

HITCHIN BID BUSINESS PLAN

2024-2029



OUR TOWN

I was so impressed by the work Hitchin BID did in the town and the difference it made to so many aspects of the town, I became a director in 2018 and am now subsequently Chairman. It benefits the town and businesses in so many ways and on so many levels. You only have to walk through the town and see the incredible flower displays in the spring and summer courtesy of Hitchin BID.

Visitors and residents alike receive a warm welcome as they enter the town from the banners (found on many lampposts) highlighting Hitchin's art and attractions. This complements litter free streets and the BID Rangers providing business services, organising events, and providing security services day and night.

Of course no one can miss the Christmas tree, Christmas Light displays and timetable of incredible events all year round; from Eat Alfresco, to food festivals, ghost tours, the French market and a plethora of events to suit all ages, Hitchin has now become one of the most popular towns to visit, even boasting a town centre beach with real sand in the heart of the summer months. This was reflected in the 2019 Great British High Street Awards where Hitchin was a finalist. This truly evidenced the great work Hitchin BID do and was a great moment for the town.

All of this and so much more can be found on our brand new VisitHitchin.com website which tells you all you need to know about this beautiful market town and whatever you want to do or find out you'll find the answers there. Our town centre office and Information Centre has become invaluable to Hitchin businesses, individuals, and visitors to the town who require information on "everything Hitchin"

On top of this we work in tandem with the Council on many ongoing initiatives, all to benefit Hitchin businesses and visitors. Our work doesn't go unnoticed, evidenced by an invitation to the "Best Towns Awards 2023" hosted at Westminster Palace, where we reached the finals and missed out on the main award by a whisker.

Hitchin BID went above and beyond during the pandemic with many echoing their feelings of warmth and gratitude. I firmly believe we offer incredible value to the town businesses that are currently going from strength to strength and the town would be immeasurably worse off without it.

I urge my fellow businesses to continue supporting the excellent work undertaken by Hitchin BID and Vote Yes to secure a further 5-years!



Mark Shields
Chairman Hitchin BID

**Remember, Hitchin BID is led by businesses for businesses,
it is owned and operated by you, for you.**

CONTENTS

- 4 Your BID
- 4 The new Visit Hitchin brand
- 5 Meet the team
- 6 15 years of achievement
- 8 What we do to support our town
- 10 Coronavirus business support
- 12 Consultation
- 14 Our Vision
- 15 Our 4 Objectives
- 26 The Ballot
- 27 Measuring our success
- 27 Comparable BIDs
- 28 The BID Area
- 30 The BID levy
- 31 The BID finances
- 32 Governance
- 35 Detailed information



Hitchin**BID**

YOUR BID

Hitchin Business Improvement District (BID) is an independent organisation working to sustain and improve the economic vibrancy of the town centre. This is your chance to benefit from a £1.6 million investment in key projects for Hitchin Town Centre.

For the last fifteen years, Hitchin has enjoyed the benefits of a Business Improvement District (BID) through which almost four and a half million pounds of additional investment has been spent in our town. This has paid for substantial improvements and projects that have made a tangible positive difference to the cleanliness, vibrancy and safety of the town centre.

However, nothing is forever, and the BID is a fixed-term arrangement, working its way through the fifth and final year of its third term right now. If we do nothing, the BID will end on the 31st March 2024 and everything will grind to a halt and then disappear. No Rangers, no cardboard and waste recycling collections, a reduced security presence, no night rangers, no community events, no Christmas lights, no floral displays, the list is substantial.

Of course it doesn't have to be like this. You can renew the BID's term for a further five years, continue the great activities we have all become so used to, and do more on top too!

We already know two-thirds of you want to see the Hitchin BID renewed for a further five years. The following pages detail why and how. Hopefully the few businesses that are undecided or unsure will be reassured by the facts and figures in this document to be sufficiently convinced to add their company names to the substantial list of BID supporters we have already.

In November this year the Council will be issuing ballot papers seeking your formal approval for the renewal of the Hitchin BID through a 28 day postal vote. I know the BID's past record and potential future plans make an immediate "Yes" the only sensible option and I'm sure you will agree with me.

I hope we can rely on your support.

Tom Hardy
Chief Executive
Hitchin BID



THE NEW VISIT HITCHIN BRAND

Over the past year we've been transitioning to the new 'Visit Hitchin' brand which will replace the Hitchin BID logo. Visit Hitchin will still be run by the Hitchin Business Improvement District (BID) with all projects and initiatives delivered, falling under this business plan. We believe this new logo is the best way forward to create a stronger brand for our town centre.



MEET THE TEAM



Recycling Ranger Team

Tom Hardy
Chief Executive

Day Ranger Team

Shauna Waugh
Events & Marketing
Coordinator

Tracy Hunt
Tourism & Publications
Coordinator

Hitchin Information
Front of House Team

15 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENTS



700
Christmas light displays



Over 500
Events organised & supported



450
Floral displays installed



60%
Increase in turnover during street days



Over 100k
Visitors to the Hitchin Information Centre

Over 1000
Business promotions on social media



Over 500k
visitors to our town centre website



£200K
Worth of business savings



63,000
Pieces of chewing gum removed



800 tons
of cardboard and paper recycled



550 tons
Of used coffee grounds recycled



100,000
H-Town newspapers delivered



Over 500
Pieces of graffiti & flyposting removed



Over £15k
Of recovered stolen goods



WHAT WE DO TO SUPPORT OUR TOWN CENTRE



The day
Ranger team



Cardboard
recycling service



Enhanced CCTV
provision



Discount
commercial waste



Information
Centre



Social media
promotion



Deep cleaning &
gum removal



Floral displays &
bunting



Town-wide
Christmas displays



Town-wide
tourism strategy



Shop & pub
watch radio links



Reduced
shoplifting



Marketing
campaigns



Regular, speciality
& major events



Graffiti removal



Night Rangers



New website



Flyposting
removal



Christmas tree



Market Place
management



Promotional
publication



Vinyl wrapping
vacant shops



Townwide
branding



Business
representation



Lamppost
banners



Hitchin basket
website



PubWatch
meetings



Reporting
highways faults



Grit bins
and gritting



Covid-19
business support



Coffee ground
recycling scheme



Hitchin Hub
website



Monthly
newsletters



H-Town
Pounds



Destination
management plan



In partnership
with Councils



The Hitchin BID team is crucial to the success of Hitchin. Without the BID team's hard work we would have no Hitchin tourism strategy, no Christmas lights, no cardboard & coffee grounds recycling, no floral displays, the streets would be full of chewing gum/graffiti and the events in the town would be extremely limited. We see all the positive work the Hitchin BID are doing. We urge those businesses and individuals who are not sure what they do, to speak to ourselves or the BID team, to understand further what the money raised for the town is spent on.

Hannah Vincenti
Fabio's Gelato



As a retailer we rely on the support that Hitchin BID gives us. The effort the team makes to bring customers into the town with events, and extra marketing they give to help individual stores is so greatly appreciated. The Rangers in particular are invaluable. The team are always on hand to help with anything. I speak to other retailers in towns of a similar size, and they all say they wish they had a team available like this. I think I speak for all Hitchin businesses when I say the BID has our complete support and appreciation for what they do.

Kerry Haynes
Cloud Nine Baby



CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS SUPPORT

Although the pandemic seems like a distant memory, we want to remind businesses of the work we undertook. Hitchin BID went above and beyond to support businesses through these unprecedented times. We offered a wide range of support and delivered on a comprehensive reopening plan for the town centre.

EAT ALFRESCO & OUTDOOR SEATING

Prioritising businesses with limited or no outdoor spaces we offered alfresco dining areas on the Market Place to all businesses in the town centre. This initiative was so successful we continued to bring it back each summer. We also support many businesses in applying for street licences to extend their external spaces.



The BID has proven an invaluable support to the businesses of Hitchin, none more so than during 'the Covid chaos'. Over the years the BID has added to the vibrancy of Hitchin as both a cultural and business centre and brought the town to the attention of the wider local area as a place of interest worthy of a visit. Added to this at a simple level the BID have made the town a more attractive, cleaner, safer place to be at any season of the year.

Doug Brooker
Brookers



BUSINESS SUPPORT

We delivered a comprehensive reopening plan for Hitchin following the lifting of restrictions. This focused on 4 key areas;

Reminding the public what the Town Centre offers
Reassuring the public of the shop safe measures.
Encouraging the public back to the town centre.
Promoting the offer & diverse range of businesses.

COMMUNICATION

We sent daily emails to businesses on how to access support, who to contact and when support would be coming. The BID liaised with landlords on rent reductions and business banking representative on bounce back loans as well as being in regular contact with the local MP and Councils to relay information on support and changes to the guidance/rules.



WELCOME BACK CAMPAIGN

Ahead of the partial reopening of businesses in April 2021, we ran a 'thank you for your support' compilation video using 30 town centre businesses. We put up 'Welcome Back' and 'We've Missed You' banners across the town and delivered 15,000 welcome back H-Town Newspapers to all residents in Hitchin.



REOPENING SUPPORT

We bulk bought face masks, hand sanitizer, 2m floor stickers and wipes for businesses. We secured discount prices for Covid-19 equipment as well as purchasing 10 outdoor hand sanitizer stands for public use around the town centre. There were 2m social distancing boards around the town centre and we delivered free posters to businesses such as 'sanitise your hands before entering', 'clean assured premises' and other Government issued posters. Ahead of businesses reopening we sold discounted packs to businesses which included posters and PPE.



ONLINE SUPPORT

To help retail and hospitality, we matched up delivery drivers with business that reverted to deliveries over lockdown. We updated and circulated a new Hitchin eateries map for the town and launched Hitchinbasket.com to allow customers to search for over 1000 products, food and services. Using social media we promoted around 7 businesses per day on how the public can support them and buy products over lockdown.



STREET RANGER PROPERTY CHECKS

Whilst the town centre was in lockdown our Day Rangers performed daily commercial property checks to flag any potential issues whilst business owners and staff were elsewhere.

CONSULTATION

Hitchin BID is dedicated to delivering projects and services that businesses value, and that benefit both them and the local economy.

In preparation for the new BID term, we launched an extensive consultation process where town centre businesses were invited to give feedback on existing BID services and to highlight their priorities for the future. During June 2023, hard copies of our consultation surveys were hand-delivered to all BID levy paying businesses and those to be added in to the new boundary. We emailed out the online survey, updated businesses on the renewal process via our newsletter and undertook over 400 face-to-face business visits. In August 2023 we delivered a series of business meetings to present new projects and receive feedback.

Using the survey findings, feedback from face-to-face visits, suggestions made in the business drops-ins and business events, we have set out your priorities.

YOUR PRIORITIES FOR BID TERM 4

Car Parking (lobby the Council on installing 'Pay on Exit' car parks, discounted employee parking schemes, investment for new multi-storey sites)

Safety & Savings (Day Rangers, Night Rangers, lobby the Police for better security measures, cardboard and coffee collections, commercial waste discount scheme)

Business Support (representing the business on trade associations, highways, Police, North Herts Council and Herts County Council)

Promoting Hitchin (townwide social media campaigns, publications, enhancing Hitchin SEO using key tourism sites, continue to develop the town website, wider use of the Visit Hitchin brand)

Appearance (floral displays, bunting, Christmas lights scheme, chewing gum removal, graffiti and flyposting removal. Lobbying the council on public realm improvements)

Vibrancy (maintain town centre events, activities in the wider areas of the town, more business focussed events, new mural and public arts, interactive installations)



We believe that a strong, vibrant and enticing town centre is good for the town as a whole. Over the past ten years the Business Improvement District has tangibly sustained and improved the town centre as a great place to live, work and do business. Without the BID, so much of what we have become so used to having in the town would disappear. I am voting yes in November to ensure we keep all the hugely important projects and initiatives that make the town the vibrant place it is today.



Gary Walker
Hitchin Markets Ltd

OUR VISION

We believe that a clear vision is vital for the future economic prosperity of Hitchin. The BID will build upon the success of the last 15 years but will also incorporate new elements after feedback from the business community. We will work with partners to progress and enhance the 4 core objectives as well as more ways to support businesses and the town centre environment.



New initiatives to encourage the experience economy



Increased promotions in quieter areas of the Town Centre



Increasing business support on a local and national level



Improvement to Town Centre parking and accessibility



Force the pace on the Council's Town Centre Strategy

OUR 4 OBJECTIVES

Based on the success of the last 15 years Hitchin BID has been in operation and on feedback received, we have chosen to keep the BID's core objectives consistent with those from the initial business plan. For the 2024-29 business plan the objectives will come under the following headings:

1 Vibrant

2 Clean & Safe

3 Promoted

4 Business Support

Your dedicated BID team will build upon the strong foundations and partnerships established over the past 5 years. The vast majority of business value the services that Hitchin BID delivers to support business in their day-to-day activities. We work hard to enhance the trading environment and work to provide leadership and business representation as we work towards maintaining Hitchin as one of the most successful towns in the South East.

There is no replacement body that will deliver the projects and initiatives set out in this business plan.





VIBRANT

We intend to ensure that the town centre is a vibrant area and a place people can enjoy all year round. We intend to help build on the success of existing events and to introduce a programme of additional activities to further energise Hitchin and to draw many more people to visit from the local area and further afield.

SUMMER DISPLAYS

We will organise and pay for a wide variety of floral displays across the town centre and erect the bunting during the summer season in various locations.

WINTER DISPLAYS

We will organise and pay for the town centre festive lighting displays and Christmas tree in the Market Place. The 25 static floral displays will be replanted and maintained over the winter months.

TOWN CENTRE EVENTS

We will enhance and adapt the town centre annual events programme. Focusing on business support and footfall to maximise the benefit to the local business community.

TRAILS AND ACTIVITIES

Looking at the wider town centre, we will deliver a number of trails and family friendly activities to spread footfall and highlight businesses on the periphery of the Hitchin BID area.



I have found the BID an invaluable resource to the overall management of the town. The events they organise attract large numbers to the town benefiting the local businesses. The Rangers are always on call and do an amazing job keeping the area safe and clean. Hitchin is a very special town with a large thriving independent sector. Without the support of the BID I believe the community spirit that knits us altogether would dilute and be damaging to the town centre.



Karen Bourne
Wild Ivy



CLEAN & SAFE

The BID plan is to ensure that the town centre is an attractive, safe and welcoming place for those who live, work and visit. Importantly, we want to present the best possible appearance to potential investors. The BID therefore pledges to carry out activities that are above and beyond those already being provided by existing organisations.



CRIME REDUCTION

The BID will continue to work alongside the Police and Councils to reduce crime. We will facilitate PubWatch, the ShopWatch WhatsApp group and continue to offer businesses radio links. Our extended CCTV and the anti-shoplifting measures undertaken by the BID will ensure Hitchin remains a safe place for the day and evening economy.

THE DAY RANGER TEAM

The Rangers undertake vital work behind the scenes to ensure the town centre remains a clean and safe environment for businesses and visitors to enjoy. They operate 6 days a week working with a wide variety of local businesses. The Rangers are one of the most valued assets which we will be continuing into the new 5-year BID term

NIGHT RANGERS

The BID will continue to fund the Night Rangers on Friday and Saturday nights from 10pm to 3am. They play an important role in public realm security as well as assisting the public and reporting issues.

OUR CLEANER TOWN

We will continue to remove graffiti using specialist equipment as well as taking down flyposting. There will be chewing gum and deep cleaning carried out in the main streets in the town centre and new initiatives introduced such as the cigarette ballot bins.





Hitchin BID are invaluable to our town. We share the same passion in keeping our High Street thriving with a variety of great High street brands and small businesses that we adore. There is always something exciting going on in Hitchin and the BID are a fundamental part of that happening. We support the work of Hitchin BID and encourage all businesses to vote yes to secure its existence for a further 5 years.

Lauren Mcdouall
Mint Velvet



3

PROMOTED

The BID plan is to provide greater investment into promotion and marketing of the town to ensure that this is targeted at key catchments. We also propose to work with others to ensure that we jointly and consistently promote Hitchin much more effectively to a local, regional and national audience.

VISIT HITCHIN BRANDING

Over the past year we've been transitioning to the new 'Visit Hitchin' brand which will replace the Hitchin BID logo. Visit Hitchin will still be run by the Hitchin Business Improvement District (BID) with all projects and initiatives delivered, falling under this business plan. We believe this new logo is the best way forward to create a stronger brand for our town centre.





HITCHIN INFORMATION

The Information Centre is a valued asset in our community. It provides a place for local residents to obtain information, Hitchin gifts and tickets. The BID will aim to continue funding this facility and grow the services and products it provides.

TOWN TOURISM

Using the newly developed Destination Management Plan, the BID will continue to strategically promote Hitchin as a destination. We will work on raising the profile of the town and develop the experience economy.

PUBLICATIONS & PROMOTIONS

The BID will continue to produce publications to promote the town centre, its businesses and attractions. We will maintain the lamppost banner flags and work on new promotions activities.

ONLINE PROMOTION

We will continue to develop the towns online presence through the new VisitHitchin website, online advertising and social media activities.

Over the last 6 years of running a shop in Hitchin we have learnt what an integral part of Hitchin the BID is. Everything from keeping the town clean & free from graffiti, to running events around the town. They are paramount in keeping Hitchin the desirable thriving town that it is!



Richard Barry
Arkley Fine Art



BUSINESS SUPPORT

The BID plan is to ensure that it remains the voice of its businesses on key issues and representative of their views and opinions to ensure the town is properly supported. We will look to offer businesses a greater choice of cost-saving initiatives to ease the pressure of ever-growing use of the internet and post-pandemic consumer behaviour challenges.



CARDBOARD & COFFEE RECYCLING SCHEME

We will continue to provide all businesses with free cardboard, paper and coffee grounds recycling using our dedicated Recycling Ranger team. Our Rangers collect from over 200 businesses per week and recycle over 300 tons of cardboard and coffee per year.

H-TOWN POUNDS

The BID will continue to support the H-Town Pounds scheme which is aimed at promoting local spend in over 80 independent businesses.

BUSINESS REPRESENTATION

We will remain the collective business voice on key issues. The BID will lobby for and represent business ensuring Hitchin gets the investment and backing it needs.



HITCHIN REGENERATION

The BID will form a new group to look at short and long term projects in the town as well as new income streams. This will allow an expansion of the projects we deliver as well as new investment opportunities and improvements.

TRAINING OUR TOWN

The BID will deliver a series of statutory and marketing training to equip businesses with the skills and knowledge to thrive and prosper.



A renewed Business Improvement District will unquestionably be a force for good in Hitchin. Keeping it clean and safe while showcasing and promoting our countless great attractions. I urge all Hitchin businesses to back the BID and guarantee a bright future for our town centre.



Emily English
The Half Moon





THE BALLOT



All businesses who occupy or own a commercial premises or Rateable Valued entity will be eligible to vote in the Hitchin BID renewal ballot.

Every 5 years a Business Improvement District is required by law to renew its mandate to work on behalf of levy paying businesses by means of a ballot. The Hitchin BID ballot is scheduled to take place between 9th November and 7th December.

Ballot papers will be issued by post to the person confirmed as having responsibility for casting the vote on behalf of each company or organisation. Your voting papers should arrive via post no later than 9th November 2023 and you will have 28 days to return them in the pre-paid envelope provided (the ballot will close on 7th December at 5pm)

How is the result calculated?

The ballot will be managed by Civica Electoral Services. A successful result will authorise the continued operation of the Hitchin BID for a further 5 year term, commencing on 1st April 2024. In order for the ballot to be successful the following two criteria must be met.

- The majority of votes counted must be in favour
- The total representative ratable value of votes counted in favour must exceed that of those opposed.

The ballot result will be announced on 8th December 2023

If you have any questions about the ballot, please get in contact with Hitchin BID tom.hardy@hitchinherts.com or 01462 453335



- The voter list has been developed by Hitchin BID based on National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) listings provided by North Herts Council and through consultation with businesses. The NNDR listings as of 17/07/2023 show there are 695 hereditaments eligible to vote.
- Voters are identified as the person confirmed to have the authority to cast the vote on behalf of each company/organisation or the person/organisation named on the NNDR list as of 17/07/2023

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

Businesses here already benefit substantially from the additional services that the BID delivers. Here's a list of what you could expect over the next five years too:

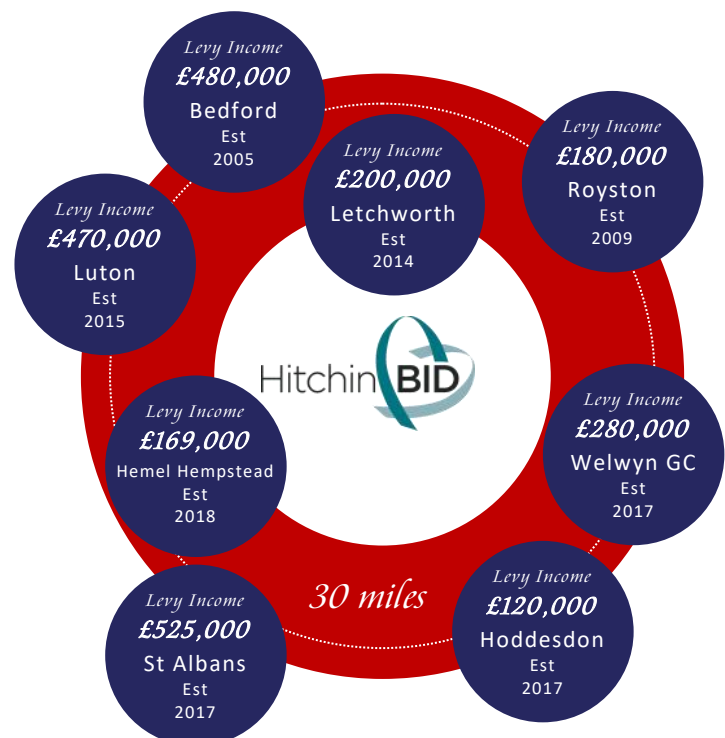
- A cleaner and safer town centre for those who use it.
- Targeting of a larger and more affluent catchment area meaning more visitors and a higher average spend.
- Those currently visiting wanting to do so more often, staying longer and spending more.
- Staff recruitment made easier and existing staff encouraged to remain in employment here.
- A constantly improving 'look and feel' to the town centre environment.
- A more accessible town centre for all forms of transportation, even the car borne visitor who are presently strongly attracted to peripheral supermarkets and out of town 'sheds'.
- A more effective voice for businesses over the management and future development of their trading environment.
- An opportunity to use the BID income to 'pump prime' additional income from external agencies, growing the overall 'pot' and improving return on investment for businesses.

COMPARABLE BIDS

The BID is an independently run non-profit organisation. There are over 360 BIDs in the UK run under this same concept.

When calculating the levy for Hitchin, we took both the results of the business survey and subsequent consultations with businesses into account.

We also examined the levy rates set by a number of established competitor BIDs for comparison. Unless we generate a level of similar proportion, we will fall behind the investments being made by neighbouring towns.

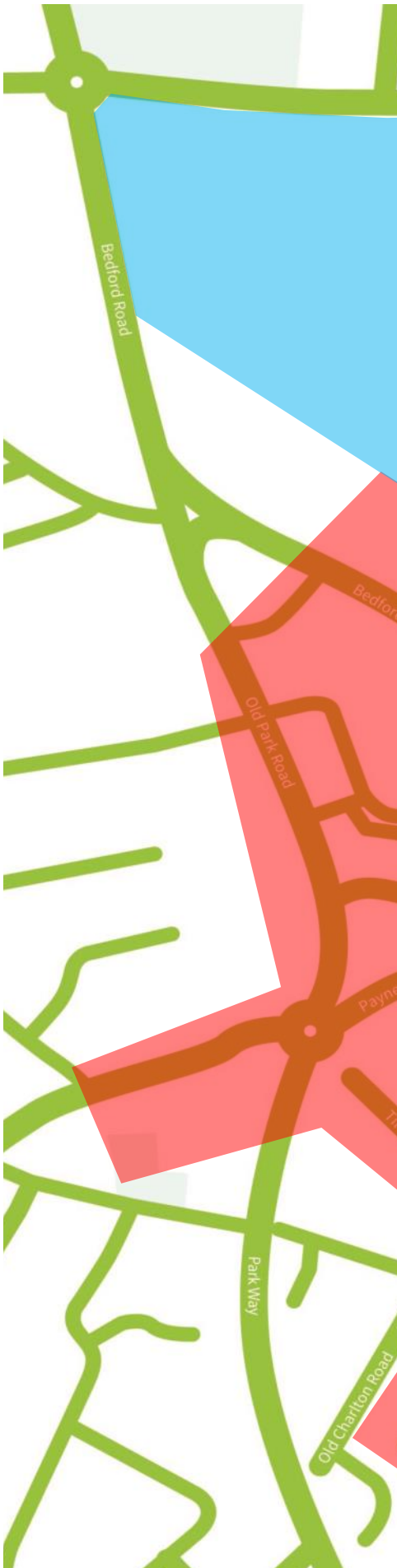
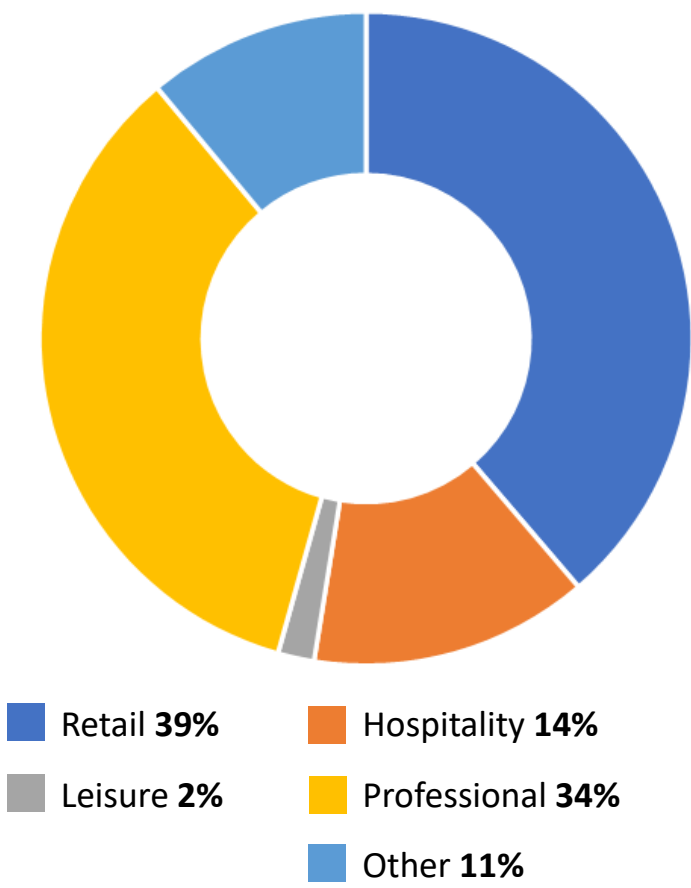


THE BID AREA

The Hitchin BID boundary has been carefully considered to accommodate businesses that will get the most out of the projects and initiatives we deliver. We have included a number of new businesses in the area for the 3rd term as well as reduced rate zone. The red area will be on a 2.2% levy rate and the blue area on 1.5% levy rate.

Arcade	Churchyard	The Lairage
Arcade Walk	Churchyard Walk	Tilehouse Street
Bancroft	Hermitage Road	Portmill Lane
Bedford Road (part)	High Street	West Alley
Brand Street	Ickleford Road (part)	Queen Street
Bridge Street	Market Place	Whinbush Road (part)
Bucklersbury	Old Park Road (part)	Fishponds Rd (part)
Churchgate	Park Street (part)	Walsworth Rd (part)
Paynes Park	Sun Street	Grammar Sch. Walk

HITCHIN BID BUSINESSES BY SECTOR





THE BID LEVY

- The levy rate to be paid by each property or hereditament will be 2.2% or 1.5% depending on the location (please see page 28 & 29 for details). The levy will be based on its rateable value (as per the 2023 Rating List) and reviewed every 3 years as per Government process.
- Under the Local Government Act 2003 and the Business Improvement District Regulations (England) 2004, the levy is mandatory by law for the full period of the term (not exceeding 5 years and will be charged annually in advance for each chargeable period from April to March (starting on 1st April 2024).
- The BID levy will apply to all eligible hereditaments located within the defined BID area.
- Liability for the full year's levy falls upon the Non-Domestic Ratepayer for the property on the date of billing (typically the first week of April). If the property is empty on the date of billing, then liability shall fall upon the property owner.
- Residents and businesses outside the BID or not eligible to pay the levy can apply to become voluntary members. This decision will be at the company's discretion.
- Business can set up a standing order to pay the levy over a 12 month period.
- No refunds will be made, either fully or in part, in respect of levy amounts paid should there be a change in Non-Domestic Ratepayer during the financial year. Neither the BID Company nor the Council will enter into negotiations between outgoing and incoming levy payers, and all said negotiations to recoup part-year payments must be resolved independently by the individual or company concerned.
- Hitchin BID reserves the right to raise or lower the levy by the rate of inflation at the discretion of the Company Directors.
- Please note: no exemption or discounts will be issued to listed buildings and those who pay discounted business rates are also not entitled to a levy discount as well.



Hitchin**BID**

THE BID FINANCES

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Income (£)						
BID Levy	280,000	290,000	295,000	305,000	310,000	1,480,000
Sales & sponsorship	20,000	22,000	24,000	26,000	28,000	120,000
Total income	300,000	312,000	319,000	331,000	338,000	1,600,000
Expenditure (£)						
Promoted	35,000	36,500	38,000	40,000	43,000	192,500
Vibrant	98,000	100,000	100,000	105,000	118,000	521,000
Save & Support	18,000	20,000	22,000	23,000	26,000	109,000
Clean & Safe	70,000	72,000	75,000	78,000	80,000	375,000
Total activity costs	221,000	228,500	235,000	246,000	267,000	1,197,500
BID team	45,000	45,000	46,500	47,000	48,000	231,500
Premises/admin	24,700	26,200	26,700	27,700	28,700	134,000
Total overhead cost	69,700	71,200	73,200	74,700	76,700	365,500
Contingency	5,000	6,000	7,000	9,000	10,000	37,000
Total expenditure	295,700	305,700	315,200	329,700	353,700	1,600,000

- All figures are calculated based on historic and likely future trends. Programme costs may change over the term subject to Director approval.
- Levy income figures are estimated based on National Non- Domestic Rates listings as of April 2023. The figures are based on a 97% BID levy collection rate.
- As well as revenue generated from the levy, the BID will seek to secure additional funding from sponsorship, voluntary contributions and other sources.
- North Herts District Council will be responsible for collecting the levy, after which all collected funds will be transferred to the BID.
- Some projects detailed are inclusive of staff overheads.

GOVERNANCE

Businesses have been at the heart of developing this BID renewal at all stages of the process.

This began when businesses in Hitchin were asked for their views in 2023, via a survey which was available as an online form or through a face to face business visit. The survey was structured to seek the views of businesses as to which improvements projects they considered would boost their performance and to confirm their support for the renewal of the Business Improvement District.

A strong and representative sample of 187 responses (representing a response rate of 30% based on the total number of businesses) was received and provided strong support (93% in favour) of the BIDs renewal. The Directors met on a regular basis to oversee both the production of the business plan and also to ensure the proposals have been drawn up in close consultation with as many Hitchin businesses and organisations as possible.

THE DIRECTORS



Mark Shields
Life Practice UK



Andrew Pearce
Bradshaw Johnson



Mark Shadbolt
Chiltern Developments



Cllr Keith Hoskins
NHC Representative



Charlotte McCrossin
Gatwards Jewellers



Michael Norgan
Osinskys

BUSINESS REPRESENTATION

The Directors are responsible for the high level financial and strategic direction of Hitchin BID. Sub-groups are formed to deliver specific projects such as tourism, branding and street days as necessary. The renewal process has seen over 300 businesses consulted with and all businesses have had the opportunity to feed into the new 5-year business plan. Business representation is of the utmost importance when delivering Hitchin BID projects and initiatives.



Hitchin's businesses are majority independently-owned small businesses. The last three years have nearly crushed them through Covid, Brexit, and price increases. The BID has been instrumental in bringing excellent communication and reassurance in times of difficulty. They make the town sing with extra activities, events, and measures to help promote and drive business to the town. They do an invaluable job.



Michelle Smith
Pilates Pod



I support the BID because they bring so much to the town with all their events throughout the year, making Hitchin a vibrant town that people want to live in and visit. Without all their hard work Hitchin town centre would not be the same.



Michael Norgan
Osinsky's



I support the BID because of all the good they do for the town. You just have to look at some of the towns around here that don't have a BID to see how they're doing less well. So that's why I will continue to support the BID.



Felix Camfield-Walker
Farley's Hair Salon



I support the BID because of the invaluable support they provide to the businesses in Hitchin. We really appreciate the work of the rangers who are always on hand to help with any security issues and help to keep our streets clean and safe. The Christmas lights and floral displays as well as all the events that go on in the square help to make Hitchin a vibrant, attractive town that helps boost footfall.



Charlotte McCrossin
Gatward's Of Hitchin

DETAILED INFORMATION

Additional income – this proposal commits to seek a substantial amount of extra income in addition to the BID levy over the life of the BID from other sources.

Aims and objectives – this plan explains how the BID would deliver improved trading for Hitchin.

Ballot – the timescale for the entire ballot process is clearly defined and both the BID and the Council will quickly and clearly communicate the ballot result.

BID boundary – the proposed BID area has been drawn to represent universal business interests and is formed around the natural town centre limits.

Budget – a detailed budget has been produced, which includes all income and expenditure, as well as the provision of a prudent contingency fund.

Caps – no levy caps are proposed to the BID levy payable.

Communications – a number of detailed communications with potential BID members have been carried out and are highlighted within this proposal.

Company – it is proposed that the Hitchin BID would operate on a non-profit basis as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Database – the voter database has been refined to include the correct voter contact details, including those that are Head Office voting addresses, where appropriate.

Empty properties – the liability for the BID levy on any eligible vacant premises will revert to the Landlord.

Exemptions – There are no exemptions for businesses in the BID area.

Governance – the structure and operation of the BID Company has been designed so as to follow the highest possible standards of representation, governance and transparency.

Hitchin Information - Hitchin BID will make every reasonable effort continue to subsidise this facility. The BID company reserves the right to relocate offices and close this facility if it is no longer viable.

Inflation – the proposed BID levy will be subject to annual increases by the rate of inflation at the discretion of the Directors.

Levy – the proposed levy has been selected as the minimum possible to deliver the required improvements and is considered to represent excellent value for money to levy payers.

Levy collection costs – the Council have kindly agreed to collect the levy free of charge.

Mid-term review – the Hitchin BID would undertake to commission and publish an independent review during the third year of the proposed five-year term.

Monitoring – the BID will employ regular and robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, which will include an annual survey of a representative sample of levy payers, an Annual General Meeting and an Annual Report.

Notices – all notices, including those issued to the Secretary of State, the Local Authority and all proposed levy payers have been issued in line with the prescribed regulations from all applicable Legislation.

Operating costs – the proposed budget includes a detailed breakdown of all anticipated BID operating costs, as far as can be determined at this time.

Premises – all relevant and eligible public and private sector premises within the BID area have been included in our database and this will be maintained to ensure accuracy during the lifetime of the BID.

Proposals – this document summarises the proposition to deliver additional services in Hitchin.

Research and Consultation – the BID development process has been carried out in a very open, inclusive and transparent manner and a number of consultative techniques have been employed over a twelve-month period.

Revaluation - the prevailing Rateable Value list, as updated on the 1st January each year of the BID term, will be used for the calculation of the annual BID levy for the duration of this proposal.

Services – the proposed BID projects have been generated through local research, are able to be measured and have been fully costed.

Term – the duration of the proposed BID, to include start and end dates, has been included in this document.

Transparency – every effort will be made to ensure the transparency of the operation of the BID, including the production and distribution of detailed progress, monitoring and financial reports.

Variation – there is no intention to significantly vary the projects within this plan and consequently we do not expect to seek a Variation Ballot for any reason, although, this could possibly occur during the term of the BID if it becomes necessary due to required material changes to the plan following the midterm review.

Voting - the ballot timetable is outlined on page 26.



Contact

Hitchin Business Improvement District (BID)
Hitchin Information
1A Churchyard
Hitchin
SG5 1HR

Email tom.hardy@hitchinherts.com

Phone 01462 453335

Website visithitchin.com

Social Media [@VisitHitchin](#)