

**CABINET
20 NOVEMBER 2018**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

ITEM 3A

**TITLE OF REPORT: ITEM REFERRED FROM HITCHIN COMMITTEE: 5 MARCH 2019
– FUTURE HIGH STREET FUNDING BID**

The Hitchin Committee, at the meeting held on 5 March 2019 requested that the following statement be presented to full Council:

“Reasons why North Herts Councillors should support a Hitchin FHS bid reviving Hitchin’s town centre;

Hitchin is the market town and retail hub of North Herts but its market is failing and the future of retail is changing.

The Government’s new Future High Street Fund presents an opportunity to reset Hitchin’s town centre to adapt to future needs and trends.

- A new experience-based economy is required to keep town centres vibrant, and a revitalised curated market with a new street food hall could be the catalyst for this in Hitchin
- For North Herts to thrive, each town needs to have a strong, differentiated and complementary offer
- The new Churchgate Resurgence ideas offer opportunities for addressing retail decline in North Herts in a way that does not undermine other towns
- The ideas also aim to create local employment and address housing needs, including a proportion of social housing
- They aim to provide a new community hub focused on the arts and wellness, and to cater for a broad age range
- A bid for Hitchin also offers opportunities to address public transport and parking issues allowing greater connectivity.

Any scheme for Churchgate must represent value for money for local residents and be affordable. But there are also positive ripples that the Churchgate improvements could produce for North Herts such as:

- Building Hitchin’s attraction as a tourist destination;
- Enhancing its historic character;
- Generating a greater contribution to North Herts revenue (Hitchin provides 71% of NHDC’s parking revenue); and finally
- The domino effect that could result in this project becoming a beacon for Hertfordshire.”