneurs.

The proposed solutions detailed in this Business Plan have been worked up by the BID renewal team and then shared during further consultation with businesses. We have then circulated our proposals in the draft prospectus and these have been further amended to reflect the views of the experienced commercial managers and stakeholders.

The research and consultation process has demonstrated that there is much more still to be done in a climate where competition is increasing, Internet usage is rising fast and resources are under threat because of the impact of the recession on national and local public sector budgets.

Working alone and in isolation, none of us can make any difference to the way the town is heading. Pooling our efforts and resources, working together with a common purpose is the only solution. We know that a BID is the natural and obvious solution as we, along with many other business communities



across the UK have discovered already. With a moderately successful set-up already in place, we would be foolish to discard it and all the advantages we know it can bring.

### **Key findings from the research**

Here are some of the hard facts from the detailed research we have undertaken in the last three months with both our businesses and the customer that visit the town centre particularly.

### **From answers received from over 50% of the business levypayers (representing over 3,000 employees):**

- +77% have seen trade remain constant or improved over the past year
- +94% expect trade to remain the same or increase in the coming year
- Rising business costs are viewed as the greatest challenge to future profitability
- +56% feel that Royston has remained the same or has improved as a place to conduct business in the last four years, since the BID was introduced

### **.....and from Royston users:**

- 87% visit once a week or more frequently but stay less than two hours in total
- 50% come to town by car and a fifth of them still find parking less than easy
- 80% feel that the town's commercial offer is disappointingly poor
- 94% like the market but would prefer it to trade for longer and more frequently
- Cambridge, Stevenage and Letchworth are the principal competitors
- The park and the friendliness of the people are Royston's key strengths
- 55% would spend more time and money in the town if the shopping offer was better

Finally we undertook business and on-street surveys in the run up to setting up the BID for the first time here in Royston and felt it would be useful to compare some of the points where the two sets of surveys had common questions. Here are a few of the more interesting points:

### **Some notable points between the on-street surveys this year and in 2007:**

- Food shopping -3%, other shopping down from 54% to 29%
- Those staying for under two hours in 2007 were 85%. Now 78% - the balance staying longer
- Huge decline in shops noted in 2007, less so now (57% now cf 73% last time)
- Car use constant, public transport up +8% in 2013
- Ease of finding a car parking space has declined over the five years -3%
- Car parking cost less critical now though
- Impression of cleanliness has declined -7% in five years

- Signage and public information declined -14% in five years
- Shops range and variety is constant. 20% only think it is good or better
- Huge number think the market is better now than in 2007
- Visits to town in the evening up +11%
- Lots more people shopping in Cambridge and Stevenage now (+16% and +25%)
- Best liked now for the park & friendliness compared with atmosphere & appearance in 2007

**Comparison of business surveys between 2007 and 2013:**

- Reported turnover fairly consistent across the five years between the two sets of results
- In 2007 74% thought that turnover would improve in the coming year. That figure in 2013 is 89%
- Business rates and overall costs of substantially more concern now than in 2007
- 33% rated customer parking good or better in 2007. 29% think the same now
- Range and variety of shops rated good or better by just 15%, consistently across both surveys
- Impression of the market has moved from 22% to 54% positive
- 32% suggested improving the local retail offer in 2013, against 17% in 2007
- Better parking arrangements requested by 28% now compared with 23% in 2007

## The Royston First Renewal Proposition:

### What are our priorities?

The results of the research detailed above prompted us to come up with the following prioritised actions we plan to undertake over the course of the next five years:

- **Business as usual.....the activities the BID does now that would disappear if a 'NO' vote is the result of the forthcoming renewal ballot**
- **Making sure Royston is the market town of North Hertfordshire**
- **Business to business.....activities we can do together to help each other**
- **Making more of marketing, promotion and events**
- **Picking and delivering another big win**

These themes are listed in the order determined by our consultation with businesses in and out of town. They clearly put sustaining the current successes at the head of the requirement of a renewed BID process. The next key issue is the market offer and its importance to the town centre. Our activities are intended to re-introduce civic pride for the town by enhancing its assets to provide more for local people to appreciate while making it easier and more convenient to use regularly. Making it cleaner and safer are natural goals and the safer aspect applies equally to the industrial complex, where signage and security remain particular issues. Once we have "polished" Royston, we want to extol it to a wider audience by making more of its history, culture and diversity. Events, festivals and added attractions will give ample opportunity to bring life, fun and enjoyment back into the local equation.

### Our activity themes for 2014 to 2019:

#### Business as Usual

The BID has delivered a number of top-line projects and activities in its first four years, many of which are now taken for granted. We know the loss of them would have a negative impact if the BID stops, but likewise, unless we allocate time and money to sustaining them, these projects would simply disappear as the BID changes direction. Consequently we have built the following into our forward budget plans, knowing they represent a lot of what you value in the BID:

- Operation Artemis (uniformed late night police patrols)
- Free-After-Three parking and parking scratch cards
- Pigeon control (moving them from whence they cause most offence)
- Royston Focus newsletter promoting the town throughout its hinterland
- Shop window dressing and premises maintenance
- Support for Royston Means Business, The Royston Arts Festival, The Easter trail, The Christmas Carnival and other seasonal activities
- ANPR installation and maintenance
- Christmas lights installation and modernisation/extension

- ❖ We plan to work towards the Cinema being established as a separate community interest company (CIC), generating sufficient revenue to maintain its existence and operation independently of the BID.

Total anticipated spend on these items over five years is expected to be: **£331.5K**

### **Royston, the market town of North Hertfordshire**

Royston contains many attractive buildings and lots of green space in and around the town. It has also been known for its traditional market. However, empty retail units remain a major concern locally as our research testifies. There is a national decline in the numbers of smaller, independent businesses, especially those selling clothes, commodity and convenience merchandise, and Royston is not immune from this. We want to re-invigorate our campaign to repopulate vacant premises by running a pilot project to return quality retailing in the town, possibly by using pop-up shops initially.

Another of our goals is to sustain Royston as an attractive market town in the eyes of local residents and an ever-increasing number of visitors drawn from the wider catchment population by investing time and money into the market as well as whole of the commercial area in the town centre. We have earmarked £12,000 as priming funding in each of the initial years, with more subsequently to keep the momentum going so that we see a greater number of stalls offering quality merchandise at competitive prices. We would like the market to operate on more days and for longer whenever possible too.

- Run an sustained and vigorous campaign to bring a new and better commercial offer into the town centre, ideally by attracting quality retailers here
- Encourage and support new stall-holders and more sustainable events such as a food fayre, independents' day, different market options such as a continental market etc
- Assist retailing in general with shopping guides, more advertising, promotion and e-commerce
- Further physical enhancement of the town centre on the lines of Angel Pavement and Fish Hill Place, perhaps along the High Street itself
- Add to our 'Gateways' by further highlighting features and attractions
- Further upgrades to the signage throughout and around the town
- A large displayed map of the Industrial Estate with route indicators prominent on it

Our market development activity will cost around **£145K** between 2014 and 2019.

### **Supporting Local Business**

There are a number of activities that we want to offer direct to our stakeholder businesses that will directly improve their performance or reduce the cost of operating.

- Help with web site creation and management for all businesses that want it
- A generic website for the town's businesses with rolling banner advertising a feature
- Promotion of employee vacancy opportunities on the website
- Specific on-line offers
- Improved employee parking facilities in town and in the Industrial Estate
- Operate a retail skills academy – assisting new and existing retailers with business skills training

- Cardboard and wastepaper recycling
- Bulk purchase of business basics such as energy, security, insurance, maintenance and telecoms
- Employment Law helpline
- Increased security support for smaller businesses on the Industrial Estate

We expect to spend up to **£98K** over the next five years on this activity theme.

### **More Marketing, Promotion and Events**

Royston has significant housing close to the town centre and parks in which to run communal events such as carnivals, fetes, exhibitions and competitions. Greater engagement between the commercial areas of the town and the population will build a sense of ownership and discourage locals from seeking out such events in competitor destinations. Also, the town now has new areas in Angel Pavement and Fish Hill Square; a new cinema; a great deal of time and money spent on The Cave and the Museum; and, hopefully soon, a brand new Visitor Centre. We want to attract more people to come and enjoy this unique offer in a pleasant rural setting.

- We will produce a comprehensive guide that details not only our extensive commercial base but also the depth and scale of the manufacturing and research activities of our bigger businesses. We will be seeking additional grants and sponsorship (money, expertise or in-kind contributions) to extend our campaign even further
- Tourism is an unknown quantity in Royston but given the proximity of Cambridge and RAF Duxford, we feel it could become important development area for us. It's all a question of "setting out our stall" properly. £10K has been identified in Year Three to start actively publicising Royston to its hinterland and beyond, with a second tranche of promotion scheduled for Year Four
- Film clips of prominent local businesses planned with a total spend of £25K over the next two years
- The town app extended to allow visitors to use it as a tourist trail linking up all our key attractions
- A contribution to the new Visitor Centre

Total investment in marketing, promotion and events for the five years will be **£145K**

### **Another Big Win (or more!)**

Royston First has enjoyed several notable achievements during its first term, the Picture Palace, Operation Artemis, ANPR provision, the physical improvements in Angel Pavement and to Fish Hill Place being a few of the more obvious ones. Much of this has come about because of the private sector pool of cash the BID has generated via the levy that is then used to leverage in additional funding from other sources. We want to repeat this success over the next five years by identifying major projects then securing the total funding package to deliver them. Our attention currently favours:

- Town Square bought outright for use as a permanent market or car parking
- A children's Splash Park and boating centre
- The physical rejuvenation of High Street

- Communal on-site recreational and refreshment facilities for the Industrial Estate

We have built £35K into the budget for the later years of the next BID term to use as match-funding towards the cost of one or more of these ambitious targets. We will continue to canvass opinions on other similar potential projects while we work to grow the pot to pay for them.

**....and finally an added extra that we don't want to miss out on**

We are aware of conversation taking place locally around the thought that the presence and contribution of a local economic regeneration manager would be extremely beneficial to the key towns in North Hertfordshire, a role that has been absent in the District for the last six years. This deficiency puts this economic sub-region at a significant disadvantage compared with neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnerships and Zones, thus weakening our opportunities for additional inward investment and growth. The intention is to recruit a senior, experienced regeneration expert for the district, sharing the cost between two neighbouring BIDs (Hitchin and Letchworth) and the local authority, NHDC. However we would propose that the individual brought into the role would be "attached" to the private sector, working from the BID offices and with local business people rather than lost in the bureaucracy of the Council. Naturally Royston BID would not want to miss out on this, dividing the costs but sharing the time of this expertise. Consequently, our share of this cost has been allocated in the Supporting Local Business Support theme noted above. This idea of sharing such a facility between three BIDs is a unique one; possible only because of the common agency (pfb UK LLP) supporting the development of all three BIDs in North Hertfordshire, itself a unique situation in the UK.

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## Income and Expenditure:

### Income:

The renewal team examined the finances of the existing BID and compared them to the requirement to service the business and pay for both the existing activities and those that are new. They have decided that it is possible to finance the operation with a levy **set lower than the first term**. Thus we can announce that the levy rate **will reduce from 2% to 1.85%** of rateable value for all hereditaments above the value of £2,500 with smaller businesses paying a flat rate a £1 a week. The precise details of the mechanics of this follow under “Levy arrangements and collection” on [page 23](#). This is a **reduction of 7.5% on the previous five years**, despite inflation running throughout the period at least +3.0%.

As previously, the funds collected through the BID levy will be kept in a separate BID bank account, held by **Royston First BID Company Ltd**. The income from the levy and any extra funds attracted will be managed by a BID Board nominated and voted into place by you and used solely to fund the described local activities and services. **Thus all the money is kept locally, to be spent locally, only for the benefit of Royston.**

All income and expenditure will be reported regularly to the Board. The precise amounts to be allocated to the individual projects will be decided by them and monitored closely for compliance. Any significant variation away from this policy will require a further mandate from the entire electorate. We have specially created Memoranda and Articles of Association that drive this.

The Board will anticipate on an annual basis how funds for subsequent years will be allocated. This will be based on business feedback during the previous year and agreed priorities for the coming year, which permit some flexibility to respond to varying business requirements and the state of the external market. Regular reports will be offered to all stakeholders and they will have the chance to interrogate the Board and staff about the BID’s performance and plans at the Annual General Meeting when members of the Board will be nominated.

[Both NHDC and RTC have agreed to continue their support of the BID operation for the foreseeable future. They will contribute via the BID levy and have suggested that other grants may be available against match-funding as was seen during the first term of the BID. In addition to agreeing to provide grant funding, NHDC and RTC will, where possible, support the development of the BID Company with extra staff resources on top of the regular staff paid for by the BID income.]

### Expenditure:

The activity list earlier has been priced up using information available to us at this time. Once we have achieved the vital ‘**YES**’ vote from you, we will then devote the intervening weeks between achieving the mandate and launching the company to fine-tuning the proposals and setting up the contracts ready to make a start in April 2014. We will have to “cut our cloth” according to our means, spending only the money we have available without taking on expensive loans. The BID will have some overheads of course such as the management of the company and servicing the BID membership. How this will be done is explained in the following paragraphs entitled “The Management of the BID”. In the **Royston First BID**,

this element will be kept to a minimum to ensure we have the maximum amount of funding to spend on our declared activities.

**Projected BID income and expenditure over the five years 2014 to 2019:**

**Estimated BID income per year:**

	<b>Year One</b>	<b>Year Two*</b>	<b>Year Three</b>	<b>Year Four</b>	<b>Year Five</b>	<b>Total</b>
Levy receipts	152,000	156,000	161,000	166,000	171,000	<b>806,000</b>
Earned income	3,000	4,000	5,000	6,000	8,000	<b>26,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>155,000</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>171,000</b>	<b>172,000</b>	<b>179,000</b>	<b>832,000</b>

**Estimated BID expenditure per year:**

<b>BID projects</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Five-year total</b>
Business as usual	67,500	70,500	60,500	59,000	74,000	331,500
Marketing, promotion and events	25,000	27,000	30,000	31,000	32,000	145,000
Market town development	12,000	12,000	13,000	14,000	12,000	63,000
Supporting local business	19,000	19,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	98,000
Major project support (the Big Win)	0	0	10,000	15,000	10,000	35,000
Overheads and contingency	29,700	30,700	31,700	32,800	34,600	159,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>153,200</b>	<b>159,200</b>	<b>165,200</b>	<b>171,800</b>	<b>182,600</b>	<b>832,000</b>



Notes on the accounts:

- 1) These budgets are for illustration only. There are several factors that will influence the precise amounts collected and spent. However the BID board will not spend money it simply has not got
- 2) \*A typical inflation figure of +3% has been added to the income each year. The precise rate will vary. +3% on a typical levy payment of £250 a year added an additional £7.50 to the bill
- 3) A contingency of £5,000 per annum has been included. At the end of the next five years, assuming it is unused, it could be applied to cover the cost of a further BID renewal
- 4) Overheads are calculated as a fixed percentage of the overall income, at a figure lower than that recommended by the BID guidance notes from the InterBanking Federation with which this business plan complies

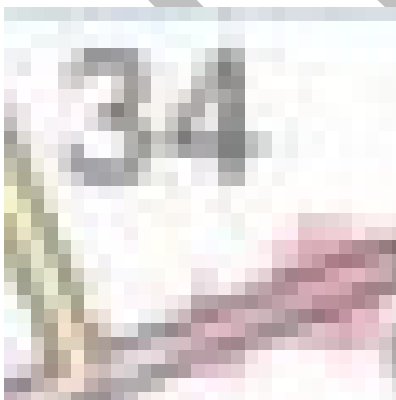
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**The Royston First modified BID area:**

The proposed BID area covers all or part of the following streets in Royston:

Angel Pavement	Green Drift	Market Hill	South Close
Baldock Road (part)	Greenfield	Melbourn Road	Stamford Avenue
Baldock Street	High Street	Melbourn Street	
Barkway Street	Jarman Way	Newark Close	Studlands Rise*
Barkway Road	Jepps Lane	Newmarket Road	Sun Hill*
Beverley Close	John Street	Old North Road	The Warren
Church Lane	King James Way	Orchard Road	Upper King Street
Fish Hill	Kneesworth Street	Poplar Drive	Woodcock Road
George Lane	London Road	Princes Mews	York Road
Grantham Close	Lower King Street	Priory Lane	York Way
		Queens Road	

\*Geraint to check



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\*New map to be sourced by Geraint

This is the official Royston BID boundary map. All eligible businesses in the streets inside this boundary will be subject to the terms and conditions of the proposed BID and they will vote and pay the BID levy at the prevailing rate at the start of each calendar year.

### Managing the BID next time round:

The fundamental proposition behind the **Royston First** was originally derived from close ties with the national BIDs movement in the UK following the creation of primary legislation to permit them to be formed in 2004. Grown from a local partnership that developed and delivered Town Centre Management (TCM), the then current Manager brought together a team of experienced individuals who represented the key dimensions of the town centre itself. They created the initial business plan and took it a vote by all businesses within a defined area across the whole of the town.

Following a successful “yes” vote in March 2009, the management and operation of the BID was undertaken through the auspices of the **Royston First Limited**, a company limited by guarantee. This meant that the legal and financial liabilities of the BID company were covered by the demands of both the BID legislation and the requirements of Companies House. The whole operation has been overseen and scrutinised via a further formal “Operating Agreement”, issued by NHDC prior to the initial commencement of services. This Agreement is a detailed set of protocols that covers the management of the BID as well as billing, collection and transfer of the BID levy.

We propose that the same arrangements are kept in place for the next term of the BID but that more hours are dedicated to the formal delivery of services and communications/ engagement with the businesses inside the BID boundary. The new BID Board will be responsible for the strategic management of the BID and be responsible for all decisions relating to the BID. The Board structure will remain representative of the types of business and stakeholders in the BID area, and will also include representation from the local and town councils. The Chair will be elected from the business members of the Board. Others may be co-opted onto the Board at its discretion.

The BID company will formally report results of the annual audit at its AGM with elections held then too. As well as this formal presentation, the performance of the company will be announced through ebulletins, a twice-yearly newsletter and regular information sessions for different groups of ratepayers.

Minor budget and project variations will be managed by staff and reported to the BID Board. Major variations will always be referred to the BID Board for approval except for substantive deviations, which will have to be put to a vote of all levypayers. Funding may be transferred between projects (due to projects being amended or postponed) as the needs of the business dictate on the authority and instruction of the BID Board, without resorting to an alteration ballot.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association that govern **Royston First BID Company Ltd.** can be found on the website and will be reviewed and modified in the light of changes to the Company made following the renewal ballot.

As the BID is largely an investment by you as local businesses in the management of the trading environment around your premises, it is vital that control remains with those who are paying for the extra services. Consequently the Board members will be nominated by you and directly accountable only to you as the contributing businesses. It will have a private sector chairperson and aims to consist of 17 members (as a maximum) including 13 elected Board members representing the different sectors of the levy payers in the BID area:

Major industrial site businesses	2
Independent industrial site operators	2
Independent businesses	2
Independent retail businesses	2
Pub and club operators	1
Hoteliers and Restaurants	1
Cafés, bistros and takeaways	1
Financial and legal services	1
Community representatives	2
Property	1
Council	1
Police	1
TOTAL	17

\*The BID Manager will be an ex-officio member of the Board also

The Board will meet at least three times per year. There will be working groups, each led by a different Board director, for each major project area.

All members will be determined by ballot of the voters with a third of the Board offering to retire each year by rotation.

A stakeholders' report will be issued every six months to keep you informed of progress and there will be regular email bulletins sent out giving you the latest BID news updates. Our website will continuously stream information both to stakeholders and your regulars and visitors to the town.

The accounts for the company and its business plan and the delivery against it will be regularly assessed by external auditors and scrutineers to ensure maximum return on investment for those paying the BID levy. They will be audited independently on an annual basis and be presented at an AGM to which all levy payers will be invited.

At this annual AGM levy payers will also receive reports on the BID performance during the year and can question the Board on the progress of the BID and the town, before new Board members are elected.

**Royston First** will recommence operations for a further five-year period, beginning 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and ceasing on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, unless a further renewal ballot has taken place in the preceding three months that generates a mandate to continue for a further specified term.

Details of the **Royston First BID Company Limited** draft Memorandum & Articles of Association are available to view online at [www.roystonfirst.com](http://www.roystonfirst.com)

### **The BID ballot:**

During January 2014 businesses will be asked to cast their vote for the BID in a formal and confidential postal ballot. The Electoral Services Department of NHDC will be responsible for managing the ballot, to ensure it is carried out fairly and is not subject to any external influence that might defeat the wishes and intentions of the majority of those voting.

### **Arrangements for the BID ballot:**

Ballot papers will be posted to all eligible voters on or by the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and all ballot papers must be returned to The Ballot Holder by not later than 5pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 (known as the 'day of the ballot').

### **Who can vote in the ballot?**

All business ratepayers (non domestic) in the defined BID area and who are listed on the Council's database as at 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 are eligible to vote in the ballot (the date of the

Notice of Ballot). People entitled to vote in this ballot will have one vote in respect of each hereditament occupied or (if unoccupied) owned by them in the area of the proposed BID.

#### **Issue of ballot papers:**

Ballot papers will be posted to eligible voters by the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

#### **Lost ballot papers:**

If you (or your proxy -if one has been appointed) do not receive your ballot paper by Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 you may apply to The Ballot Holder at the Council's address for a replacement, including physical evidence as to your identity.

#### **Spoilt ballot papers:**

If you spoil your ballot paper you can return it to The Ballot Holder by not later than 5pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 either by post or in person and you will be issued with a replacement.

#### **How to complete the ballot paper:**

To complete the ballot paper you must:

- Check that the address of the property printed on the ballot paper is the one in respect of which you are entitled to vote
- Place a cross (X) in either the 'YES' box or the 'NO' box on the ballot paper in answer to the following question:

"Are you in favour of continuing the Business Improvement District proposal from **Royston First BID Company Limited** for the following streets for a further five years?' (A list of the streets involved then follows on the ballot paper).

- The person previously identified as the Uniform Business Rate Payer will sign in the space provided, adding his or her name and position in the organisation. The form should be returned immediately in the pre-addressed postage-paid envelope supplied.

Each ballot paper counts as one vote. It is important that EVERY paper is completed and returned by the date and time specified.

The ballot paper must be returned to The Ballot Holder in the envelope supplied to arrive not later than 5pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014. Any ballot paper, which is not signed or unmarked or is otherwise considered void due to uncertainty, will not be counted.

#### **The count of ballot papers and declaration of result:**

Ballot papers will be counted and the result declared by 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014. The result will be published on the District Council's web site shortly afterwards - [www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk) and on

the **Royston First** Limited web site - [www.roystonfirst.com](http://www.roystonfirst.com). For a ballot to be successful there must be a simple majority of those voting in favour of the proposal, both in terms of the numbers voting and also by the aggregate of the rateable values of those voting in favour against that of those that vote no.

**The BID will proceed if both of the following tests are met:**

- Of the votes received, a numerical majority of the rateable properties voting in the ballot must vote in favour
- Those voting in favour must represent a numerical majority by rateable value of the rateable properties exercising their vote

If a “No” vote results, then the BID renewal team will seek to implement a “fall-back” plan in which the assets of the BID Company pass to a competent local authority body who will determine the extent to which they can be used to fulfill any elements of the existing work programme or the new projects being proposed. Very obviously if a “No” vote is the outcome of the renewal ballot then it is extremely likely that most BID generated activities would halt more or less immediately.

Given the unique nature of our BID proposition and the obvious successes the BID mechanism is generating elsewhere, it is crucial that we seize this “one-off” opportunity to work together to make the BID renewal happen so as not to jeopardize the status quo, particularly parity with neighbouring towns and their respective BID functions.

**The BID financial arrangements:**

**The Levy arrangements:**

The BID investment levy will be the principal source of income for the BID. **Royston First** will apply a levy of 1.85p in the £ on all rateable properties with a rateable value of over £2,500 located in the eligible area. Those properties with a rateable value of £2,500 or less will pay a fixed contribution of £52 per year to be part of the BID organisation. A modest sized business with an RV of £20,000 will pay £370 a year or just over £1 a day.

The BID levy will be increased each year in line with the Consumer Price Index, which can be viewed by accessing: [www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=19](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=19)

The levy will be applied on the basis of the current RVs for all properties as at the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. Charitable status or mandatory charitable relief will not apply to the BID levy. The levy will also apply to offices, government buildings, doctors’ surgeries and other community related buildings. **If after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 the 2010-based rateable values decline because of significant government legislation on the business rates system (other than the inflationary adjustments that are periodically made) then the BID Board will apply the Rateable Values as set on the 1<sup>st</sup>**

January 2014 as the base figure for all future annual calculations. This is being done to preserve BID income in the light of a prospective major revision to the business rates system that could well see substantial adjustments to the sums collected. Patently a large decline income could well threaten the viability of the BID Company otherwise.

The BID levy will be chargeable to the occupier. However, the levy will be passed to the property owner whenever a rateable property is vacant.

Businesses that begin to occupy existing rateable properties during the five year term of the BID will be liable to pay the levy annually provided the rateable property remains eligible for BID membership. New builds within the BID area will be subject to the levy. On change of ownership/occupancy, the new occupier will be liable/invoiced but there will be no refunds of any levy paid to date. Similar arrangements are proposed for proprietors who sell property or terminate leases. Businesses in receivership and administration will be liable in the same way as they are for Uniform Business Rates payments via the local authority.

### Calculating your Levy:

Simply multiply the rateable value of the business unit by 0.0185. For clarification of rateable value or potential BID levy, please contact the **Royston First** team on 01763 878242. Details of the current values are available online at [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk) For businesses with an RV of £2,500 pa or less, a fixed fee of £52 will be collected annually at the same time as the rest of the levy payments.

### Collection of the Levy:

NHDC have generously agreed to collect levy without charging. They will issue the BID levy bills and collect the levy on behalf of **Royston First BID Company Ltd**. The accumulated levy will be held in a separate account solely for BID receipts. Funds will then be transferred in their entirety to the BID's bank account under arrangements set out in the formal Operating Agreement. This agreement will be available on [www.roystonfirst.com](http://www.roystonfirst.com) once the mandate for the Company is confirmed.

The BID levy is charged on an annual basis and is **a compulsory payment**, just the same as your business rates (it is enforced by very similar legislation). You are required to pay the levy if the BID renewal vote is successful, regardless of whether or not you voted or how you voted if you did. Payment terms will be 28 days from the date of invoice, paid as a single payment and due on the 1<sup>st</sup> April each year, although we are prepared to make alternative arrangements for any organisations that might find this a problem. We expect to be able to issue the levy demand during February each year, when the Local Authority issues its annual UBR demand to all ratepayers on its books at that time.

The non-payment of the BID charge will be strongly pursued via all available enforcement options to ensure fairness to those businesses that have paid, and a **fee of £100\*** will be charged to meet the additional administration costs incurred during any enforcement action. \* Check with NHDC



NHDC will provide regular updates during the BID's existence, detailing revenues collected for and on behalf of the BID. The BID Company's accountant/ auditor will provide quarterly budgets and credit statements and the company's accounts will be audited annually prior to the AGM.

Landlords, property owners and institutions/ organisations will be invited to make voluntary contributions. Additional income will also be generated by BID project activities, advertising, applications for grants and business sponsorship. We are grateful to NHDC and RTC for announcing that for the time being, they intend to continue making the same grant payments to the BID that they made to the local Town Centre Management operation that preceded it.

### **Governance:**

The BID area and the BID levy percentage cannot be altered without an Alteration Ballot, in essence a rerun of the balloting process that creates the mandate for the operation of the BID. The budget headings and project costs of the Business Plan can be adjusted within the constraints of the revenue received through the BID levy by the BID Board, provided the overall essence of the Plan remains. Minor variations in the delivery of the Plan will be handled by the operational staff and reported routinely to the Board. More substantial changes will always be debated and ratified by the Board. Major deviations must be presented to the full membership of the Company and ratified by an Alternation Ballot, conducted in the same way as the Mandate Ballot.

If there are substantial issues arising from the management of the BID process or stakeholders feel that the Board is failing to deliver the prescribed activities in this business plan then it would be appropriate for the concerned stakeholders to make the Chairman of the Board aware of the problems perceived. A written statement, again addressed to the Chairman, should follow up any verbal complaints, complete with evidence of the problem detected. If there is no obvious, satisfactory resolution to the issue outlined then on receipt of a further letter signed by more than 25% of the stakeholders paying the levy, he or she will arrange a formal ballot of all stakeholders to either ratify the change(s) from the announced programme or calling for the cessation of the BID operation. Appeals can be made to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; the detailed legislation governing the formation and operation of Business Improvement Districts explains the process in depth.

### **How will we measure success?**

**Royston First** will deliver the projects and services as outlined in the activity section earlier over the next five year "life" of the BID. Each project and service will either build on what is already provided by the BID Company to date or introduces a new service now considered a priority by businesses. Given the pace of change inherent in the commercial world now, we feel it is prudent to concentrate on projects identified between 2014 and 2016. The business plan will be continually assessed as we work

but there will be a major review towards the end of Year Three to ensure it remains pertinent to the needs of the town, as it has evolved in the intervening years.

A key dimension to the BID proposal is the reassurance to all non-domestic ratepayers that they will see value for the money they contribute. Naturally this will be measured against each individual project but the overall impact of the BID over its five-year term is important too.

The level of progress made on all projects will be assessed during each year of the BID using a dedicated Key Performance Indicator for each individual project. We will also have a number of specific indicators for the whole of the BID and the town so that we can be sure we are moving solidly ahead vis-à-vis our stated ambition. All the KPIs will be independently assessed by an external auditor who can also ensure that added value is constantly sought and achieved. He will additionally provide advice and guidance to further refine our delivery in the light of advances across the whole of the UK BIDs movement. This will be reported back on a regular basis to BID levy payers through our recognised lines of communication (website, ebulletin, newsletters and meetings).

#### **Key Performance Indicators:**

1. Individual project delivery in relation to the Business Plan timetable
2. Recorded footfall patterns
3. User opinions of the town via on-street market research
4. Car parking performance statistics
5. Reported crime figures including theft, car-related crime and reported violence, especially associated with the industrial complex
6. The level of vacant units in the town centre

#### **Core services monitoring:**

Regular monitoring and evaluation of the standards within the BID area will ensure that the services provided by public agencies are to the standard and requirements set out in the Environmental Protection Acts and other legislation/ schedules that define how some Local Authority services are delivered into the town. However, very few of the actions we plan now relate directly to Council-provided services (with the notable exception of an additional uniformed police presence and parking). Consequently it has only been necessary to engage with NHDC at senior officer and member level to share our ambitions for the town with them and agree to co-operate fully together to ensure that the BID maximises all opportunities that arise over the next five years of the BID's existence.

We will also plan to benchmark against other locations of a similar size and profile to Royston to check that we are making progress ahead of those places without a BID operation, and compare ourselves with the few towns and cities that have set up their own BID function. However, it should be understood that Royston occupies a unique position within the BID movement in the UK in that it is the only location that has successfully combined a town centre BID with that of its adjacent business or industrial park. There are plenty examples of the two different types of BID, but nowhere else is the same as Royston in this respect.

All relevant KPIs will be published annually with quarterly updates via the website and email bulletins. All key measures will be reviewed by the BID Board regularly to ensure the progress of the BID and timely delivery of the Business Plan.

We are extremely grateful to North Hertfordshire District Council and Royston Town Council for their enthusiastic support for our proposals and the commitment of both politicians and officers to the concept over the last five years. The close working relationship that has developed during the course of preparing our BID proposition augurs well for the next five years, a crucial period for the town and the community. **As a consequence of our discussions with them, they have been pleased to share with us a concordat of co-operation that was noted in the statement released as the notes from a session of the Cabinet in December 2013 when they observed that "The Cabinet is satisfied that the projects detailed in the BID Proposals do not in conflict with any of its own stated objectives and in fact comply very closely with an Immediate Council Priority of enhancing the town centres in their charge."** The Council will also renew the legally constituted Operating Agreement to the BID Company immediately prior to recommencement of its activities next April that will remain in force right through until 2019.

**Royston First** is your investment in making Royston a better place in which to conduct your business. We want to bring about positive change by pooling resources, cutting costs and adding value to each and every contribution we receive, whether voluntary or via the levy.

#### **Making your business opinion count:**

This Business Plan gives you the detailed background information to the BID to enable you to make an informed decision on how to vote in the postal ballot, to take place in January 2014.

A final version of this business plans will be published in advance of this referendum and will be available on our BID website: [www.roystonfirst.com](http://www.roystonfirst.com)

#### **BID risk analysis:**

**Royston First** is a significant business undertaking with all the attendant risks that go with it. Its sphere of operations directly influences the commercial area that all businesses, both in town and on the Industrial Estate and their staff rely upon for their living. It is appropriate, therefore, to give due consideration to this challenge and to the risks associated with it.

If BIDs across the UK do not develop and grow further, current national business trends indicate a gradual, sustained decline of commercial profitability in town centres like Royston. Competition across the Region is already strong and recent investment decisions in Cambridge, Letchworth, Stevenage, Peterborough and Milton Keynes will increase their appeal, especially for the evening economy. Failure to respond positively to this competition will inevitably mean further decline in sales and overall profitability for many of the companies trading in the BID area.

The BID combines solid business support and a compulsory payment scheme, which guarantees constant cash flow. Thus, it will be easier for **Royston First BID Company Ltd.** to control costs, plan over the longer term and rise to the expectations of its stakeholders.

A financial contingency is contained within the budget meaning that, should the income from the levy fall short of those anticipated 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 next 5 years, if no discernable difference is detected then a vote against renewal will simply “switch off” the BID and with it all business contributions. Any outstanding assets held or liabilities will pass back to a responsible public body, along with the responsibility of sustaining any projects that directly influence the public realm.

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 of 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 is VAT registered to ensure that the tax can be reclaimed on expenditure. It also benefits from mutual trading status meaning that it is exempt from any Corporation Tax liability.

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**The BID timetable:**

Consultation	August and September 2013	Consultation documentation and meetings
Outline Business Plan and prospectus	November 2013	Circulated to key stakeholders
Draft business plan ratified by NHDC	December 2013	Cabinet approval of the content
Final Business Plan	December 2013	Published on the website
Prospectus issued	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2013	All hereditaments to receive a copy
Notice of Ballot	23 <sup>rd</sup> December 2013	North Hertfordshire District Council Public Notice
Ballot papers issued	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2014	NHDC
Day of the Ballot	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2014	Ballot closes at 5pm
Announcement of ballot result	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2014	Declared via the media
BID Company formally commences second term	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2014	Contracts ready for additional services provision
Levy calculation	23 <sup>rd</sup> December 2013	Applies to all hereditaments within the revised BID boundary on this date
Levy bills issued	March 2014	Payable on receipt of the Demand Notice
BID term	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019	The start date and end date of the BID

**The Royston First BID Renewal Team:**

David Campbell – Finance Director    The Automation Partnership

John Gourd - Site Director                Johnson Matthey plc

David Smyth – Partner                    UHY-WKH Accountancy

A.N. Other                                    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Geraint Burnell                            Royston First BID Manager

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