

# Future High Streets Fund

## Call for Expressions of Interest

### Application Form



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

#### Applicant Information

**Bidding authority: North Herts District Council**

**Area within authority covered by bid: Letchworth Garden City Town Centre**

**Bid Manager Name and position: Anthony Roche, Deputy Chief Executive**

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**Postal address:**

**North Hertfordshire District Council  
District Council Offices  
Gernon Road  
Letchworth Garden City  
Hertfordshire  
SG6 3JF**

**Additional evidence, such as letters of support, maps or plans should be included in an Annex.**

Applications to the Fund will be assessed against the criteria set out below. Further information on the scoring criteria and their weighting will be published by the department before the end of January 2019.

#### **Submission of proposals:**

Proposals must be received no later than 2359 on **Friday 22 March 2019**.

An electronic copy only of the bid including any supporting material should be submitted to [highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk).

Enquiries about the Fund may be directed to [highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk](mailto:highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk).

## **SECTION 1: Defining the place**

This section will seek a definition of the high street or town centre to be covered within the bidding authority. Places should:

- Explain the high street/town centre geography
- Indicate the population of those living and travelling to this centre, how this links to the wider economic area and its role in the lives of those within the catchment area

### **1.1 Geographical area:**

*Include information setting out the extent of the high street/town centre area covered in the proposal and a description of this centre.*

*Please include maps and supporting evidence as annex documents if required.*

*Please limit your response to 500 words.*

**Letchworth Garden City is the world's first Garden City based on Ebenezer Howard's original concept of a self contained settlement combining both town and country living. Much of the town is the product of a master plan, with areas of low, medium and higher density housing, industry, open spaces and the town centre. Letchworth Garden City (GC) is one of four towns serving the District of North Hertfordshire and is centrally located between the historic market towns of Hitchin to the west and Baldock to the east. The town is connected to the East Coast Main Line railway via a branch line which splits at Hitchin providing destinations to London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Cambridge and Peterborough. The town also has good strategic road connections to the A1(M) linking London to the north and to the A505 running from Luton in the west to Royston in the east across the District. (Annex 1.1a)**

**As a planned settlement, Letchworth GC has a compact well defined town centre with wide open streets, public spaces and a range of civic, retail, office and other commercial space. The centre is the second largest in the District in terms of retail floorspace and the number of shop units behind Hitchin. The centre primarily serves the day to day shopping and service needs of the local residents.**

**There is a limited range of convenience traders within Letchworth town centre. National multiples present include a large Morrisons, Sainsbury's Local and an Iceland and some specialist food shops. Letchworth has a lower order of comparison shopping with a small selection of multiples geared more towards value brands and discount stores such as, Home Bargains, Poundland and Wilko. Intermingled with these are a number of long established independent retailers and charity shops. There is also a range of services including high street banks, estate agents, hairdressers, and food and beverage establishments. Other facilities include an independent cinema and a library.**

The Town Centre area we propose to use is the Official Town Centre as designated in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission draft (September 2016) (Annex 1.1b). The town centre is bounded by Station Road, Broadway and Gernon Road, with the core retail area and main shopping circuit around Leys Avenue, Eastcheap and the Garden Square Shopping Centre, also defined as the primary shopping frontage in the local plan. The Town Centre has a Business Improvement District (BID)<sup>1</sup> whose geography deviates slightly from the official plan but is largely the same (see Annex 1.1c). Some of the statistical material we present is based on the latter geography, but differences are not considered material.

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<sup>1</sup> Letchworth BID - <https://www.loveletchworth.com/bid/>

## **1.2 Population and links to wider economic area:**

*Information on the population living and working in the town centre area, how the area acts as a centre of social and economic activity and its links to the wider economic catchment area.*

*With supporting evidence to include:*

*Resident and workplace population, travel to work catchment area, town centre footfall, commercial space, retail activity, cultural activities, diversity of uses and social/ historical importance of the centre*

*Please limit your response to 750 words.*

**The original Letchworth GC master plan was focussed on the area between the three parallel roads of Wilbury Road / Norton Road in the north, Icknield Way across the middle of the area, and Hitchin Road / Baldock Road (the A505) to the south. After the Second World War development spread beyond the original master plan, with the Grange estate to the north and the Jackmans, Lordship and Manor Park estates to the south.**

**Letchworth nestles between Hitchin and Baldock, separated by narrow strips of countryside (See Annex 1.2a). At the 2011 census the population of Letchworth Garden City (including Willian and Norton) was 33,249 and there were 14,271 dwellings in the town. The Letchworth population is expected to increase to approx. 38,000 over the Local Plan Period to 2031 with a planned estimated growth of 2167 homes, 50 of which are to be within broad locations within the Letchworth town centre<sup>2</sup>. However, if Hitchin and Baldock are included, the housing increase is anticipated to increase by a further 7,321 across the three towns<sup>3</sup>, pushing the population to circa 95,910 by 2031. (See Annex 1.2a – showing proposed site allocations)**

**Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock form the service centre for an extensive rural hinterland of more than a dozen villages as well as serving the wider District and adjacent Local Authority areas of Central Bedfordshire and Stevenage. This area has been identified as within the Functional Economic Market Area serving Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire.**

**The FEMA study<sup>4</sup> notes a decline in jobs in North Hertfordshire between 1997 and 2014, although the population has increased. This indicates that larger numbers of residents are**

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<sup>2</sup> North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission Draft (October 2017) - Section 4: Letchworth Garden City on the NHDC website as Ref: LP1 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>

<sup>3</sup> Experian Census Population 2011 NHDC Retail Study Update 2016 – Nathaniel Litchfield June 2016 (Table 1 Annex 1 of Study p.76) on NHDC website as Ref: E1 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>

<sup>4</sup> FEMA study – Stevenage, North Herts and Central Beds – Nathaniel Lichfield June 2015 – available to view on NHDC website as Ref: E3 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>

commuting out of the district via the strategic road and rail links to work in neighbouring larger towns, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and London. Indeed, the number of commuters to London has increased considerably over the last decade highlighting the town's changing demographic as people have moved out of the capital.

Travel by car predominates, despite a good railway service between Letchworth GC, Hitchin and Stevenage, with inbound trips mainly from Central Bedfordshire. A higher proportion of trips exit the Letchworth and Baldock area (37%) compared to those entering the area (31%). Some 20% of trips are made internally, <sup>5</sup> reflecting the design and ethos of the Garden City.

North Hertfordshire is generally considered to be a prosperous area. However the demographic of Letchworth GC is very different from the rest of North Hertfordshire. By its very nature as a new town, no family has lived in Letchworth for more than 120 years. Following an initial influx into the original development, waves of new residents have settled in new developments in different parts of the town. Some of these areas have been more successful than others, but it is true to say that the disparity between the most privileged and most deprived parts of Letchworth is much greater than anywhere else in North Hertfordshire<sup>6</sup>. Of Letchworth's 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), four were in the 30% most deprived nationally and a further 2 in the 40% most deprived areas, whilst 6 others are in the 20% least deprived<sup>7</sup>.

Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock, and neighbouring Stevenage currently cater for all the disparate local needs of the populous and catchment area. Letchworth Town Centre has come to represent the value and budget end of shopping and entertainment. A high proportion of the expenditure generated by the more affluent population within Letchworth leaks from the area, to the other towns of Hitchin, Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage and Cambridge<sup>8</sup>.

Letchworth has a Business Improvement District organising numerous public events. These show excellent attendance figures with over 20,000 people attending the 2018 Food and Drink Festival, going to prove that the demand is present if Letchworth can find the right product to sell<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Emerging North Central Hertfordshire Growth Transport Plan: Letchworth & Baldock Evidence Pack – Hertfordshire County Council 2017 – (See Section 5.1 in Annex 2.1h).

<sup>6</sup> Poverty and Deprivation in LGC - LGCHF (See Annex 1.2b)

<sup>7</sup> SQW Draft Economic Narrative 2018 (See extract at Annex 1.2c)

<sup>8</sup> Fig 2.2 *Other shopping Destination*: NHDC Retail Study Update 2016 – Nathaniel Litchfield June 2016 (See Shopping Hierarchy extract at Annex 1.2d)

<sup>9</sup> Love Letchworth BID estimate of weekend attendance.

## **SECTION 2: Setting out the challenges**

Clear description of the issues and challenges facing this area.

This section will seek a description of the issues and structural challenges facing the high street or town centre area to be covered within the bidding. Places should:

- Describe the key challenges facing the area
- Provide evidence to support this argument (additional sources can be included in annexes). Set out why this place would benefit more from moving forward to co-development than other places within the area

**We will not accept bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges.**

### **2.1: Challenges**

*We recognise that each place will see different challenges. Supporting evidence on the challenges facing areas could cover the following:*

- *Proportion and/or number of vacant properties*
- *Openings/closures of commercial units*
- *Diversity of uses in the town centre area*
- *Resident/customer surveys*
- *Pedestrian flows and footfall trends*
- *Evidence of congestion and air quality*
- *Perception of safety and occurrence of crime*
- *State of town centre environmental quality including provision of green spaces*
- *Accessibility*
- *Housing demands*

**Letchworth GC and its town Centre face four main challenges:**

- **to bring new footfall to the town centre independently of and despite its reputation and current range of outlets thereby encouraging and promoting sustainable economic growth**
- **to reduce the incidence of poor health in the town and revolutionise the provision of Primary Care and Health provision in the town centre.**
- **to create a more sustainable town by encouraging sustainable travel as an alternative to the car.**
- **to generate a new brand and change the public perception of Letchworth Garden City as a diverse, exciting and healthy place to visit.**

### **Context**

**The demand for what Letchworth GC town centre currently supplies is likely to diminish. The older and lower income consumers groups are over represented amongst Letchworth town centre users, and the range of goods and services sold reflects this current demand<sup>10</sup>.**

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<sup>10</sup> Letchworth Town Centre Pfb Public Survey Feedback Report: April 2018 – (See Annex 2.1a)

The pfb survey undertaken in April 2018 (Annex 2.1a) shows that 70% of town centre visitors surveyed came from Letchworth, 55% were over 50 (Town average 35%), had visited for over 5 years (86%), came to the town centre at least 2 to 3 times per week (66%), by car or walking (89%), to browse the shops (42%), but for less than 2 hours (71%) and spend less than £20 (64%)<sup>11</sup>. This demand is only likely to diminish. The generation for whom going to the shops was the norm will give way to those who buy their Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) and non-branded clothes online or who are less concerned about saving pennies as they don't have the time to shop around on foot.

Generally, Hitchin and Baldock are known for their specialist independent shops, leisure opportunities and in Hitchin's case excellent range of high street names. Stevenage provides entertainment for the younger generation and larger out of town centre stores such as Debenhams. Letchworth has become known for its value / budget offering of consumables, food and a small range of eateries and cheaper pubs. The Javelin Group's finding as referenced in the North Hertfordshire 2016 Retail Study update ranks Letchworth GC 's market position as 'lower middle' compared to Hitchin ranked as 'middle' in terms of fashion offer and 'old' in terms of town centre attributes. Letchworth GC along with Hitchin are ranked as fourth tier centres in the Javelin Group's sub regional hierarchy with Letchworth having a lower ranking than Hitchin (UK Ranking of 435 compared 297 for Hitchin and VENUSCORE of 66 compared to 91 for Hitchin)<sup>12</sup>. This is reflected in the customer views on shops and services carried out as part of the 2016 NHDC Retail Study Update<sup>13</sup> and recent customer survey carried out by the Letchworth BID<sup>14</sup>.

### The First Challenge

*The first challenge is to bring new footfall to the town centre independently of and despite its reputation and current range of outlets. Business follows to where there is potential spend and profit and our objective is to change the demographic of the clientele in the town centre by providing the residents and others in the area, who currently rarely visit, a reason to come to the town centre, thereby giving a peg for commerce to invest and to cater to that clientele.*

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<sup>11</sup> Letchworth Town Centre Pfb Public Survey Feedback Report: April 2018 – (See Annex 2.1a)

<sup>12</sup> NHDC Retail Study Update 2016 – Nathaniel Litchfield June 2016 (See Shopping Hierarchy Extract at Annex 1.2d)

<sup>13</sup> Fig B.0.2 how visitors rate Centres for shops, services & facilities (% of visitors) p.134 from NHDC Retail Study Update 2016 – Nathaniel Litchfield June 2016 on NHDC website as Ref: E1 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>

<sup>14</sup> pfb Public Survey Feedback Report: April 2018 – (See Annex 2.1a)

Footfall in Letchworth is approximately 11,000 per week or 2,200 per day<sup>15</sup>. Hitchin by contrast has nearly 18,000 visitors per week<sup>16</sup>. The Garden Square shopping centre within the Letchworth town centre core retail area (Leys Avenue and Eastcheap) has the highest footway usage rates<sup>17</sup>, however the footfall in this area has followed an accelerating downward trend over the last three years, falling by 1.52% in 2016 and 6.20% and 7.67% in the following two years<sup>18</sup>.

The Letchworth evening economy is even weaker with only 870 people (average count) on a Saturday night<sup>19</sup>.

2016/17 town centre vacancy rate evidence<sup>20</sup> indicates that Letchworth stands out as having much higher vacancy rates compared to other towns in North Hertfordshire, at over 15% in total compared to 6.9% in Hitchin, 5.8% in Baldock and 10% in Royston(See Annex 2.1c). Analysis of the town centre rate listing premises undertaken in 2018 shows an 11% vacancy in retail uses (use class A1 to A5) and 18% vacancy in office usage in Letchworth town centre compared to a 6% vacancy in retail uses and 11% vacancy in office use in Hitchin town centre. (See annex 2.1d)

Recent Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) research lists the following as vacant:

- LGCHF - 11 Void Units counted against 123 rack rented units - Total NIA of 13,944 Sq. Ft
- Garden Square - 8 Void Units - Total NIA of 13,448 Sq. Ft
- Garden Square - 2 New retail units under development - Approx. total NIA of 5,500 Sq. Ft
- Spinks Arcade (Leys Avenue) - 10 Void Units

To give just one specific example, part of the units identified in the Garden Square for the first phase of the Primary Care Hub (see section 3.1) has been vacant since 2011. The larger part of the unit has been vacant since February 2018.

The major challenge facing Letchworth Town Centre is that its current trajectory is not sustainable and it must reinvent itself with an offer for the next generation. Neither the District Council nor the Heritage Foundation are in a position to enact that change

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<sup>15</sup> PMRS Survey Letchworth October 2018

<sup>16</sup> PMRS Survey Hitchin September 2018

<sup>17</sup> *Fig 4.6 Letchworth GC Footpath & Pedestrian Traffic* – Letchworth & Baldock Emerging North Central Growth Plan Evidence Pack 2017 - Hertfordshire County Council (See attached at Annex 2.1h)

<sup>18</sup> Garden Square Shopping Centre Management figures

<sup>19</sup> PMRS Evening Survey Letchworth 2018 (See Annex 2.1a)

<sup>20</sup> Fig 30 p.37 - North Hertfordshire Annual Monitoring Report 2016/2017 - <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring> - (See Annex 2.1d)



themselves, but can provide the catalysts for change encouraging new customers / clients to the Town Centre thereby encouraging private enterprise to invest.

### **Comparisons**

Hitchin, Letchworth, and Baldock town centres have developed a complementary offer over the last century. Both Hitchin and Baldock have thrived as two wealthy, independent market towns since the Middle Ages. The construction of Letchworth and the advent of modern travel meant that each of the three differentiated so as to co-exist totally interdependently and all three have adapted over the years to provide a complementary offerings to the populous as a whole.

Hitchin has perhaps the most developed town centre, with two supermarkets, a full range of high street multiple brands in clothing, banks and a developed leisure and food and drink sector. Baldock has one very large supermarket and a range of catering and leisure establishments. Letchworth town centre by contrast has a retail sector which is 46% budget / value operations, one “cheaper” supermarket (and two out of town centre upmarket ones) and a small range of eateries and cheaper pubs. The anecdotal evidence we have suggests that the better off Letchworth residents will, on the whole, use the peripheral Letchworth Supermarkets and seek entertainment in Hitchin and Baldock. The less affluent and older residents of Letchworth are the patrons of the town centre and the composition of the outlets there reflects this. It is also reflected that this demographic is less likely to use ecommerce and more to use cash, which is also reflected in the high street offering.

The Immediate threat to Letchworth is that the older resident generation will be replaced by a more internet savvy generation shopping online. The remaining current clientele tend to be lower income shoppers buying consumables, food and other non-demand-elastic items. Future generations’ shopping habits are likely to differ from these and the survival of many of the current outlets will be in peril. The challenge is to encourage a new generation and demographic of visitors to bring in fresh higher income footfall, to increase dwell time and a create new demand profile of visitor in the town centre.

### **The Second Challenge:**

*The second challenge is to reduce the incidence of poor health in the town and revolutionise the provision of Primary Care in the wider town through a Primary Care and Public Health Hub in the town centre.*

Letchworth as noted in 1.2 above has by far the greatest disparity in Hertfordshire of a wide range of social and welfare measures. In 2015, of the 23 LSOAs<sup>21</sup>, Letchworth's score for health deprivation and disability on the Index of Multiple Deprivation rated as follows:

**In Hertfordshire**

- 10 of Letchworth's LSOAs are in the top 20% most deprived for health and disability.
- A further 5 LSOAs are in the top 40% most deprived for health and disability.
- 11 LSOAs are in the most affected 20% for this measure, at a rate of 17.5 –31.5% of the population<sup>22</sup>.

**Nationally**

- 4 LSOAs were in the 30% most deprived nationally.
- 6 LSOAs were in the 20% least deprived areas nationally.

The Draft SQW Economic Narrative on LGC shows the social cohesion and deprivation disparity to be deteriorating, as between 2010 and 2015 nearly half Letchworth's LSOAs slipped into a more deprived class whilst only one rose<sup>23</sup> (See annex 1.2c).

Meanwhile, primary healthcare provision in the Town Centre is in a poor and deteriorating state. There are four GP surgeries in the town serving the population of Letchworth, one within and the others on the periphery of the town centre. (See Plan at Annex 2.1e)

They are all suffering from increasing patient lists (indeed some have stopped taking on new patients) and their buildings are old, too small and in poor and worsening condition. They are losing practitioners as they retire and are unable to recruit due to poor working conditions and prospects within the existing practises, and are overburdened with increasing bureaucracy and administrative requirements. (See annex 2.1g Local Surgeries and 2.1f GP General Background Commentary from Letchworth Heritage Foundation).

The situation will deteriorate as the population increases from 34,000 to 38,000 over the next 15 years under the Local Plan. This would indicate a likely widening of the disparity in health levels between the best and worst in Letchworth, already by far the worst in Hertfordshire. (See Annex 2.1g and Annex 2.1f).

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<sup>21</sup> Herts Insight: Lower Super Output Area – official subdivisions of Wards  
<http://atlas.hertslis.org/profiles/profile?profileId=420&geoTypeId=16&geoids=E10000015#iasProfileSection2>

<sup>22</sup> Poverty and Deprivation in LGC - LGCHF (See Annex 1.2b)

<sup>23</sup> SQW Draft Economic Narrative Dec 2018 (See annex 1.2e)

The NHS strategic preference for Primary Care delivery by Health Hubs in North Hertfordshire has so far proved elusive and it is vital that a solution is delivered for Letchworth before 2021 when the decline in local primary provision may become critical as new patients are unable to enrol.

### **The Third Challenge:**

*The third challenge is to enhance the environment by encouraging change in the modes by which town centre users travel to and from the centre.* Letchworth's residential properties, with generously proportioned gardens and its public open spaces make it a pleasure to walk or cycle to and from the town centre in most weathers. However, the current default mode is the car and this is reflected in the generous parking arrangements in the town centre. Although air pollution is not currently at threatening levels, modal shift to public and other non-private car usage will reduce the pollution and congestion in the centre and could potentially provide further town centre space for expansion on the Letchworth offer in the place of surface car parking.

One of the key aims of the NHDC Transport Strategy<sup>24</sup> is to encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel in accordance with the Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP4)<sup>25</sup>. Letchworth GC at present has good north south links in terms of bus and cycling routes into the town centre and the station with a good network of footpaths linking the town centre to the surrounding residential areas. The station is located on the northern edge of the town centre, which in itself generates a high number of early morning and evening commuter footfall passing through the town centre. The town centre is served by a number of bus stops scattered around the centre, which are underutilised. Journey to work data in the Letchworth and Baldock area demonstrates the dominance of car trips (65%) with the next most significant mode being on foot (12%), followed by train (12%), bicycle (3%) and bus use is (2%) with the remainder being other<sup>26</sup>. The most frequent bus services run north south, through Letchworth and on towards Stevenage. Bus services between Letchworth and Hitchin and Letchworth and Baldock are less frequent and there are large parts of the town that are not served directly by busses at all (see annex 2.1h plan showing bus services).

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<sup>24</sup> North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy can be viewed on the NHD website as Ref ED14 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-documents>

<sup>25</sup> The HCC LTP4 can be viewed at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/planning-in-hertfordshire/transport-planning/local-transport-plan.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> Section 5.1 Total Travel Patterns - Extract from Letchworth & Baldock Emerging North Central Growth Plan Evidence Pack 2017 - Hertfordshire County Council (See Annex 2.1h)

Encouraging visitors to use more sustainable travel modes requires more reliable and frequent bus services and a reduction in available car parking provision over the longer term, the North Central GTP has a number of interventions that seek to encourage modal shift thereby encouraging the people of Letchworth GC to live safer, more healthy and fulfilling lives. It is recognised that as part of the proposed vision of a health hub there will need to be careful consideration of sustainable transport, to reflect the wider issues already identified and ensure that the additional people visiting the town centre for the health hub do so in the most sustainable way.

Pollution is not considered to be a major potential health threat partly due to the open design of the town centre allowing emissions to disperse. Nevertheless, it is desirable that we should seek to minimise the emissions wherever they are as we encourage footfall and dwell time in the centre.

#### **The Fourth Challenge:**

*The fourth challenge is to change the public perception of Letchworth town centre.*

Letchworth has a brand, which currently represents a 'heritage-style, staid atmosphere, lack of vitality and innovation and dullness'. This needs to change to show the true picture of a modern, clean, interesting and exciting, green and above all a world famous Garden City with something for all. Poor perception reduces footfall and this can only be remedied through ensuring the wider public experiences the best of the town centre.

Demand for retail space is limited by the lack of footfall and the Letchworth Heritage foundation have examples<sup>27</sup> of businesses not taking leases on premises due to the lack of passing foot traffic.

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, there are four major challenges facing Letchworth Town Centre. Firstly, its current trading trajectory is not sustainable and it must reinvent itself with an offer for the wider public and the next generation of user. Secondly, the primary health care provision is close to collapse and in need of complete overhaul. Thirdly, to encourage and promote more sustainable forms of travel to encourage people to live more healthy lives. Lastly, Letchworth Town Centre has a poor reputation amongst prospective visitors and traders. Neither the District Council nor the Heritage Foundation are in a position to enact the first change themselves, but can provide the catalysts for change by facilitating the second

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<sup>27</sup> Copy of Letchworth Target Retailers by Rapleys August 2018 (See Annex 2.1i)

thereby increasing footfall, bringing new clients to the town centre and thereby encouraging private enterprise to invest.

## 2.2: Rationale for selecting town centre area

*Set out your rationale for choosing this town centre area as opposed to other centres within your local authority, and why this area is most in need. Please limit your response to 500 words.*

North Hertfordshire has four historic towns and a large number of villages and rural communities. For the purposes of this bid only the four towns were assessed to be of sufficient size for consideration. Of the four towns only Letchworth Garden City has a potential town centre project already being investigated (which started in mid to late 2017) and that project potentially meets the requirements of the Future High Streets Fund.

Letchworth is the world's first Garden City. It attracts visitors from around the world each year. Currently the town centre is struggling significantly, with large numbers of vacant units. There is an opportunity to deliver an innovative intervention which is consistent with the principles of garden cities and which can reinvigorate the town centre. As the first garden city, any successful intervention is going to attract significant attention and can perhaps be used as a model for future garden cities, or to reinvigorate other post-war new settlements.

The proposal for Letchworth Garden City is for a health led reinvigoration of the town centre, encompassing both a primary care hub and a public health hub. This is consistent with the principles of garden cities, which includes "healthy communities". The first phase of the project, the new combined GP surgery is hoped to be completed in April 2021, although a significant amount of work is still required, including whether sufficient funding can be identified. Later phases, including the ancillary primary care services and public health hub are dependant on suitable funding being identified and the Future High Streets Fund creates an opportunity to do that. Without these later phases the transformational impact on the town centre will be reduced.

The town centre of Letchworth has received investment from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and therefore already has attractive public realm. However there are significant challenges in terms of vacant retail units and the opportunity has arisen to use the primary care hub and public health hub to bring people into the town centre every day, which will generate footfall for the other tenants. If successful this model could be replicated in other towns in the district. The proposal simultaneously uses an innovative

**solution to bring people into the town centre and also brings the potential health benefits for the community through a better, fully - integrated, primary care and public health offer.**

**Delivery of a primary care hub including the GPs and other primary care services will provide opportunities to develop other sites around Letchworth as they are vacated by their current health tenants. It is likely that these will be redeveloped for residential properties, thereby offering brown field sites for development.**

## **SECTION 3: Strategic ambition**

This section will seek evidence of the level of ambition from the local authority, support from stakeholders and evidence that the local authority is well-placed to use the Future High Street Fund to tackle these challenges in a way that will fit with wider existing plans. Local authorities should:

- Set out a high-level vision for improving their area and how this links with need expressed in Section 2
- Demonstrate how this ambition will align with other funding streams (public or private)
- Cover how investment from government will support the area and help overcome these challenges
- Demonstrate engagement with and support from local stakeholders including other tiers of local government, if applicable (supporting evidence of this support such as letters should be attached as an annex)
- Show how this will link to wider strategic plans, including the Local Plan and Local Industrial Strategies e.g. around housing and local growth
- Provide an estimate of how much revenue funding they would need to support the development of their strategic vision and business case for a specific proposal

This phase relates to defining places and challenges and we therefore are not asking for specific project proposals at this stage.

**However, if a local authority has been working on a specific project that they feel is deliverable in the short term if they were to receive capital funding at an early stage, we invite them to make that clear here. While the details of the project will not be considered in our decision-making at this stage, we may consider fast-tracking these projects during co-development.**

We will not accept bids that do not provide sufficient evidence of support from local stakeholders.

### **3.1 Town centre vision and ambition for change**

*Set out your vision for regenerating your high street and how this links with the challenges outlined in section 2.*

*Please limit your response to 750 words.*

**North Hertfordshire District Council, our partners at the Heritage Foundation, Letchworth BID and elsewhere want Letchworth Town Centre to be the pioneer in creating an attractive, prosperous and sustainable new Garden Town centre, catering for the needs of all the residents in the original ethos of Ebenezer Howard. A Town Centre Strategy Group has been established to work together to deliver the vision (See annex 3.1a)**

**We propose a solution to Letchworth's major challenges: Regeneration of the Town Centre driven by the catalyst of a health led transformation programme, to improve the health service offering to local residents, encourage the leading of healthy lifestyles and simultaneously increase the footfall and change the demographic of the town centre users to enable Letchworth Town Centre to provide a long term sustainable offer.**

The programme will follow three phases:

**Phase 1 – Primary Care Hub (PCH):**

This phase will enable at least 3, but ideally all 4 town centre GP practises to merge into one Superpractice anchor, based in the Garden Square Shopping Centre, open 8.00 till 8.00, 7 days a week (one of the practices is managed on a different model and therefore may take longer to bring in). The owners of The Garden Square have offered vacant retail and storage space to the project and have agreed to help with relocation costs. Plans for this phase are currently under development and the phase could proceed in the next year to 18 months subject to outcomes of public consultation and planning approvals for the change of use. Phase 1 will also free up valuable peripheral town centre space which is likely to be converted to residential use thus increasing the local town centre resident population and footfall. This phase will seek to address challenges 1 and 2 as outlined under Section 2.1 of this Bid application.

The vision the doctors have, shared by all those involved hitherto is:

“A fit for purpose building, housing a single sustainable practice, covering the whole population of the town. They will have access to a modern facility that would house a stable, efficient, resilient primary care service. It would be an attractive place for nurses and doctors to work as it will be managed at scale to ensure efficient recruitment, training, peer support, policy development, HR and be as future proof as possible.”

**Phase 2 – Additional Primary Care and Public Health Hub:**

Hertfordshire County Council public health team is looking to establish “healthy hubs” in towns across Hertfordshire. They have identified Letchworth as the best location for the first hub in North Hertfordshire. Locating it with the primary care services represents an opportunity to create a “best in field” service to residents that covers all aspects of health needs.

Phase 2 will include a concerted campaign aimed to encourage ancillary health services and health orientated public and private sector operators to locate in the Garden Square or adjacent town centre locations to achieve a one stop shop for all health needs at the very centre of the town. Other primary and secondary healthcare services include, for example, midwifery, community mental health, house physiotherapy, remote monitoring, an integrated area for mobile testing and scanning units, comprehensive out of hours service, district nursing, phlebotomy, social worker, mental health and the Ernest Gardiner Day



Centre, and space for allied and voluntary services; etc. will co-locate with or close to the PCH to enable a joined up, 360 degree health service offering to the public.

We anticipate that the opportunity of co-location with a super-surgery and retail centre will be attractive to health-led businesses and operators such as smoking cessation clinics, weight loss services, mental health awareness and drug and alcohol services.

By improving, simplifying and easing access to efficiently run health services, we aim to improve the health of some of the least healthy groups of residents and at the same time reinvigorate the demand for retail and office space in the town centre by broadening the demographic profile of town centre users. The Primary Care and Public Health Hub will be used by the local residential and business community irrespective of age and income status, and should help to promote future employment and economic vibrancy across the town centre.

### **Phase 3 – Healthy Town Centre:**

This phase will be development and implementation of the North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy and the emerging North Central Growth Transport Plan in concert with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as the Highway Authority, the Letchworth Heritage Foundation and other key stakeholders including bus and rail operators. These Strategies and Plans will define the path by which modal shift can be undertaken from private car to alternative, healthy means of transport or by public transport such as improving walking and cycling with a focus on the town centre and station, and working with bus operators and HCC in improving bus interchange facilities in the town centre, thereby freeing valuable town land for other uses in the longer term (see annex 3.1b summarising the key aims and objectives of the NHDC Transport Strategy and the proposed interventions to encourage modal shift). Work on this phase will need to commence as part of Phase 1 in undertaking any feasibility studies and rolled out in parallel with phase 2 in promoting alternative sustainable modes of transport to and within the town centre.

By embedding health, wellbeing and the environment as the ethos, we aim to free up space and land, currently occupied by the current surgeries and potentially surface car parking in the longer term, to encourage new businesses and residences to expand the Letchworth offer to a new town centre user demographic.

### **3.2 Engagement and alignment of vision**

*Set out how your town centre vision aligns with other funding streams, both public and private, including details of partnership working with the private sector in this area. Show how your vision fits with wider strategic plans such as housing, transport and Local Industrial Strategies.*

*Please limit your response to 750 words.*

**Our programme aligns with a number of public and private funding streams and we intend to seek to leverage further funding contingent upon the success of this bid.**

**The programme aligns with the strategies of both the North and East Herts Clinical Commissioning Group and the Herts Community NHS Trust. Potential revenue funding could be available from the NHS Transformation Fund should a further round become available to the CCG. However, based on previous funding rounds, this would not include the capital funding required to deliver the project.**

**Over recent years, the NHS has promoted a strategy of Health Hubs where single practices come together and essentially pool resources and share costs. These also enable individual GPs to develop specialist knowledge in various fields in which they might have an interest – paediatrics and childcare, geriatrics, diabetes and so on. This provides the level of ‘collegiality’ which doctors prefer today and which mirrors the experience in hospitals where ready access to specialist knowledge and experience is available. And of course it means that doctors can expand their professional horizons and increase career and job satisfaction. More on this will become apparent when we see more details of the proposed new GPs contract.**

**<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/15/rise-super-size-gp-surgery-quarter-practices-now-deal-10000/>**

**There are now a number of Health Hubs up and down the country and we have provided a link to what the NHS call Wave One so that you can see what has been happening elsewhere:**

**<https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gpfv/redesign/improving-access/gp-access-fund/wave-one/pilots/>**

**This shows many of the positive impacts, including 0800-2000 seven day a week surgeries.**

**The programme also aligns with the many of the policies in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan proposed submission draft, Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and the aims and objectives of the NHDC Transport Strategy. (See Annex 3.2a for list of relevant policies, aims and objectives)**

The Programme is strategically aligned to The LEP Strategic Economic Plan - Perfectly Placed for Business 2017 – 30 - Priority 3 Reinvigorating our places for the 21st Century (actions 1 & 3). <https://www.hertfordshirelep.com/news-events/news/revised-strategic-economic-plan-published/>

In terms of economic impact, we estimate that under Phase 1 alone, town centre footfall will increase by 20%, generating nearly £30,000 income per week (See Annex 3.2b for methodology). We would anticipate further benefits to accrue under Phases 2 & 3. Most importantly it will generate a new demographic visiting the centre, more reflective of the town's population as a whole. The Hub will act as an anchor for the town centre and also free up property for redevelopment.

The current format of delivery of Primary Care in the town is unsustainable. The surgeries are unable to recruit, waiting lists have been frozen due to lack of physical capacity, administration is inefficient and buildings outdated and increasingly dilapidated. The surgeries themselves are on a downward trajectory. With Letchworth's population scheduled to grow by a further 4,000 people in the period to 2031 (Local Plan), the current arrangements will not have the capacity to cope with the influx. Indeed, it cannot cope with the current population. Our solution creates the capacity to serve the future needs of the town, and both retains and will create jobs, both directly in retention of surgery staff and practitioners, and in the recruitment of new staff and indirectly in the growth of local complementary services and offerings.

Delivery of phase 1 of the project has already identified a potential location with the owners of the Garden Square in the form of 2000sqm of floor space in central area of the Shopping Centre development. Additionally the shopping centre owners are prepared to consider some additional funding to cover some fit-out and relocation costs, subject to the assessment of the financial model . This could potentially be match-funding for the FHSF.

NHDC have access to approx. £120k of s106 capital funding from recent developments in the town which needs to be allocated towards the provision of healthcare facilities. Initial indications from officers on behalf of the Local Planning Authority confirm that this project meets the requirements for that funding.

We aim to set the town centre onto the path of prosperity, through a single solution, to address the two major challenges facing Letchworth; the long term sustainability of its town centre and health of its population. Through the catalyst of a highly efficient and effective Primary Care and Public Health Facility, we aim to attract large growth in footfall

and to widen the social and economic demographic of visitors to the town centre, which will in turn generate private sector investment into and widen the town centre offer.

### **3.3 Support for town centre vision**

*Provide details, including letters of support, for your vision from (where applicable):*

*• Other tiers of local government including Mayoral and non-Mayoral Combined Authorities and county councils where applicable*

*Other local stakeholders including:*

- Local Enterprise Partnerships*
- Business Improvement Districts*
- Private sector*
- Community groups*

*Please limit your response to 500 words and include evidence of this support as an annex where appropriate.*

This bid application has support from the following people and organisations:

**Copies of their letters of support are included in Annex 3.3**

#### **Letters of Support Received as at 14 March 2019**

**The Letchworth Heritage Foundation**

**Herts Community NHS Trust**

**East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group**

**Right Honourable Oliver Heald MP**

**Cromwell Ltd on behalf of the owners of the Garden Square Shopping Centre**

**GP partners from the relevant practises.**

- Birchwood Surgery**
- Nevells Road Surgery**
- Garden City Surgery**

#### **Letters requested and to be received prior to submission of Bid**

**Love Letchworth (Town Centre Business Improvement District)**

**Hertfordshire County Council**

**Hertfordshire Highways**

**Hertfordshire LEP**

**Hertfordshire Growth Board**

**Support from the patient representation groups.**

**Support from major businesses in the wider town and area.**

### **3.4 Estimate of revenue funding needed**

*Provide details of how much revenue funding you need to develop project plans for capital funding (including detailed business cases).*

*Include estimated breakdowns of how you would spend this revenue funding*

*Please limit your response to 500 words.*

The Council estimates that the project would require approximately £200,000 to develop project plans and the business case for capital funding. This is in addition to revenue funding potentially available from the CCG and Garden Square shopping centre owners.

Due to the every day demands on the GPS in particular, consultancy support is required to deliver the project, including:

1. **Business Transformation consultancy to merge the governance, staff roles and systems integration of the old practices to the new surgery.**
2. **Service Transformation consultancy to fully utilise the merger and co-located primary care and public health services to make a streamlined service for patients**
3. **Project delivery support to manage the move and physical integration of the practices and ensure smooth transition of patient care to amalgamated practice.**
4. **Planning consultancy regarding the application for change of use**
5. **Architectural and design services to create Hub design**
6. **Transport consultancy to ensure local infrastructure capability to handle increased footfall**

With regard to the phase two capital funding, there is some potential funding from the owners of Garden Square (subject to the business case) and the s.106 monies, which combined could potentially offer the match funding to a capital contribution from the FHSF.