



Welwyn Garden City BID Business Plan

2022 – 2027

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Contents

1.	Foreword	1
	Message from Jonathan Field.....	1
2.	Welwyn Garden City Ltd.....	2
	BID Board.....	2
3.	Executive summary.....	3
	3.1. BID background	3
	3.2. The benefits of the Welwyn Garden City BID.....	3
	3.3. Finance.....	4
	3.4. The Area.....	5
	3.5. The Vision	5
	3.6. Strategic objectives and activities	5
	3.7. BID term.....	5
4.	How a BID works.....	6
	4.1. Background.....	6
	4.2. The Vote	6
	4.3. Alteration of arrangements	7
	4.4. The Levy.....	7
	4.5. Duration & Commencement date of the BID Arrangements.....	7
	4.6. Timescales	8
5.	BID Delivery and benefits	9
	5.1. The first five years	9
	Animated and Attractive	9
	Promoted and Celebrated	10
	Welcoming and Accessible	11
	A Great Business and Leisure Offer	12
	5.2. COVID 19 Support.....	13
6.	Working together will make a difference.....	16
7.	Welwyn Garden City BID area	17
8.	Services provided by Public Bodies	19
	8.1. Council’s Support for the Welwyn Garden City BID	19
	8.2. Council’s Vision for the BID	19
	8.3. Council Services for Business.....	19
	8.4. Individual Baseline Service Statements.....	20
	8.5. Council’s Operational Support for Welwyn Garden City BID	21
	8.6. Monitoring and Review	21

8.7.	Monitoring of basic service provision	21
9.	The Research and Consultation Process.....	23
9.1.	Background.....	23
9.2.	What were the aims of the process?.....	23
9.3.	Research and consultation activity.....	23
10.	Research results.....	25
10.1.	Business feedback	25
10.2.	Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City.....	25
10.3.	Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City.....	26
10.4.	Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City	27
11.	The BID’s response.....	29
11.1.	The role of the BID.....	29
11.2.	How will the delivery be monitored?	30
12.	Vision and objectives.....	31
12.1.	The Vision	31
12.2.	Objectives, activities and outcomes.....	31
	Objective 1: Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City.....	31
	Objective 2 – Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City.....	32
	Objective 3 - Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City.....	34
13.	Organisation, Resources and Delivery.....	36
14.	Welwyn Garden City BID Budget & Finances	38
14.1.	Balancing the Budget.....	38
14.2.	The Welwyn Garden City Town Centre BID Budget	39
	Five years 2022 – 2027	39
14.3.	Cost of the BID Renewal	39
14.4.	Sources of Additional Funding.....	39
14.5.	Application of Funds and Alteration of BID Arrangements	40
14.6.	Governance and management of the BID Budget.....	40
15.	Levy Criteria for Welwyn Garden City BID	41
16.	Risk analysis.....	47
16.1.	The responsibilities of the BID Company.....	47
16.2.	BIDs in other places	47
16.3.	The Importance of Voting ‘YES’	47
16.4.	Working with key partners	47
16.5.	Sustainable mechanism for Welwyn Garden City	48
17.	Final thoughts.....	49

Appendices	50
Appendix 1 – Definitions	50
Appendix 2 – Streets included in the BID Area listed alphabetically.....	51
Acknowledgements	52
Further information.....	52

1. Foreword

Welwyn Garden City - Business Improvement District (BID) Proposal and Business Plan 2022-27

Message from Jonathan Field

It is hard to believe our first term is drawing to a close. We have achieved so much over the last five years, despite the distraction of a pandemic!

We recognise how challenging and devastating the pandemic has been for many of you, and we understand how recovery is likely to be a long road. We want to support you through this period, just as we did through the pandemic, and this is reflected in the new business plan. The first year will be spent supporting the recovery of our town, getting us back on our feet, so that we can look forward to the following four years with some confidence and enjoy watching our town grow and flourish once again. In order to support this recovery, we will be significantly discounting the first years' levy.

We have listened to your feedback and have set up three new objectives for the next term which aim to deliver on our vision in a practical way, capitalising on the Garden City principles; a town designed for healthy living and sustainability, which make it a unique place to do business.

Looking ahead we will continue to work closely with partners, ensuring your interests are represented on our vision for the town centre's infrastructure ensuring we as a town centre compete effectively. We will also invest our time and energy to influence our appeal to the young and families, and the elderly. Moreover, we believe that the principal landlords across the town centre could add value to their investment by working together with the BID in the best interests of our town centre.

The partnership between HCC, WHBC and our BID in making better use of the space at the end of Stonehills illustrates the progress we are making with regards to our vision. We intend to pursue further opportunities to make best use of the space in our town centre. We have over the last 5 years already made good progress in encouraging more hospitality venues into the town. Welwyn Garden City is unique in what it offers those who visit and live in the garden city. We worked closely with the WGC Centenary Foundation in celebrating the town's 100 years heritage; the celebratory launch in January drew in over 30,000 people over 2 evenings.

Our BID has been an exemplar in enabling businesses to emerge from the pandemic. We are keen to build on that and seize the opportunities for all in the post pandemic scenario and as Welwyn Garden City's town centre moves into its next century.

I believe the BID is fundamental to the recovery of our town. We will continue to work hard for you, supporting and shaping future growth of our town that all of us depend upon.

I think you will agree that together, we have overcome many challenges and great work has been achieved. This can only continue with your support, so please vote YES in the forthcoming ballot, let's continue to shape the future of our town together. Thank you.

Jonathan Field
John Lewis and Partners
Chair of Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd

2. Welwyn Garden City Ltd

BID Board

The BID Company, the Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd is a company limited by guarantee, is the body which has proposed the BID for the purposes of the BID Statutory Provisions and is responsible for the implementation of the BID plan and to ensure that the business views represented are as broad as possible by both geography and business sector across the Welwyn Garden City BID area.

The membership of the board and the company is open to all business levy payers in the BID area and also to Voluntary Members. The Members of the Company control the membership of the Board, through their Articles of Association and votes at General Meetings of Members.

The current members of the BID Board are as follows:

Directors	Organisation
Jonathan Field (Chair)	John Lewis and Partners
Anthony Clements	Future Gifts
Carley Beck	Howard Centre
John Beech	Landlord representative
John Hughes	Resident representative
Ka Ng	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Mike Paraliki	Stonehills Hairdressing
Mounia Le Gaufey	Ewart Price Solicitors
Nick Brown	Welwyn Hatfield Chamber of Commerce
OJ Daya	Waitrose
Terry Mitchinson	Editorial Consultant
Council Member Representative	Organisation
Cllr Tony Kingsbury	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Advisers	Organisation
Chris Dale	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Sian Chambers	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

3. Executive summary

3.1. BID background

Business Improvement Districts are created by businesses and organisations which come together to collaborate on initiatives that improve the location where they trade or do business. Business Improvement Districts are driven by participating businesses who work together to draw up a business plan which is voted on and, if agreed, is then funded through a levy based on business rateable values, as well as trying to lever in additional funding where possible for investment into the delivery of projects for the benefit of businesses.

This is the BID Proposal and Business plan for the second term of a BID in Welwyn Garden City. The first BID started on 1st April 2017 and will run until 31st March 2022. The levy for the Welwyn Garden City BID is collected by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and paid directly to the Business Improvement District company. This is a not-for-profit company set up by the businesses and is accountable to the businesses in the Welwyn Garden City BID area to manage the delivery of the Business Improvement District business plan.

3.2. The benefits of the Welwyn Garden City BID

The Welwyn Garden City BID was established in 2017 with the aim to ‘put Welwyn Garden City on the map’, enabling the town centre to become a thriving place for all those that live, work and visit.

Welwyn Garden City is a unique place, that competes today with the neighbouring towns of St Albans, Hitchin and even Watford. Welwyn Garden City needs to build on its strengths of being a ‘Garden City’.

With the dramatic changes to the way we work and live brought about through the COVID pandemic, Welwyn Garden City stands to capitalise on its Garden City credentials as being a place where more people work locally in a vibrant, green and sociable neighbourhood rather than commuting every day to the big cities.

Even before the onset of the COVID pandemic, Welwyn Garden City was already experiencing the challenges faced by other towns and cities with a decline of the town centre as reputable shopping destination and a need to redefine itself as an economic and social hub for Welwyn Garden City as a whole. Over the past few months these trends have accelerated and heightened the need to work together to shape the future of the town.

The influence of the collective voice of businesses working together also translates into productive relationships and outcomes, when working with other organisations such as Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Herts County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the police, to meet the businesses’ needs. Through these relationships the BID has not only represented business interests but has generated and coordinated practical and financial support for businesses and influenced development plans for the future of the town.

This new BID Proposal and Business Plan builds on the success of the current term, aims to support businesses at a critical time of recovery and enable Welwyn Garden City town centre to build on its unique strengths and assets. It also aims to take more of a leading role in the promotion of the

town to new businesses and investors and supporting them in establishing themselves and benefiting from the new and emerging opportunities for the town.

The benefits of a BID do not just come from the ability to deliver projects and services from a guaranteed budget but come from the collective influence of the businesses in the BID area. It will have the influence to change key issues which impact upon the operation and success of our businesses such as promotion of the town centre, crime and safety issues and attractiveness of the town centre for our clients, customers and everyone who lives and works here.

The collective voice of businesses working together also translates into productive relationships and outcomes, and when working with other organisations and public bodies, the ability to influence more strategic issues such as the redevelopment of the town centre.

The plan has been developed to ensure that it:

- is balanced to cover all business sectors
- builds on the success to date
- clearly defines the role of the BID
- seeks to create and take advantage of new opportunities
- has focussed activity but remains relevant for next five years
- has deliverable and achievable objectives

It takes account of the changes which have occurred over the last five years and clearly lays out a business-led programme of investment to tackle issues identified by businesses with the aim of creating a positive and more profitable trading environment to potentially benefit all business sectors.

3.3. Finance

This levy will be collected on behalf of the Business Improvement District (BID) by the 'Billing Authority' Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, which has responsibility for the public administration and collection of business rates of the area covered by the BID. The levy will then be paid directly to the BID Company in its entirety. This charge is payable by non-domestic rate payers in the defined BID area, regardless of whether or not they voted in the BID ballot, or how they actually voted. It is collected by the 'Billing Authority' in much the same way as business rates.

The budgeted income over the five-year period of the BID is planned to be of the order of £1.3 million. The yearly income will be made up of some £270,000 from the levy revenues and a sum averaging around £26,000 from voluntary private and public sector contributions. (See income and expenditure tables in Section 14)

The BID Company for Welwyn Garden City BID is a not-for-profit company, directed and controlled by nominated business people who manage the Business Improvement District business plan and are directly accountable to the businesses trading in Welwyn Garden City town centre.

The manner in which the BID Levy charge is calculated is defined in Section 15.

3.4. The Area

The Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District covers the town centre from Campus West and the College in the north, to the edge of the railway track in the east. It then extends down alongside the railway track to Church Rd and west to Parkway (see map in Section 7).

3.5. The Vision

Through a business-led programme our vision is to:

‘To create a town centre which is innovative, vibrant and sustainable, which builds on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a wonderful place to visit, work, live and invest.’

3.6. Strategic objectives and activities

The BID investment programme will be delivered through the three key strategic objectives and their related activities:

Objective 1:

Celebrate a Wonderful Welwyn Garden City

To promote the strengths and develop the profile of Welwyn Garden City and all it has to offer to increase positive perceptions, loyalty and pride in the town centre

Objective 2:

Enjoy a Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City

To provide a vibrant, safe and positive experience for visitors and workers in Welwyn Garden City to enjoy, exploring new sustainable opportunities with businesses and key partners.

Objective 3:

Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City

Encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of Welwyn Garden City.

3.7. BID term

Subject to a successful vote in November 2021, the new BID will start on 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2027.

4. How a BID works

4.1. Background

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a precisely defined geographical area within which the businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment.

BIDs were enabled by parliament through the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. This legislation was based on the experience of some twenty years of successful BID activity in America and Canada. Since 2004, over 300 BIDs have been proposed and approved by business communities in England and Wales. These include Watford, St Albans, Letchworth, Loughborough, Luton and Milton Keynes. Larger cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and London have a number of BIDs.

There are more than 120 BID areas which have been operating for more than five years and have gone through a renewal ballot and more than 30 have now entered their third term having gone through a third ballot. In most cases BIDs going on to a second term have received an even greater endorsement in the vote than they did the first time. BIDs have brought significant improvements to the trading environment of the businesses based in these locations. Further information about BIDs is available on the BID Foundation website www.placemanagement.org

The lifetime of the BID is prescribed by the Regulations and is set at no more than 5 years. It is possible for a BID to be extended by proposing a new Business Plan at the end of the BID lifetime for a fresh formal vote by the businesses.

The purposes of a BID are to provide new or expanded works and services or environmental enhancements within the prescribed BID area, funded via a BID Levy charge. All services/improvements will be additional to those already provided by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. This charge is payable by non-domestic rate payers and is collected by the council in much the same way as business rates. The manner in which the BID Levy charge is calculated is defined in Section 15.

All works and services will be contracted by the Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd, the BID body for the BID area. The objectives and aspirations of the Welwyn Garden City BID are set out in this BID Proposal and Business Plan.

This business plan has been prepared in line with best practice and with 'reference to the 'Industry Criteria and Guidance' prepared for Revo in association with: Association of Town and City Management, the Association of Convenience Stores, the British Retail Consortium, Intu and the British Property Federation.

A set of definitions for terms used throughout this document is contained in Appendix (1).

4.2. The Vote

To succeed, the ballot has to pass two tests: A simple majority vote of those who vote must register a 'YES' and the aggregate rateable value of those who vote 'YES' must be greater than that of those

that vote 'NO'. If these two criteria are met, the Business Plan is activated and all businesses in the area concerned will be required to pay the levy.

The persons entitled to vote, and be liable for the levy, are the ratepayers of non-domestic premises in the Business Improvement District. Properties with a rateable value of less than £5,000 will be excluded from the vote and levy.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Electoral Services returning officer John Merron will be the Ballot Holder for the Business Improvement District vote. Details of voting procedures and how you can confirm persons entitled to vote can be found by contacting Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Electoral Services on Tel 01707 357300 or by e-mail elections@welhat.gov.uk

4.3. Alteration of arrangements

The Business Improvement District, its boundaries, business plan and the levy percentage cannot be altered without an alteration ballot, although its board can adjust projects and spend as they feel appropriate, provided the basic tenets and budgets are not compromised. This is explained in more detail in Section 14.

4.4. The Levy

In consideration of the challenges facing businesses over the last 18 months the levy in year 1 will be reduced to 1.5% of rateable value (RV) for non-domestic hereditaments outside a managed shopping centre, and 1.25% for non-domestic hereditaments inside a managed shopping centre with an RV of £5,000 or more which fall within the levy criteria laid down in Section 15 where the levy criteria is covered in more detail. The levy for future years will return to a level which is in line with the current BID levy percentage.

This levy arrangement will generate around £1.3 million of ring-fenced funding over the five year life of the BID and will also be used to lever in additional funds where possible adding a further £130,000 over the life of the BID. This will be used to fund the projects identified in this Business Plan.

4.5. Duration & Commencement date of the BID Arrangements

Subject to the successful ballot in November 2021 our proposal is for the Arrangements for the Welwyn Garden City BID Proposal and Business Plan to operate for five years and to commence on the 1st April 2022. After five years, on the 31st March 2027, it can be extended or renewed – but only after being subject to a ballot.

4.6. Timescales

Action Point	Action	Day and Date
1	Notice by BID Proposer to Billing Authority & Secretary of State of intention to hold ballot (at least 84 days before Ballot Holder requested to hold ballot Action Point 4)	Fri 11 June 2021
2	Establish Register of Businesses as specified in BID proposal	Target Date: Thu 16 September 2021 Latest Date: Thu 07 October 2021
3	BID Proposer requests Billing Authority to instruct Ballot Holder to hold a Ballot (BID proposals need to be completed)	Target Date: Thu 16 September 2021 Latest Date: Thu 07 October 2021
4	Billing Authority formally requests Ballot Holder to hold ballot	Target Date: Mon 27 September 2021 Latest Date: Thu 07 October 2021
5	Ballot Holder issues Letter to Business Ratepayers to give information about the ballot and identify named person to receive ballot paper (latest date is 42 days before Ballot Day)	Target Date: Thu 30 September 2021 Latest Date: Thu 07 October 2021
6	Ballot Holder publishes Notice of Ballot (latest date = 42 days before ballot day) also to send copy to Secretary of State, a copy of the published notice of ballot, as per Schedule 2 3(d) of the 2004 Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations	Target Date: Thu 30 September 2021 Latest Date: Thu 07 October 2021
7	Ballot Holder Issues ballot papers (at least 28 days before Ballot Day)	Thu 21 October 2021
8	Last day to appoint a proxy (tenth day before Ballot Day)	Mon 08 November 2021
9	Lost ballot papers – earliest date for issuing a replacement for a lost ballot paper (where papers not received by the 4th working day before the ballot)	Fri 12 November 2021
10	Spoilt ballot papers – last day/deadline to apply for a replacement ballot paper for a spoilt ballot paper (not later than 3 working days before the ballot)	Mon 15 November 2021
11	Ballot Day (up to 5pm)	Thu 18 November 2021
12	Count and announcement of result	Fri 19 November 2021
13	Disposal of ballot papers	Fri 20 May 2022

5. BID Delivery and benefits

5.1. The first five years

The first five-year term of the Welwyn Garden City BID began on 1st April 2017, following a successful ballot that took place during 2016. The BID has delivered and supported businesses through a time when all high streets and shopping centres across the land have faced massive challenges, most notably the structural changes in the retail economy and of course the challenges of the COVID19 pandemic.

During this first five-year term, besides the levy revenue from businesses the BID was able to secure £201,439 of additional revenue from other sources which enabled it to deliver even more support to businesses. Some of this activity is described below.

Animated and Attractive

The BID has hosted and established significant events such as the World Food Festival, Cinema on the Green, Christmas Lights Event, Garden City Lights that brought additional footfall, provided promotional opportunities for businesses and were a great way to engage with the community.

Events

Cinema on the Green

This popular event grew in attendance over the years. Transforming the Howardsgate Gardens into a free outdoor cinema attracted over 6,000 visitors from all over the county. The event offered BID businesses an opportunity to sponsor and advertise on the big screen. A typical comment from the public was, “It was an amazing event, the staff really made it something special. It was a fantastically organised and was nice to have something that was free for the whole family to enjoy. Well done!”

World Food Festival

The World Food Festival was a celebration of world culture in the heart of Wonderful Welwyn Garden City. This event was an opportunity for visitors to experience new tastes and flavours from around the globe. The World Music Stage showcased a variety of World Music performances while visitors sampled the delights of the Food Festival. The event drew over 15,000 visitors to the town and was one of the biggest yearly footfall drivers. A typical comment from the public was “Not only was the food delicious and the music fantastic but how lovely was it to see the town so vibrant and alive!”

Christmas Lights Events

Christmas is a magical time in Welwyn Garden City. With the added decorations and crowd-pleasing events, the area is now established as The Home of the Christmas Lights. The Christmas trail in 2020 was completed by over 10,000 people and increased dwell time in the town by 100%. A typical comment from the public was “Thank you for making such an effort in what’s been a hugely challenging year for the town’s businesses. Such an amazing initiative which gave children a touch of magic in what was a rather different and unusual Christmas. Well done and thank you so much!”

Garden City Lights (WGC 100 Launch)

Welwyn Garden City's centenary year was launched in style with the fabulous Garden City Lights event, organised in partnership with the WGC Centenary Foundation. Over 30,000 people enjoyed the amazing light installations around the town centre. This event helped generate footfall and support businesses during the difficult trading month of January.

Town centre WiFi which is free for visitors

The BID introduced Five WiFi hotspots spread throughout the town centre to offer connectivity to visitors. It has had over 300,000 connections and the data collection has helped to increase the BID database by 5,000.

Created a brand-new outdoor dining area

To support increased capacity for hospitality businesses the Garden City turned into an Italian piazza in Summer 2021. The BID invested in 14 picnic benches and umbrellas which were placed in Wigmores South just outside of Sainsbury's. Susan Banks, a resident of WGC commented on Wonderful Welwyn Garden City's Facebook page "Enjoying the wonderful space and sunshine for a mid-morning snack! Thank you for organizing this - could almost be on holiday!"

Other notable events and activities funded by the BID included:

- Additional Christmas decorations to enhance the look and feel and improve visitor numbers and dwell time during the Christmas shopping period
- Garden Fair
- Midweek Munch
- Seasonal Trails and Campaigns
- Welwyn Garden Petit Tour

Promoted and Celebrated

- The BID developed a unique and now well-known brand for Welwyn Garden City town centre, 'Wonderful Welwyn Garden City'. Prior to the BID commencing, 81% of businesses felt that developing the town's identity and branding to attract more visitors should be a priority. With the businesses' help, the new brand was developed, inspired by the iconic Coronation Fountain. The Wonderful Welwyn Garden City brand is now established and widely recognised.
- The BID developed and rapidly grew various social media platforms and the social media numbers increased consistently throughout the BID term. The average reach is 10k, with peaks over 100k, post engagement peak of 22k and Christmas video viewed 36k times.
- The BID introduced a town centre App, offering discounts and rewards to visitors. The App has a trail facility which the BID utilised and been very successful, i.e., Christmas Trail, Easter Trail, Halloween Trail. To date the App has had over 2,000 downloads.

- The BID produced 4 issues of to|morrow Magazine, a unique publication with the sole aim of driving customers to the town centre and promoting BID businesses. All businesses had a chance to be featured for free in the magazine which was posted to 50,000 homes in specifically targeted areas. Over 120 businesses have taken up the opportunity to feature in to|morrow.
- The BID organised the Welwyn Garden City Awards in 2018 where a record breaking 70 businesses took part, and almost a third of them scored 90% or over in customer satisfaction in the mystery shopping report, which proves that providing great customer service is what sets Welwyn Garden City businesses apart.
- The BID introduced an innovative car parking campaign that ensures all investment goes back through businesses tills (The WGC Gift Card scheme), by which the BID (thanks to a grant given by WHBC) pays back every £5 spent in your shop/business through the gift card. The campaign has been really successful with over 50 businesses seeing the benefit of it.
- The BID has been involved in promoting the Centenary of Welwyn Garden City and involved in the delivery of the Centenary Celebrations since the Foundation's inception in 2006. The BID supported all the events and activities that took part in the town centre, co-ordinated partners' support and helped businesses be a part of the celebrations. Unfortunately, some of the plans couldn't come to fruition due to the pandemic however the BID is hoping to be able to deliver some in the future.

Other promotional material included: Summer in the Garden City, Christmas brochures, Social Media Campaigns including a Facebook group, newsletters and Welcome back to WGC video campaigns.

Welcoming and Accessible

- The BID took over the Welwyn Garden City Watch, which works in partnership with the police and CCTV to provide instant communication between shops, shopping centre management and CCTV control rooms. The BID offered half price subscription to all BID businesses and a free one-month trial.
- The BID lobbied and assisted in providing enhanced CCTV across the town centre which is linked to the WGCWatch.
- The BID installed complementary flower installations which won a silver and gold award in Anglia in Bloom.
- The BID installed additional Christmas lighting each year, building up to a very popular display in 2020.
- The BID provided town centre Ambassadors who engage with businesses, are the eyes and ears of the town and report cleansing or maintenance concerns.

- The BID introduced Wayfinding, which included a newly designed town centre map which is displayed at strategic points such as car parks, stations and the Howard Centre.
- The BID worked with the police, WHBC and other agencies to share intelligence and tackle ASB.

A Great Business and Leisure Offer

- The BID is a strategic partner and influencer of town centre developments.
- The BID is a key partner in the WGC Visioning Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership.
- The BID provided a variety of FREE training courses for businesses, including degree courses.
- The BID provided the opportunity to apply for funding that would not be accessible to the town centre without the BID.
- The BID has regular engagement with developers of town centre schemes.
- The BID introduced footfall counters that provide real time figures and track visitor movement.
- The BID provided networking opportunities to businesses.
- The BID supported the Welwyn Garden City Symposium.
- The BID introduced the Innovation Grant Scheme to provide financial support to businesses within the BID area by helping them to adapt and diversify in response to the new challenges posed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public Art for the Centenary Year

- The Henry Moore Foundation kindly loaned us one of their sculptures for our centenary year. Large Standing Figure: Knife Edge has stands proudly on Parkway all year next to the Coronation Fountain. The WGC Centenary Foundation has kindly extended the loan until December 2021.
- We were delighted to be offered the opportunity by Herts County Council to celebrate Welwyn Garden City's centenary through 28 posters in the newly refurbished subways next to John Lewis.
- A new statue of Ebenezer Howard created by local sculptor Ben Twiston-Davies was commissioned by the Centenary Foundation to mark the centenary. Cast in bronze and weighing half a ton, the statue stands over 7ft (2.2m) tall takes pride of place on the north end of Howardgate.



5.2. COVID 19 Support

The BID worked extremely hard to plan and prepare for 2020, which was meant to be a year of celebrations as we entered Welwyn Garden City's centenary. The team kicked off the year with the Garden City Lights festival which saw over 30,000 people attend over the launch weekend... and then the pandemic hit. Much of the town was forced to close. As a BID, we tightened the purse strings but maintained operations during the lockdown period and continued to be proactively engaging with the strategic recovery partnership, coordinating a range of campaigns and practical support to build confidence amongst you, our businesses and our consumers.

Our agreed action plan for the year was turned on its head with our recent priorities focusing on the implementation of new government guidance and reacting to your needs. We took the decision to furlough two members of staff for a short period and negotiated reductions in many of our committed contracts. The BID received a small amount of funding from government which we are giving back to you directly through the BID Innovation Grant. COVID has changed the way consumers shop. People adjusted to working from home and shopping online and lost confidence in going to the town centre. Our shop local campaign, our ambassadors and our safety measures all helped to regain that confidence, although somewhat slowly. Even though we have lost some of our businesses during the pandemic, we have also been very encouraged by the number of new businesses opening.

This 2021, the BID will enter its final year of this five-year term and we really hope to work with you to secure another term. We will be working together with businesses to understand your needs and priorities and ensure we have a Business Plan fit for the future of our town's businesses.

We will continue to work hard for you and the town to help deliver the COVID-19 recovery and the future growth that all businesses depend upon. We are committed to bringing our town back to life in a safe way, as quickly as possible, and our partnerships with levy payers are crucial to this effort.

The BID:

- Helped in accessing Government support
- Offered support and advice to levy payers
- Helped with offering loans and funds
- Lobbied for further financial support
- Supported negotiations with landlords
- Ensured security at premises
- Supported businesses using our social media platforms and LoyalFree app
- Kept businesses informed through regular newsletters
- Hosted regular virtual meetings with businesses and issued regular newsletters
- Launched Welwyn Garden City at Home
- Saved money (furloughed staff, reviewed overheads, re-profiled budgets)
- Set up a strategic partnership to plan the recovery
- Supported businesses in the re-opening process, providing advice, marketing materials and technical support.
- Offered training courses and co-ordinated support to adapt Covid Secure guidance for in-store operations, including provision of PPE, protective screens, signage and covid secure packs
- Launched the LoyalFree marketplace website, a shopping site that is free for BID businesses
- Helped transform streets to accommodate social distancing and provide a welcome environment for shoppers – including public information signage, support for queuing and hand sanitiser stations
- Surveyed businesses to better understand their needs
- Created and promoted interactive trails to support businesses
- Promoted businesses through social media campaigns
- Provided extra WGC Ambassadors to support businesses through a wide range of tasks to ensure the town centre is a welcoming environment for visitors.
- Deep cleaned some areas in the town centre

The WGC BID Innovation Grant Scheme aims to provide support to businesses within the BID area by helping them to adapt and diversify in response to the new challenges posed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Successful businesses will use the funding to adapt and deliver innovative new ways to improve their trading circumstances.

Fig 1: An example of COVID-19 Guidance provided by the BID;

Getting Back to Business COVID-19 Checklist



Getting Back to Business

We have compiled a simple checklist to ensure a smooth transition out of lockdown for our shops and businesses.
Updated 21 May 2020



REVIEW YOUR STAFF POLICIES

Staff and schedule plan
Risk assessments
Internal communications

- * Review safety processes and risk assessments in place for employees in line with national government guidance on COVID Secure business
- * Create a staff plan to reflect working from home, return to work, fixed teams on shift patterns, flexible working and potential support to work from home
- * Consider:
 - * Prioritising working from home
 - * Vulnerable staff
 - * Safe commuting available
 - * Circulate new policies, health measures and timescales with staff and across the workplace
 - * Devise advice on safe commuting
 - * Order the necessary PPE for staff to undertake their work safely
 - * Check if your staff can apply to be tested.



REVIEW SURFACES AND POINT OF SALES

Cleansing plan
Sanitising availability
Minimising risks

- * Review cleansing plan including potential new areas, hot spots, services, frequency and appropriate products recommended by Public Health England
- * Disable touchscreens, consider low-touch or no-touch switches, doors, drawers and other fittings.
- * Remove high-touch shared tools such as whiteboard markers and remote controls
- * Consider restocking with food/beverage single-serving items
- * Provide sanitizer and cleansing products
- * Implement a clean desk policy
- * Identify safe storage areas for personal items
- * If possible, designate a specific enclosed room to isolate any person identifying themselves with symptoms



INTRODUCE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Health and safety checks
Office traffic management
Access points

- * Identify and control access points for staff, customers and providers, consider one way systems to allow for distancing
- * Work with your local authority, BID and/ or managing agency/landlord regarding support managing potential issues with queueing or access
- * Display health and safety policies in place across the workspace
- * Provide PPE as required by the risk assessment
- * Encourage increasing the frequency of hand washing
- * Limit face to face meetings and use alternative technology
- * Apply social distancing on:
 - * Office space
 - * Separation panels, alternate seating spaces
 - * Communal areas
 - * Reduce maximum capacity allowed and introduce flexible time slot usage
 - * Customer facing areas & Display social distancing spaces & Consider protective measures for employees where necessary getting-tested



CHECK YOUR VENUE

Policies review
SLA review
Facility inspections

- Review:
- * Internal policies to meet with landlord, managing agency and/or head office policies and guidance
 - * Heating, ventilation, air conditioning and mechanicals ahead of re-opening
 - * Fire/Life Safety systems
 - * SLA cleansing services and frequency
 - * Security measures for your office
 - * Risk of Legionnaire's disease

Please see current UK Government's COVID-19 Secure Guidelines available on [gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

6. Working together will make a difference.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still impacting upon our lives 18 months on and the end of the Brexit transition period, the national economy is in uncertain times and whatever happens, many challenges lie ahead and the commercial world continues to change at an ever-increasing pace. Besides the challenges of the economy, lifestyles are changing and influencing the way in which we use our time and spend our money. Technology continues to develop and change the way we live and work as individuals and operate as businesses.

Trends and changes which impact upon town and city centres such as the increase in on-line shopping had already started before COVID, but over the last eighteen months many of these trends have accelerated.

It is probable that many of these changes will have a permanent impact upon the way in which town and city centres operate and the opportunities and challenges which businesses are grappling with, such as many employees remaining working from home or using their office based within the town centre on an ad hoc basis.

In this very uncertain world, it is difficult to make any predictions for the long term. However, one thing is becoming clear; people are starting to value their local town more and town and city centres of the future will become hubs for their local community for all aspects of people's lives. They will not simply be shopping destinations but places where people will want to live, work and spend their leisure time in a flexible way.

We need to think about ways in which we can work together to take advantage of these new opportunities and create a town which is welcoming, safe and forward-thinking that serves both the business and local community.

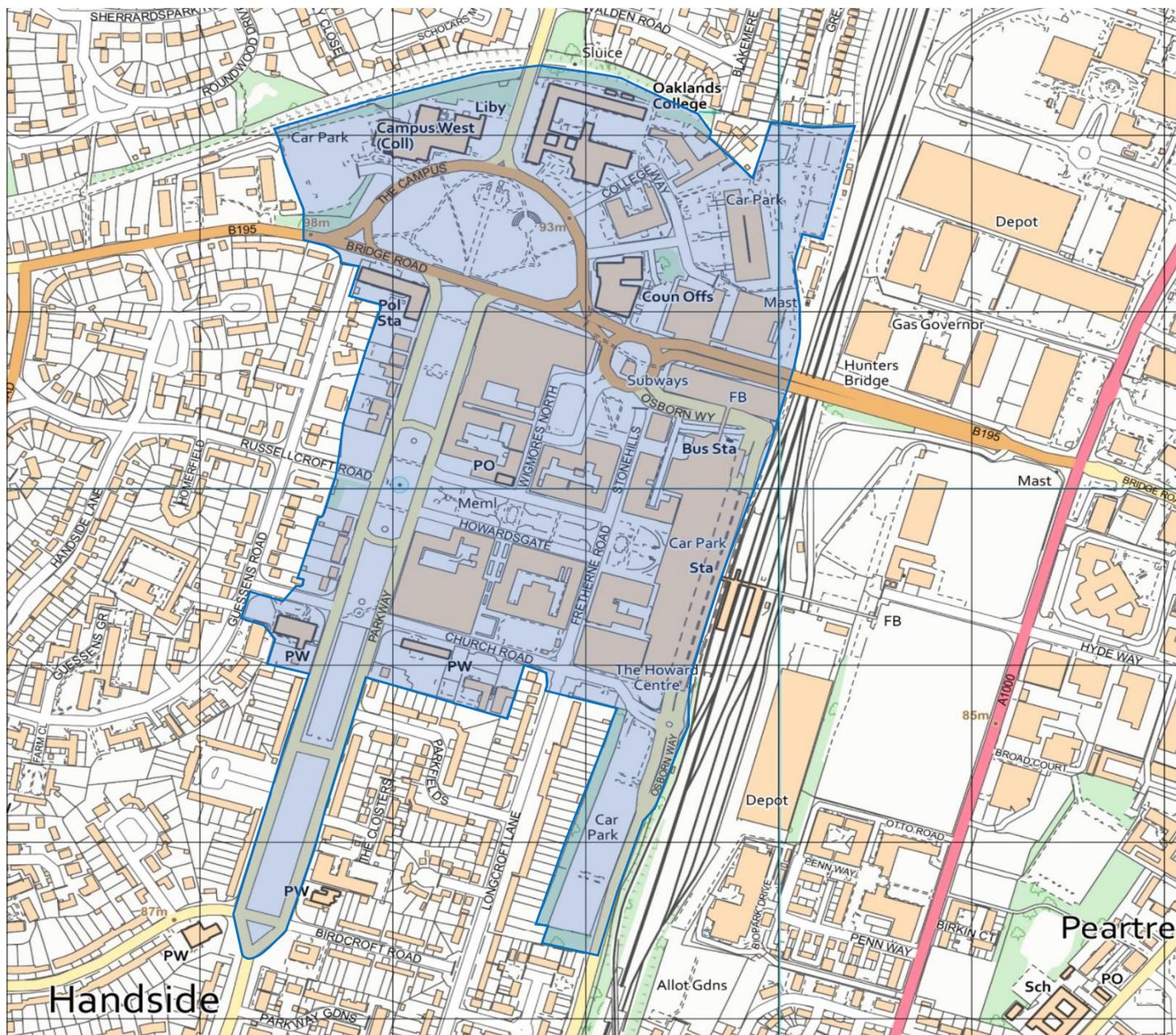
The extensive surveys, and working groups undertaken to develop this BID Proposal identified a clear desire expressed by businesses and organisations from across Welwyn Garden City to work even more closely together, including with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and with other key stakeholders to raise the town's profile and improve the appeal to visitors, skilled people and business investors. This collective and focused approach would serve to improve the trading and operating environment and allow existing businesses to flourish and grow and attract new business investment.

Welwyn Garden City was the second Garden City in England and one of the first new towns in England. 100 years ago, it was built on a set of principles which are probably even more relevant now than they were then. This presents a major opportunity for Welwyn Garden City to take advantage of the new opportunities which are emerging and which play to its key strengths and its identity.

Taking on board all of the above, this Business Plan has identified opportunities and taken account of the needs and challenges faced by all business sectors across the BID area. By working together and with strategic partners including the councils and key stakeholders through a renewal Business Improvement District there is huge potential to continue the momentum to make Welwyn Garden City a great place to visit, live, work and grow a business.

7. Welwyn Garden City BID area

The shaded area represents the full extent of the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District. A list of roads and streets within the BID area is shown in Appendix 2



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The Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District covers the town centre from Campus West and the College in the north, to the edge of the railway track in the east. It then extends down alongside the railway track to the Osborn Way carpark and then after following the edge of the town centre commercial area along the south of Church Rd it then takes in Parkway on the western edge returning back up to Campus West.

A full list of streets within the BID area is shown in Appendix 2. All non-domestic hereditaments within the BID area will, if the BID is approved, be liable for the BID levy (as defined in section 12). The BID covers those businesses, whose rateable value is £5,000 or greater. Thus banks, building societies, car parks, council facilities, restaurants, clubs and pubs, estate agents, leisure operators, charities, recruitment agents, retail and health and beauty outlets, office based businesses and organisations, and transport and travel agents and all other non-domestic hereditaments are included within the BID and will, subject to the detailed levy criteria in Section 15, contribute to the BID's collective funding and activities flowing from the combined budget.

8. Services provided by Public Bodies

8.1. Council's Support for the Welwyn Garden City BID

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council fully supports the Welwyn Garden City BID. In particular, it endorses the fundamental principle of additionality within the BID by providing baseline service statements outlining the provision of existing services from the Council to businesses at their current level (subject to budgetary constraints) across the Welwyn Garden City BID area. Thus, in line with BID legislation, BID services within the Welwyn Garden City BID will be additional to (not in substitution for) those provided by the Council. If there is a need for any change in service levels provided by the Council these will not be disproportionate to other parts of Welwyn Hatfield borough outside the BID area.

The Council's commitment to the Welwyn Garden City BID and the working relationships between the Council and Welwyn Garden City BID Company will be set out in complementary documents agreed between the two parties:

- An Operating Agreement which sets out the Council's Operational Support to the BID on a number of specific issues.
- A set of Baseline Service Statements, each defining the benchmark for a specific service provided by the Council and other agencies within the BID area.

8.2. Council's Vision for the BID

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council welcome the opportunity offered by the BID disciplines to continue to develop a strong and dynamic partnership between the Council itself and the Welwyn Garden City businesses. The Council intends that this forward-looking relationship with businesses should take shape along the following lines during the five year BID period:

- Maintaining the serious dialogue with Welwyn Garden City businesses through the BID Board and its management team on issues that can promote a stronger trading environment conducive to investment, business development and growth and a stronger community of businesses serving the businesses themselves and all those who live and work in the area.
- Working collaboratively and in partnership with the BID to ensure that the opportunities offered through the BID can be maximised and any investment or joint initiatives are as effective as possible

8.3. Council Services for Business

Businesses will continue to benefit from all the standard services from the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council providing services into Welwyn Garden City town centre provided for the benefit of all stakeholders in the town (cleaning, access, safety, maintenance and public amenities). In addition, the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council delivers a wide range of services either directly or indirectly specifically for businesses, these include:

- Commercial and Community Property
- Business Rates
- Business Support
- Licensing
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Commercial Waste

Details of these services can be found on the Council's web site under the Business Tab <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/business>

8.4. Individual Baseline Service Statements

In full support of the above commitments, Heads of Service within the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, the Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Hertfordshire County Council will draw up Baseline Service statements on the specific services they are responsible for. These documents define the benchmarks for the provision of these services and the fact that any change will not disproportionately impact upon the BID area more than any other area outside the BID within the respective administrative boundaries

They also cover how the services will be measured. The Councils attach particular importance to the incorporation of value for money principles and measures within all the Baseline Statements.

The Baseline Services are defined below:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

- Street Scene
- Town Centre Business Engagement (inc Footfall Monitoring)
- Community Safety
- CCTV (Supply, Monitoring and Recording)
- Building Services (inc Festive Lighting, Monument Maintenance)
- Public Health Protection (Environmental, Health & Licensing and Street Wardens)
- Parking Services (on and off road)

Hertfordshire County Council

- Highway Maintenance
- Winter Gritting
- Street Lighting
- Public Transport

Other Public Authorities

- Police

The process of creating Baseline Service Statements proves valuable to both the service providers and the BID company. The development of these partnerships and the additional focus on the services provided in the area, will give tangible benefits over and above those derived from the projects outlined below.

8.5. Council's Operational Support for Welwyn Garden City BID

The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's support for the BID will take practical shape in the following specific ways:

- Conducting, through the council's Democratic Services, the formal BID vote in accordance with current BID legislation and procedures
- Assuming a positive outcome to the BID ballot, collecting the BID levy defined in the BID Proposal and Business Plan from Welwyn Garden City businesses and transferring the levy sums direct to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company. The Council proposes to make a charge for the BID levy collection and will pay the gross levy sums to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company within 30 days of collecting it.
- Provide the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Member (a Councillor) or a senior officer to sit as a Director on the BID Company Board.
- Provide additional senior council officers or Councillors at the Board's discretion, to act as advisers but not as Directors to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company Board and to provide a business-focused dynamic link on all BID matters with other senior Council staff or cabinet members.
- Paying the appropriate BID levy set out in the Business Plan in respect of all its own hereditaments within the Welwyn Garden City town BID area.

8.6. Monitoring and Review

The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is committed to the regular monitoring of the operation of the BID Operating Agreement and reviewing its effectiveness in conjunction with the Welwyn Garden City BID Company. This will be carried out as follows:

- A regular review of the overall effectiveness of the Operating Agreement. This will be led by the senior council officer whose remit includes the operational relationship between the BID and the Council and will reflect the council's commitment work in partnership to the mutual benefit of the Council and Welwyn Garden City BID Company. These reviews will be scheduled to best effect for the Council's and Welwyn Garden City BID Company's yearly budgeting cycles.
- Both Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council will undertake a regular review of each of the Baseline Service Statements as shown above. This will be led by the respective Head of Service who will discuss any proposed changes with the Welwyn Garden City BID Company and update the Baseline Service Statements to reflect the services each will provide in the following year.

8.7. Monitoring of basic service provision

The Baseline Service Statements from both Councils set out the discretionary and statutory services which are delivered to and relevant to the BID area so that it is clear that the BID's activities are totally additional and complementary.

Provision of Baseline Statements will allow the BID Company to regularly appraise the delivery of core services and compare them with the details stated in the statements. From experience

elsewhere we know this has an impact on delivery and helps to guarantee that money provided to the authorities via the business rates mechanism is targeted appropriately and well spent. This means that local businesses have some influence over Business Rates investment in their area and the effectiveness of local authority service provision.

9. The Research and Consultation Process

9.1. Background

The last few months has seen extensive research undertaken across a wide range of businesses, organisations and stakeholders to ensure that the plan which has emerged has an in depth understanding of the views and aspirations of the businesses in the area as well as an appreciation of the perceptions of those who visit and also work in the area.

Research and findings from the surveys, workshops and working groups and interactions of businesses and organisations from across the Welwyn Garden City BID area has been considered, in shaping the ultimate Vision, Objectives and their associated activities.

9.2. What were the aims of the process?

The aims of the research were to:

- Identify the key issues which impact upon all businesses in the area across all business sectors and to develop solutions to address them which will help businesses achieve their own internal objectives
- Review and assess any related strategies and plans for the area which potentially impact upon and compliment the aims and objectives of the BID proposal.
- Identify and assess the impact and the relative importance of different potential initiatives on businesses
- Ensure that the Vision, Objectives and their associated activities reflect the business challenges and opportunities for the immediate term and the next five years.

9.3. Research and consultation activity

The research encouraged participation from all businesses across the town centre and involved the following activity:

- In March 2021, a detailed survey was produced to get the views of businesses in the BID area.
- All potential levy paying businesses in the BID area were sent surveys via an e-bulletin, visit from a BID representative and via the BID website and were given the option to complete the survey either via telephone or video call with a member of the BID team.
- All potential levy paying businesses were included in mail shots and publicity including a mailed-out newsletter, a detailed frequently asked questions page and e-bulletins where e-mail addresses were available. 4 e-bulletins were renewal specific whilst 13 e-bulletins included a section on renewal.
- 59% of all businesses which meet the levy criteria had a personal visit to discuss the BID. 420 businesses were visited in total, with 140 of these being unique visits.

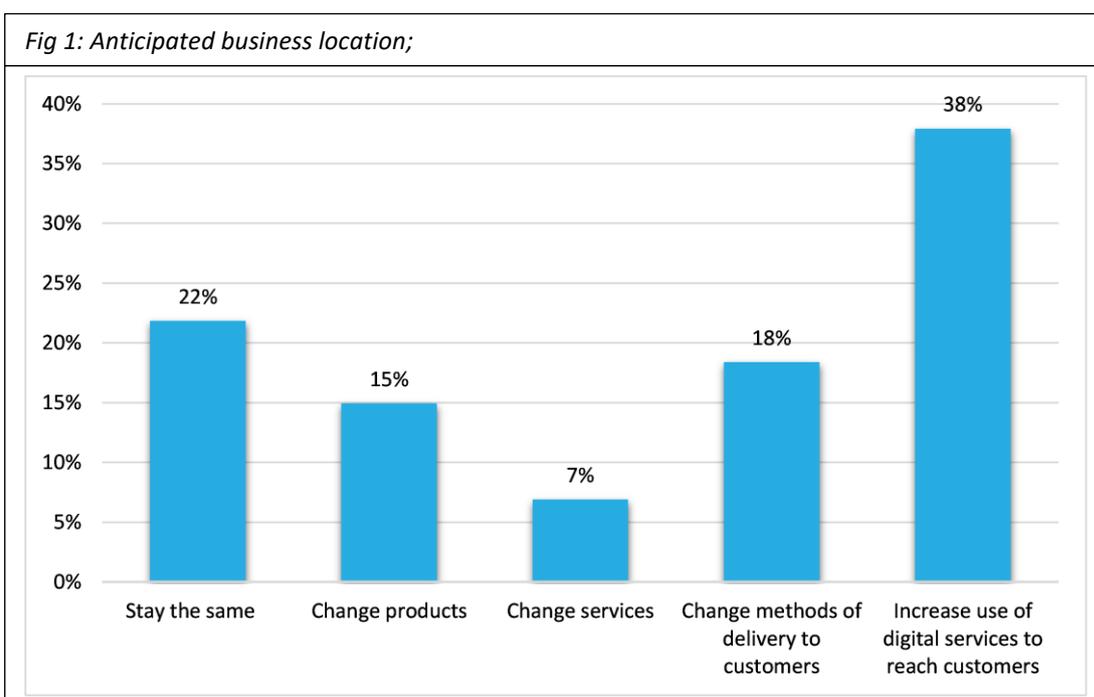
- A total of 56 businesses which met the levy criteria completed detailed four-page surveys.
- A number of working group meetings and workshops were carried out over the renewal period where all businesses were invited to discuss their challenges, opportunities and vision for the future of the town centre. These included budget setting workshops, vision and objective setting workshops and targeted workshops.
- The BID website and e-bulletins were used to invite feedback and opportunities for businesses to contact the BID team to discuss renewal.
- Active participation and decision making by the business representatives from the Welwyn Garden City BID Board in the development of this plan.

10. Research results

10.1. Business feedback

Surveys were carried out across a range of businesses from all sectors and sizes of Welwyn Garden City town centre.

Despite the economic uncertainty and current challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the confidence to remain trading in Welwyn Garden city is strong. 92% anticipate that they will stay in the same premises, with none of the businesses expecting to relocate out of the area. None of the businesses surveyed stated that they planned to close down.



10.2. Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City

Marketing and promotion of the town centre seems to be more important than ever to businesses in Welwyn Garden City. In the survey, the top three future projects ranked beneficial by businesses were all related to marketing and promotion. 'Raise the profile of the town centre' was ranked as the most beneficial initiative for businesses, with 94% saying it would be important for their business.

This was closely followed by 'Promoting the town as a destination' at 93% and 'Marketing to target and attract new businesses/investors' at 89%.

It was clear that the BID has already made an impact on businesses when promoting the area, as 80% of businesses said they were aware that the BID 'Developed a unique and now well-known brand for Welwyn Garden City town centre, Wonderful Welwyn Garden City'.

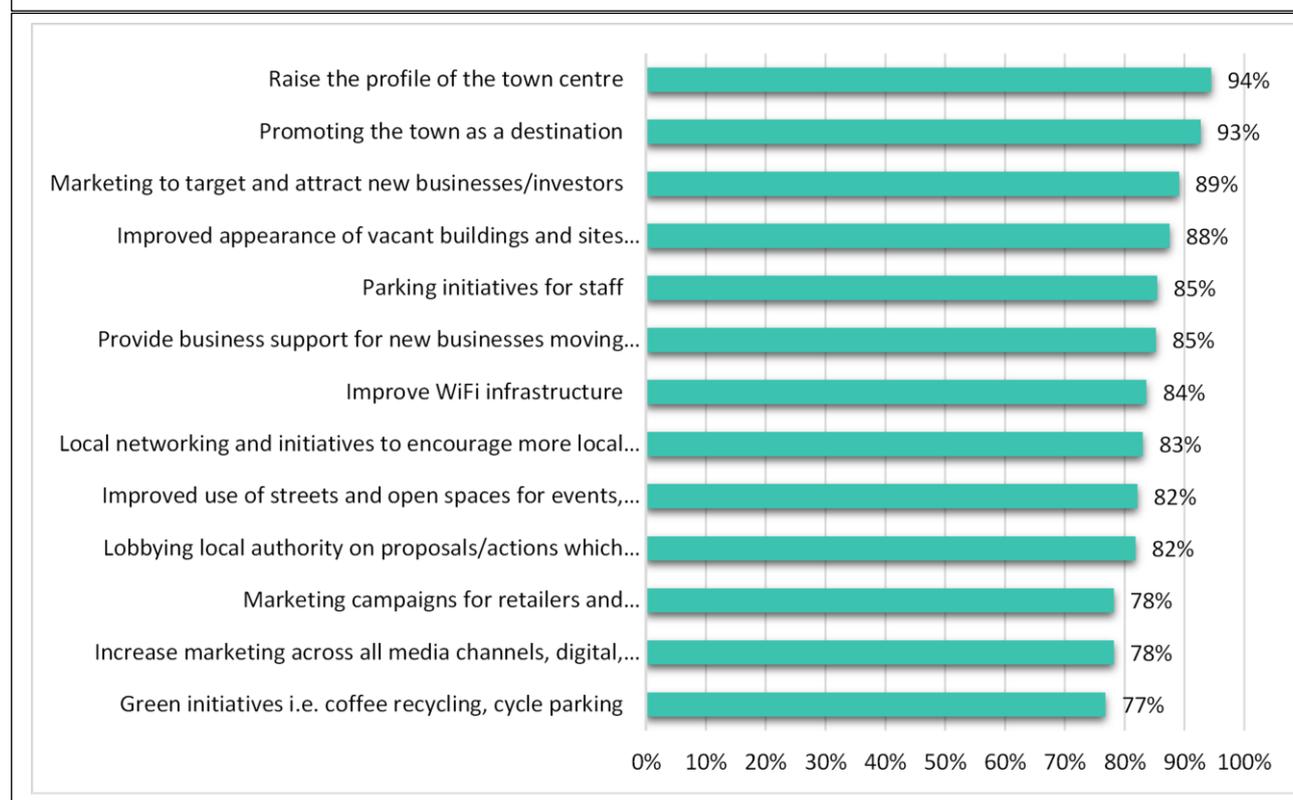
Also in the survey, when businesses were asked to make suggestions on future projects, they would like to see the BID deliver, marketing and promotion was the area that was highlighted the most. Comments for improvement in this area included more quirky photos/videos on social media promoting the town centre that would appeal to all ages, as well as a business bulletin to promote businesses and a BID intranet/portal.

In the workshops, comments around marketing and promotion included the need for digital promotion to be the focus for the BID, and that a BID business hub would be a good start to promote the local businesses and enhance the business community. There was also the suggestion that it would be useful to have a diary of BID events and other Key Partner events for businesses to be aware of and promote to all, which would create a community and help with engagement initiatives.

10.3. Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City

From the survey, it is clear that the events and activities that have already been in place in Welwyn Garden City have made an impact on businesses in the area. When asked to say whether they were aware of the current BID activities, the top two ‘yes’ responses were to do with events or aspects that make the town more vibrant. 89% of businesses said they were aware that the BID ‘Hosted and established significant events such as the World Food Festival, Cinema on the Green, Christmas Lights Event, Garden City Lights that bring additional footfall, provide promotional opportunities for businesses and are a great way to engage with the community’ whilst 85% said they were aware that the BID ‘Installed additional Christmas lighting each year, building up to a very popular display in 2020’.

Fig 2: Top future projects ranked by businesses as beneficial



Not only were businesses aware of these BID activities but they also found them to be beneficial, as 'Installed additional Christmas lighting each year, building up to a very popular display in 2020' came out on the top of the list, with 92% of businesses saying that this was beneficial to them. 86% also said that 'Hosted and established significant events such as the World Food Festival, Cinema on the Green, Christmas Lights Event, Garden City Lights that bring additional footfall, provide promotional opportunities for businesses and are a great way to engage with the community' was beneficial to them.

In the workshops, 'Events and things to do' was the topic that was discussed the most. Comments included the importance of having events as things going on helps to attract people in and makes them feel part of something. Suggestions for improvement in this area included having a wider range of themed based events focusing on different demographics and cultures and the BID needing to promote a calendar of events and quality markets.

Another important part of making the town vibrant is how welcoming it is. From the surveys, it is clear that parking -is still a concern as three out of the top five aspects that businesses ranked as either very poor or quite poor were to do with this. 'Availability of business parking' ranked as the worst issue with 64%, followed by 'Cost of business parking' at 57%. 41% also said that 'Cost of customer parking' was either very poor or quite poor.

The ambassadors are an important initiative for making the town a welcoming place, and this has been recognised by businesses as 'The BID provided town centre Ambassadors who engage with businesses, are the eyes and ears of the town and report cleansing or maintenance concerns' was ranked as beneficial by 86% of businesses. The ambassadors are also an important part of sharing intelligence and information about crime and anti-social behaviour with the Police and other agencies, and this is clearly something that needs to be ongoing as in the survey four out of the top six aspects that businesses ranked as important were to do with crime and safety. At the top of the list was 'Personal safety during the day', where 94% of businesses said this was important to them. This was followed by 'Business Crime/Shop theft' and 'Police support for your business' at 92% and 'Safety generally' at 90%.

10.4. Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City

In the workshops, commercial attractiveness was the third most talked about topic. There was a general consensus that the town needs more of a variety of shops and niche products to drive footfall, as well as there being a need to fill vacant units. Suggestions for how to improve this, included small independent retailers being encouraged into the town, 'Flexi rent' stalls for small entrepreneurs and having pop up stalls available. It was also suggested that rents are a challenge for businesses and that there are too many owners of properties which is an issue as remote landlords often do not understand the issues facing their tenants.

As mentioned previously in this section, 'Marketing to target and attract new businesses/investors' was ranked as the third most beneficial initiative for businesses in the survey, with 89% saying that it would be important for their business. This was followed by another initiative linked to making the town a more attractive place to shop, 'Improved appearance of vacant buildings and sites through vinyls/promotion', where 88% of businesses said this would be beneficial. Another project linked to inward investment was 'Local networking and initiatives to encourage more local trading', and 83% of businesses said this would be beneficial to them.

Another important factor within this objective is helping to develop effective business to business communication. In the workshops, business community was the second most discussed topic. It was highlighted that the BID could co-ordinate business to business initiatives to support each other's businesses, as well as possibly co-ordinating themed breakfast meetings and workshops hosted by the businesses that relates to the business needs. There was also the suggestion that the BID needs to try different methods of facilitating networking between businesses, such as exploring both online and physical means and researching what fits best for businesses availability. It was commented that online business networking would be a good option for the BID to deliver through social media and possibly a 'WhatsApp' group chat for businesses.

11. The BID's response

Following our extensive research three key project areas of the Welwyn Garden City BID have emerged reflecting the key issues and opportunities identified by the businesses and visitors. The activities within each of the project areas have been specifically designed to address and take advantage of these.

It is evident that Welwyn Garden City was exposed, even before COVID to the same changing dynamics effecting the way in which people use all towns and city centres. Over the last eighteen months during the challenges of COVID, these changes have simply accelerated and now is an ideal time to review the needs of businesses building a plan for the future.

The BID will continue to act as a catalyst for businesses and organisations to come together and play a key role in this new and exciting era in the life of this town. The BID's ability to influence has increased significantly and it is now leading and driving key initiatives working closely with the local authority and other key businesses and organisations on plans which will shape the future of Welwyn Garden City town centre.

The BID will continue to work with all stakeholders to define, develop and promote the identity of Welwyn Garden City town centre which reflects its strengths, characteristics and heritage and is a sustainable and vibrant place which generates pride for its businesses, local residents and visitors. This BID Proposal and Business Plan has been designed to ensure that the activities benefit as wide a range of businesses as possible. It will do this by becoming an accessible, safe, vibrant and attractive town which celebrates its culture and heritage, serves its local business and residential community and is recognised as a great place to be.

11.1. The role of the BID

All businesses and organisations stand to benefit from these additional projects and activities which have been identified by businesses across Welwyn Garden City as crucial to their future:

- To act as the voice for businesses in Welwyn Garden City and represent their interests within the context and framework of this BID Proposal and Business Plan
- To create a vibrant town centre and promote its business, cultural, leisure, educational and social offer locally and regionally.
- To create a sense of 'place' for visitors and people working in the town centre to have a positive experience and feel safe, secure and comfortable.
- Encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of Welwyn Garden City town centre.

11.2. How will the delivery be monitored?

Monitoring and measuring the performance and effectiveness of the BID activities is an integral and essential part of the plan. Businesses need to be confident that their levy money is being invested as productively as possible to maximise results.

The effectiveness of the measures undertaken will be gauged by key performance indicators monitored and relevant for each project area, including footfall, customer surveys, business surveys, photographic evidence, vacant properties and footfall trends. These measures and key performance indicators are identified for each objective and need to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the life of the BID.

12. Vision and objectives

Assuming a positive BID vote by a majority of businesses by both rateable value and number of hereditaments, BID operations will continue, and a new term will start on 1st April 2022 and will continue for a total of 5 years.

12.1. The Vision

Through a business-led programme our vision is to:

‘To create a town centre which is innovative, vibrant and sustainable which builds on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a wonderful place to visit, work, live and invest.’

12.2. Objectives, activities and outcomes

The BID investment programme will be delivered through the three key strategic objectives and their related activities:

Objective 1:

Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City

To promote the strengths and develop the profile of Welwyn Garden City and all it has to offer to increase positive perceptions, loyalty and pride in the town centre.

Objective 2:

Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City

To provide a vibrant, safe and positive experience for visitors and workers in Welwyn Garden City to enjoy, exploring new sustainable opportunities with businesses and key partners.

Objective 3:

Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City

Encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of Welwyn Garden City.

Objective 1: Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City

To promote the strengths and develop the profile of Welwyn Garden City and all it has to offer to increase positive perceptions, loyalty and pride in the town centre.

Expenditure

An average of £68,000 per year – a total of £346,000 over five years.

1. **Identity and Branding:** Work with all stakeholders to continue to define, develop and promote the identity of Welwyn Garden City town centre which creates a sense of pride by its businesses, residents and visitors
2. **Destination Marketing:** Promote the town centre as a destination for visitors and encourage exploration of the town centre.

3. **PR and Marketing:** Develop the use of digital and printed marketing and PR to inform and increase awareness of Welwyn Garden City as a town, its events and all it has to offer, in a way which is consistent with its identity, to visitors and businesses alike.
4. **Promoting the offer:** Lead the promotion of the business, leisure, retail and cultural offer and other town centre events and activity through campaigns and initiatives such as a visitor web-site, a business directory, offers and schemes.
5. **Market intelligence:** Develop and use marketing capability from marketing schemes and initiatives to attract even more shoppers and clients.
6. **Customer Service:** Promote and develop award schemes which profile businesses and individuals and celebrates, recognises and promotes excellent customer service and a great experience.
7. **Business Communications:** Communicate between the BID and its businesses and organisations, to keep businesses engaged and informed of BID activities and issues which may affect their environment and to keep the BID informed of business needs and priorities.
8. **Communications management:** Marketing and promotional activity to support businesses during and after any economic or logistically challenging periods of time.

Measures and Results:

- Increased levels of sales activity & footfall across the whole of the town centre
- Positive media exposure locally and regionally measured through numbers of articles, publications, click-throughs on digital media and value through using advertising value equivalent. (a.v.e)
- Numbers of businesses and organisations actively engaged in BID activities and the use of and their association with Welwyn Garden City BID in their own marketing and promotion.
- Numbers of businesses, organisations and public regularly engaged and involved in a loyalty scheme.
- Increased interaction with and support from stakeholders including local authorities.

Objective 2 – Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City

To provide a vibrant, safe and positive experience for visitors and workers in Welwyn Garden City to enjoy, exploring new sustainable opportunities with businesses and key partners.

Expenditure

An average of £118,000 per year – a total of £592,000 over five years.

1. **Events and Markets:** Encourage, support and act as host to events, markets and heritage, sporting and cultural activity in the town centre which are consistent with the ethos and principles of the Garden City and create a vibrant and attractive place.

2. **Street Infrastructure:** Work with others to support the development of infra-structure which enables the streets and open spaces to be used effectively and sustainably.
3. **The heritage:** Support and encourage initiatives which promote and celebrate the heritage and origins of Welwyn Garden City.
4. **Ambassadors to:**
 - a. Support businesses in tackling and communicating issues which affect their business on a day-to-day basis.
 - b. Help promote the area, to welcome visitors and provide support for the implementation of events and animation in the streets and open spaces
 - c. Work closely with the Police, WHBC Street Wardens and other agencies to share intelligence and information which supports the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour.
5. **Environmental Enhancements:** Provide additional floral displays, public art and festive and creative lighting to improve the appearance and vibrancy of the streets and open spaces where appropriate.
6. **Crime Reduction:** Support the reduction of anti-social behaviour and crime issues by continuing to develop and maintain the existing business crime reduction schemes, such as the Welwyn Garden City Watch and working with key partners and organisations including the Police and the council's CCTV.
7. **Green Initiatives:** Explore and implement where appropriate initiatives and schemes which support environmental sustainability which benefit businesses and those who visit and work in Welwyn Garden City town centre.
8. **Safety:** Work closely with emergency services, the local authorities' statutory services and other key stakeholders during times of national or local incidents or emergency situations to maintain a safe and positive experience for visitors and workers in Welwyn Garden City.

Measures and Results:

- Improve visitor and business perception of the sense of community & business safety
- Reduction of incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Regular flow of information and sharing of intelligence to support business crime prevention
- Measured assessment of the degree of litter and cleanliness of Welwyn Garden City town centre
- Numbers of parking spaces available in or near Welwyn Garden City town centre both on and off-street
- Improved perceptions of ease with which visitors, workers, and residents they can navigate and traverse the Welwyn Garden City town centre.

Objective 3 - Invest and grow in Welwyn Garden City

Encourage growth, development and investment of businesses which complement and build on the strengths of Welwyn Garden City.

Expenditure

An average of £46,000 per year – a total of £233,000 over five years.

1. **Visioning:** Play a key role in the creation of a vision and plan for the town centre which is shared by all key stakeholders.
2. **Profile:** Raise the profile of Welwyn Garden City as a great place to invest and develop a business in line with the vision and the masterplan.
3. **Promote Investment:** Work with partners, landlords and property agents to attract, engage and support potential investors in making commitments to invest, grow and develop in Welwyn Garden City.
4. **Evening Economy:** Support the growth of a distinctive evening leisure offer, suitable for the town centre.
5. **Voice:** Represent business and organisation's interests in planning and delivery of developments in the public realm and the buildings of the town centre which complement and support the Garden City principles.
6. **Networking:** promote and support the sharing of best practise, cost savings and business growth.
7. **Voluntary Membership:** Develop a voluntary membership scheme and links between businesses and organisations in the town centre and those in its surrounding area to encourage an even stronger Welwyn Garden City economy.
8. **Additional Income:** Seek match funding, grant opportunities and other sources of revenue, both financial and in-kind, both for the BID and others, to increase the BID's ability to achieve its vision and objectives.
9. **Monitoring:** Work with others to provide and report on a range of indicators which monitor the economic performance of the town centre including: footfall and foot-flow, commercial performance and customer perceptions.
10. **Business Support:** Provide support to businesses at times of national or local incidents or emergency situations working closely with emergency services, the local authorities' statutory services and other key stakeholders.

Measures and Results:

- Increased level of investment in existing and new businesses.

- Increased range of businesses and organisations.
- Reduced levels of vacant and derelict properties across Welwyn Garden City town centre.
- Increased number of new businesses and organisations established in Welwyn Garden City town centre.
- Numbers of businesses and organisations actively engaged in award schemes for customer care and businesses performance.

13. Organisation, Resources and Delivery

The preparation of this BID Proposal has been managed by the Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd which is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. It is legally and operationally responsible to the businesses in the BID area for all BID activities and acts on their behalf.

The Board is elected by the members of the Welwyn Garden City BID Company, Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd, drawn predominantly from those paying a levy in the area and made up of a representative cross-section of the businesses and stakeholders of the area and key agencies associated with the successful delivery of the BID projects. It will continue to be driven by the private sector and includes a councillor from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and a senior officer who will act as a key operational link.

The main role of the Board is to safeguard the interests of levy payers by ensuring that the business operates in line with the BID plan, is professional and offers consistent value for money in line with its targets. The Board will ensure that the implementation of the BID will be monitored and delivered cost effectively, through keeping overheads to a minimum and using methods which will optimise the use of the revenue budget and add real value to the delivery of the plan.

All businesses will be encouraged to be actively involved in the Board and associated working groups to represent the levy payers. Through specific working groups, the Board will be instrumental in prioritising the requirements of the levy payers into deliverable projects which address their needs, within the framework of the business plan.

The Board will continue to provide a consistent, collective and effective voice for the businesses and organisations in Welwyn Garden City. All roles on the Board, and any working groups are voluntary and are undertaken with a commitment to represent the interests of all businesses in the area.

In support of its vision and objectives, the BID will encourage collaboration with all key stakeholders involved in the town centre. Collaborative working between businesses and other organisation in the town centre will also be encouraged to build upon the sense of the business community and ensure that the skills and resources available for delivery of the BID are enhanced and deliver best value.

There will continue to be hands-on dedicated Project and Contract Management to support the initiatives from any working groups. This management role will also provide administrative support and project delivery for the BID Company as well coordinating activity with partner organisations and ensuring cost-effective delivery of projects through tendering and careful management of contracts.

The effectiveness of the measures undertaken will be gauged by Key Performance Indicators for each project area, including footfall, customer surveys, business surveys, photographic evidence, car parking usage and retail turnover movement.

Besides regular newsletters and other forms of bulletins, there will be an annual report providing details on activities and performance of the company against the objectives of the delivery plan for the previous year.

All Levy payers are entitled, on application, to become members of Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd. There will be an Annual General Meeting at which all members of the company are invited to attend and vote and at which Directors will be retired by rotation and new Directors elected in accordance with the articles of the company.

14. Welwyn Garden City BID Budget & Finances

14.1. Balancing the Budget

2020 presented the businesses and organisations of Welwyn Garden City with unprecedented and significant challenges and the Board have tried to balance the costs to businesses with the requirement to generate sufficient funds to provide support, make a tangible difference on the ground and help drive the changes needed in Welwyn Garden City going forward.

Given the unprecedented challenges facing businesses this year and that once levy criteria is set it cannot be changed during the term of the BID, the Board has made the following provisions:

- the first year's levy has been reduced back to 1.25% for businesses within a shopping centre and 1.5% for businesses outside a shopping centre in the first year of the 2022 – 2027 BID. These rates are lower than the first year of the current BID.
- some of the reserves which have been accumulated as a result of the limitations on normal delivery of events and promotional activity during COVID are being used to supplement the first year of the budget of this new term.
- for any business ratepayer who is legally required to cease use of their premises will be given 100% relief for that time period if they are not in a position of being able to use for it for any other purpose. (see Section 15 Paragraph 16 for details).

The investment being sought from businesses in the BID area is modest in relation to what can be achieved. For the smallest business in the business improvement district, the cost is less than the cost of a coffee from a coffee shop once a week and even for a larger business the cost is less than the cost of a coffee per day.

The BID has been successful in leveraging in additional funding and will continue to look to leverage in additional cash funding, grants and value in kind, to support the delivery of this plan and add to the investment made by Welwyn Garden City businesses through the BID.

With a 1.5% of rateable value contribution in year 1, the indicative costs to a business would be:

Rateable Value	Levy Rate	Annual	This equates to: Weekly	This equates to: Daily
£1 - £4,999	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero
£5,000	1.50%	£75	£1.44	£0.21
£10,000	1.50%	£150	£2.88	£0.41
£25,000	1.50%	£375	£7.21	£1.03
£75,000	1.50%	£1,125	£21.63	£3.08
£150,000	1.50%	£2,250	£43.27	£6.16
£350,000	1.50%	£5,250	£100.96	£14.38

14.2. The Welwyn Garden City Town Centre BID Budget Five years 2022 – 2027

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Income						
BID Levy revenue (Note 1)	£ 200,525	£ 268,355	£ 273,722	£ 279,196	£ 284,780	£ 1,306,579
BID Levy reserves B/F (Note 2)	£ 62,568	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 62,568
Other Income (Note 3)	£ 25,000	£ 25,500	£ 26,010	£ 26,530	£ 27,061	£ 130,101
Total Income	£ 288,093	£ 293,855	£ 299,732	£ 305,727	£ 311,841	£ 1,499,248
Expenditure						
Objective 1 – Celebrate wonderful WGC	£ 66,080	£ 66,080	£ 66,672	£ 67,275	£ 67,891	£ 333,998
Objective 2 - Enjoy vibrant and sustainable WGC	£ 115,030	£ 115,030	£ 116,060	£ 117,110	£ 118,182	£ 581,412
Objective 3 - Invest and grow in WGC	£ 45,165	£ 45,165	£ 45,570	£ 45,982	£ 46,403	£ 228,286
Central Management Costs, Administration, Office (Note 4)	£ 42,663	£ 43,562	£ 44,433	£ 45,322	£ 46,229	£ 222,209
Levy Collection costs	£ 6,000	£ 8,100	£ 8,262	£ 8,427	£ 8,596	£ 39,384
Contingency (Note 5)	£ 13,155	£ 13,418	£ 13,686	£ 13,960	£ 14,239	£ 68,457
Total Expenditure	£ 288,093	£ 291,355	£ 294,683	£ 298,077	£ 301,539	£ 1,473,747
Accrual for Renewal (Note 6)	£ -	£ 2,499	£ 5,049	£ 7,649	£ 10,301	£ 25,499

Notes

1. Assumes a 95% collection rate and 2% per annum inflation
2. Use of BID Reserves to support Yr 1 deliver to enable a lower levy to be charged (1.25% and 1.5%).
3. Including income from landlords, associate members of the BID and other sources (including in-kind)
4. Central admin, office and fixed overheads
5. Calculated as 5% of total levy billed
6. Accrual retained from levy revenue to provide for costs of renewal of the BID for any additional term, otherwise they will be spent on additional projects in the final year

14.3. Cost of the BID Renewal

The costs incurred in undertaking the research and developing the new BID proposals have been built into the budget of the current BID. The costs for holding the renewal ballot, are being met by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, for which we give sincere thanks.

14.4. Sources of Additional Funding

The BID Company intends to seek additional funding where possible to increase the benefits that can be delivered by the BID to businesses. Other possible income sources will include grants where the criteria match the aims of the business plan, voluntary contributions from property owners, companies and organisations outside the BID area and those not liable for the levy. It is estimated that this could be around £130,000 over the five year period.

Through discussion, developers, property owners and other stakeholders in the area will be invited to participate in the Business Improvement District and improve delivery against the business plan objectives even further.

14.5. Application of Funds and Alteration of BID Arrangements

The BID funds will be ring-fenced and will be controlled by participating businesses. Details of the BID Company's accountability to businesses are given in Section 11. The BID's Response.

As part of the Alteration of BID Arrangements (see Section 4.3), the budget headings and the project costs can be altered within the constraints of the revenue received through the levy. The Welwyn Garden City BID Company will be empowered to move funds between budget headings and between financial years to provide the services which best meet the requirements of the BID area within the framework of the BID Proposal and Business Plan's objectives. Such adjustments will be fully accountable to the businesses through the performance monitoring arrangements set out in Section 12.

14.6. Governance and management of the BID Budget

In order to ensure that the projects remain relevant and continue to address needs and priorities of the businesses in Welwyn Garden City during its five-year life, the Board of Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd may from time to time make modifications to the budget allocations for each of the main projects and the management and administration of the BID.

It will be the responsibility of the Board to make adjustments to the allocations of expenditure budget as and when they deem appropriate and to ensure that all the main aims of the BID, stated in Section 12 continue to be addressed and that all BID activity contributes towards the achievement of the vision. The Board will also monitor and gauge the effectiveness of the BID operations and activities.

15. Levy Criteria for Welwyn Garden City BID

Every BID has to establish its own levy rules. Reference has been made to the use of the 'Industry Criteria and Guidance' prepared for Revo in association with; ATCM, ACS, BRC, Intu and BPF in developing the rules which will apply to the Welwyn Garden City BID.

Business Improvement Districts use rateable values of businesses as a means of calculating levy and determining the associated criteria. This provides the basis for an equitable approach to charging to reflect the value which businesses will receive in services and support from the activities of the BID.

The Welwyn Garden City BID Company has tried to balance the ambitions of businesses in the BID plan against the affordability of the levy and the requirement to ensure that the BID is able to deliver best value.

A hereditament is defined in Section 115 (1) of the General Rate Act 1967 (the 1967 Act) as: 'property which is or may become liable to a rate, being a unit of such property which is, or would fall to be, shown as a separate item in the valuation list'. For the purposes of this levy criteria the words, 'land, 'properties' and 'premises' will also be interpreted as a hereditament.

1. Assuming a positive BID vote by a majority of businesses by number and rateable value of those who vote, the BID levy will be charged on all hereditaments listed in the local Non- Domestic Rating List located within the BID area. This applies irrespective of whether or how a business has voted in the formal BID ballot. Legislation within the Local Government Finance Act (2003) enables the local authority to issue a bill for the levy. The levy is collected by the billing authority, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The Welwyn Garden City BID Company will invoice the billing authority, for the levy collected for exclusive use of the BID.
2. All businesses which will be subject to the BID who are shown on the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Rating Database on the day the ballot holder publishes the notice of the ballot at least 42 days before the day of the ballot shown as the liable party, subject to final check and audit, will be entitled to vote for the BID proposal in a 28 day postal ballot which will commence on 21st October 2021, with the close of ballot at 5pm on 18th November 2021. The result will be announced as soon as possible thereafter.
3. If successful at the ballot, the BID will be fixed for a term of 5 years. The BID will commence operation on 1st April 2022 and will run until 31st March 2027. Levy bills will be issued for the first payment due 1st April 2022 and then on the 1st April each year thereafter. (see paragraph 10 for more detail).
4. The levy amounts for non-domestic hereditaments which do not fall under the management of a shopping mall and who do not pay service charges to the shopping mall operator will be applied as follows:
 - a. The BID levy for the billing cycle of the 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, will be 1.5% of the 2017 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 and will be 1.99% of the 2017

rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 for the billing cycle beginning 1st April 2023 and will only be subject to the changes as stated in the clauses below for each defined business within the scope of the BID for each year thereafter, with the exception of those hereditaments with a rateable value of less than £5,000.

- b. The total levy payable in any one chargeable period by any one ratepayer for any single hereditament with a rateable value of more than £1 million, as shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 will be based on the rateable value of £1 million using the percentage rates for the chargeable periods identified in Paragraph 4.a. above and will only be subject to the changes as stated in the clauses below for each defined business within the scope of the BID for each year thereafter
 - c. Non-domestic hereditaments with a rateable value of less than £5,000 showing on the billing authority's billing system as at 7th October 2021 will not be subject to any levy and will not have a vote for these properties.
5. The levy amount for non-domestic hereditaments which do fall under the management of a shopping mall operator and who do pay a service charge to the shopping mall operator will be applied as follows:
- a. The BID levy for the billing cycle of the 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 will be 1.25% of the 2017 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the Billing Authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 and will be 1.71% of the 2017 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 for the billing cycle beginning 1st April 2023 for each defined business (including any premises used and owned by the shopping mall operator for purposes relating to the management of the shopping mall, excluding car parks) within the scope of the BID, with the exception of those premises with a rateable value of less than £5,000 showing on the Billing Authority's system as at 7th October 2021.
 - b. The total levy payable in any one chargeable period by any one ratepayer for any single hereditament with a rateable value of more than £1 million, as shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 7th October 2021 will be based on the rateable value of £1 million using the percentage rates for the chargeable periods identified in Paragraph 5.a. above and will only be subject to the changes as stated in the clauses below for each defined business within the scope of the BID for each year thereafter.
 - c. Non-domestic hereditaments with an R.V. of less than £5,000 will pay nothing for these properties and will not have a vote for these properties although they will enjoy the benefits that come with trading in the BID area
6. Any hereditament where the occupier is a charitable organisation in receipt of mandatory charitable rate relief (awarded under section 43 – part 5 and 6 – of the Local Government

Finance Act 1988, will pay a levy as per the criteria outlined in this Section 15 of the BID Proposal and Business Plan unless they are a school of pre-school age, creche, play school or of primary or secondary education. For clarity Colleges, Universities or places of further or higher education will not be exempt.

7. The levy will be due for all non-domestic hereditaments, including empty or untenanted properties or hereditaments other than those that are exempt within the criteria laid out in this section 15 of this business plan 'BID Levy Criteria for the Welwyn Garden City BID.
8. The liable person is the ratepayer or person entitled to possession for occupied or unoccupied premises in the year of the collection of the levy. In accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1058) and the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1060), The Billing Authority, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council will be responsible for the imposition, administration, collection, recovery and application of the BID levy. The Billing Authority will also be responsible for any enforcement action that may be appropriate in case of non-payment of the levy.
9. With effect from the start of the third billing cycle commencing 1st April 2024 there will be an annual inflationary increase of all levy charges year on year for the duration of the Business Improvement District. This will be a minimum of 2% increase year on year or the inflation percentage as determined by the Consumer Price Index as at the 1st December of the year before the next billing process, whichever is the greater, rounded to the nearest tenth of a penny. (e.g. if a levy bill is £200 the inflation applied to this at a level of 2% would be £4 per annum). Negative inflation will not apply.
10. The BID financial year will last for 365 days (366 in a leap year) between 1st April and 31st March.
11. The BID's chargeable period is a year or part of a year, broken down into daily charges based on rateable value. It is to be paid in full in advance, the first chargeable period being will be 365 days (366 in a leap year) from 1st April 2022 to the 31st March 2023 and for each year thereafter. The only exception to the due date is where a proportional liability exists under paragraph 10, in which case, the levy charge will fall due one month after the demand is issued. The daily BID levy charge for each individual ratepayer is to be calculated by multiplying its rateable value by the BID percentage levy and dividing the result by the number of days in the financial year or part year of the chargeable period or where the amount has been capped at a specified amount, dividing the capped amount by the number of days in the financial year or part year of the chargeable period.
12. The levy will be charged for each chargeable period in advance. Any business which ceases to become the liable party during the period must apply to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, the Billing Authority for a refund for the remainder of the period if an apportionment is required between the outgoing and incoming liable parties, and the new liable party will be charged on a pro-rata basis.

13. If a property is deleted from the Rating List, revised bills will be issued provided that the amount due on charge or refund is £10 or more. The charge or refund amount will be calculated pro rata between the date of the change in occupation and the date of the financial year end.
14. The BID levy is payable in one instalment. This instalment date will be specified on the Demand Notice. The notice will be served as soon as practicable after the Billing Authority becomes aware of a BID levy liability and the liability will be calculated from the effective date of any of the following changes being recorded on the Rating List even if the effective date is prior to the 7th October 2021:
- a. New premises, or properties which were not on the rate valuation list at the start of the BID but become subject to rates within the BID boundary or on new streets within the BID boundary after the BID is in force, will be expected to pay a BID Levy based on the % or fixed levy charge appropriate in relation to its new/current rateable value
 - b. Where property is split, two or more BID levies should be made on the revised premises from the date of split on the basis of the revised new/current rateable values.
 - c. Where premises are merged the BID Levy should be based on the % or fixed levy charge appropriate in relation to the revised property's new/current rateable value.
 - d. Any change of use which affects the rateable value of the property.
 - e. Any change of ownership or occupancy of a property where the business rate payer as the liable party for the levy, changes.
 - f. The creation of a new business rated hereditament within the BID boundary will be liable to the levy rate based on the rateable value at the time of change of use or creation of the new business hereditament.
 - g. If a property which had been deleted from the rating list or been assigned a zero rateable value is added back on or assigned a rateable value of more than zero.
 - h. If, the rateable value assigned to a property or hereditament falls below £5,000 for whatever reason (physical change, change of use or a general or specific revaluation), the hereditament will be exempt from the levy pro-rata from the date the change came into effect within the chargeable period.
 - i. If, the rateable value assigned to a property or hereditament which had been below £5,000 threshold is assigned a rateable value which is £5,000 or above the hereditament will be liable for levy pro-rata from the date the change came into effect within the chargeable period.

Adjustments will be made and revised bills issued provided that the amount due on charge or refund is £10 or more. The charge or refund amount will be calculated pro rata between the date of the change covered by this paragraph 14 and the date of the financial year end.

15. No amendments will be made to the rateable value of any property in the BID area as a result of any general or property specific re-valuation other than for the criteria listed above whether or not it is applied retrospectively to a point in time prior to the 7th October 2021.
16. No other relief will be given to any class of non-domestic ratepayer and there is no distinction made between occupied or unoccupied hereditaments, both occupancy status attracting the full BID levy, unless it is a hereditament: -
- a. whose owner or occupier is prohibited by law from using it for the primary purpose for which it was originally intended, for clarity and for the purposes of this levy criteria it

will only cover a property where the prohibition by law results in no 'value or benefit' to the possessor and at the discretion of the BID.

- b. which is kept vacant by reason of action taken by or on behalf of the Crown or any local or public authority with a view to prohibiting the occupation of the hereditament or to acquiring it;
- c. which is vacant and is included in the Schedule of monuments compiled under section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979(b);
- d. where, in respect of the owner's estate, there subsists a bankruptcy order within the meaning of section 381(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986(c);
- e. whose owner is entitled to possession of the hereditament in his capacity as trustee under a deed of arrangement to which the Deeds of Arrangement Act 1914(d) applies;
- f. whose owner is a company which is subject to a winding-up order made under the Insolvency Act 1986 and as amended in the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2021 or which is being wound up voluntarily under that Act;
- g. whose owner is a company in administration within the meaning of paragraph 1 of Schedule B1 to the Insolvency Act 1986 and as amended in the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2021 or is subject to an administration order made under the former administration provisions within the meaning of article 3 of the Enterprise Act 2002 (Commencement No. 4 and Transitional Provisions and Savings) Order 2003(e);
- h. whose owner is a company in 'Company Voluntary Administration' within the meaning of Insolvency Act 1986 and all and any legislative amendments made thereafter and during the lifetime of the BID.
- i. whose owner is entitled to possession of the hereditament in his capacity as liquidator by virtue of an order made under section 112 or section 145 of the Insolvency Act 1986 and as amended in the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2021.
- j. where it is a place of religious worship, a hostel, a place of refuge or a place of rehabilitation.
- k. where it is a place which is a school of pre-school age, creche, play school or of primary or secondary education.

in which case the hereditament will be exempt for the period of time where any one of these criteria apply.

17. For clarity a hereditament which is the subject of a building preservation notice within the meaning of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990(a) or is included in a list compiled under section 1 of that Act will be subject to levy unless its use is covered by any of the other exemptions listed in this section 16 of this business plan 'Levy Criteria for the Welwyn Garden City BID'

18. The levy will be due from business or individual who is entitled to possession of a property from any hereditaments on any road which has not yet been constructed or named at the time of the ballot and any new hereditament built or created within the shaded area of the map shown in Section 7 in this Proposal and Business Plan which fall within the levy criteria of Section 15, from the 7th October 2021 at any time during the life of the BID but which are not specifically identified on the map in Section 7, with effect from the date at which their rateable value takes effect.

19. The BID levy contribution will not be reassessed if the rateable value is amended after the end of the BID.
20. Hereditament with a rateable value of less than £5,000 will be exempt from the levy and will not be permitted to vote in the ballot. Any business with a rateable value which falls below or above these thresholds will be encouraged to apply to be a voluntary member of Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd so that they can benefit from the full range of services provided by the BID.
21. Subject to the criteria stated above and within the BID boundary as defined in this document, the BID levy is a statutorily compulsory payment regardless of whether the person or business entitled to possession of a liable property exercised its vote or voted against the BID.

16. Risk analysis

16.1. The responsibilities of the BID Company

Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd (The BID Company) is a company limited by guarantee, and a significant business in its own right. It not only has all the attendant risks and responsibilities that go with this but also, subject to the vote in favour of the BID, will have a mandate from the businesses in the area to deliver the BID Business Plan. This is a significant responsibility which has an influence over the commercial prosperity of Welwyn Garden City, the businesses in the area and everyone who rely upon it for their living.

It is important therefore, to articulate some of the external and internal issues that have a direct bearing on the ability of the Company to trade successfully, as well as highlight the consequences of not adopting the principles of the BID and the benefits that accrue from the delivery of the plan.

16.2. BIDs in other places

BIDs have been proving their worth and commercial value across the UK over the last fifteen years as effective mechanisms to improve trading environments for all sorts and types of businesses. Over the last few months, during the challenges faced by businesses during the pandemic BIDs have stepped up to provide whatever support they can to their businesses.

Where BIDs have reached the end of their first term many have seen even greater votes in favour and larger turn-outs than the first time of voting. They are seen as providing businesses with very effective returns on investment. A few ballots have already taken place during the last few months despite the challenges of COVID generating high turnouts and significant votes in favour. These include Watford and Altrincham, both renewals into their second term, reflecting the value businesses place upon them.

There are many towns and cities in the Home Counties which have Business Improvement Districts having undergone renewal ballots. These include Letchworth, Milton Keynes, Luton and Hitchin which is in its third term.

16.3. The Importance of Voting 'YES'

If you want the BID and its collective influence and all its associated benefits to continue and support your business, you will need to vote for it. If the ballot does not get sufficient votes in favour both by number and rateable value, the BID and all its associated activities will stop as of 31st March 2022.

There will be no collective voice or mechanism through which you can shape or control the support you receive, and businesses will be left to face the challenges and uncertainties of the future alone.

16.4. Working with key partners

In order to deliver exceptional value for money within the framework of the aims and objectives of the plan, the BID will continue to work closely with other key stakeholders such as property owners, developers, the Local Authorities and the Police. It will seek, wherever possible to influence and shape larger projects to the benefit of its own aims while supporting others to achieve their own

objectives.

In working with others, the over-riding principle of the BID should not be compromised i.e that the BID is providing services and benefits additional to those which would have happened if the BID had not been in existence.

16.5. Sustainable mechanism for Welwyn Garden City

The BID is a unique mechanism which combines solid business support with a compulsory payment scheme which creates benefit for all on an equitable basis. It also guarantees constant cash flow to deliver the projects and priorities identified by the businesses. It provides a solid platform for the BID Company to control costs, plan over the longer term and rise to the expectations of its stakeholders.

A contingency is contained within each of the project areas, meaning, that should the income from the additional voluntary contributions fall short of those budgeted 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 5 years, if no discernable difference is detected then a vote against renewal can simply “switch off” the BID and with it all business contributions.

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 for 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.

Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd is VAT registered to ensure that the tax can be reclaimed on expenditure. It is also benefits from mutual trading status meaning that it is exempt from any Corporation Tax liability on the levy and grants revenue received

17. Final thoughts

We have never needed each other more. I believe the BID is the vehicle to drive us through a challenging recovery period and see us into more prosperous times.

You have seen, heard and experienced all the great achievements over the last 5 years and the next 5 years could be remarkable, if you vote YES to the new BID plan.

We have achieved so much together. These are just a few examples:

- Dedicated brand and marketing of Wonderful Welwyn Garden City town centre
- Wonderful Welwyn Garden City website & social media which has a significant reach offering great promotion to the town's offer and individual businesses
- Large scale events and vibrant streets, such as Christmas lights, World Food Festival, Cinema on the Green. All activities that encourage footfall around the town.
- Ambassadors dedicated to keeping your town safe and inviting for staff and visitors
- Extra Christmas lights and stunning installations
- Additional floral displays
- Business crime reduction scheme and app
- Dedicated town centre loyalty app and free Wi Fi
- Innovation business grants
- A point of contact to liaise with the police & other partners regarding rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour
- One voice championing the town and its businesses, locally or nationally
- Industry insights into best practice occurring in 300+ BIDs/towns across the UK
- Service Excellence Awards
- A conduit to work with stakeholders to shape local developments and improvements
- Business networking and social events, specifically for town centre businesses
- Relevant information sharing with businesses regarding local news and COVID-19 updates
- One passionate, caring BID team dedicated to the prosperity of our town centre
- Innovative, dynamic initiatives which aid economic recovery and future growth
- Green initiatives to encourage sustainability
- Money saving initiatives for businesses
- Significant investment for the town centre

I am confident that since the BID was created in 2017, we have made a significant difference to Welwyn Garden City. We want to build on this success to deliver a Welwyn Garden City we can all be proud of.

Let's continue to work together shaping the future of our town.

Jonathan Field
Chair of Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd
John Lewis and Partners

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions

The following terms, used throughout this Proposal document, shall have the same meaning as provided in the Local Government Act 2003 and the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.

- “BID” means Business Improvement District.
- This document is a BID proposal for the purposes of the Act. If approved it will become the BID arrangements which govern the way in which the BID levy can be used.
- “the 2003 Act” means the Local Government Act 2003.
- “the 1988 Act” means the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- “the COVID Act” means the 2020 Coronavirus Act, Chapter 7, Part 1, Section 79.
- “BID ballot” means a ballot under Section 49(1) of the Local Government Act, 2003.
- “BID body” means, the body (whether corporate or not corporate) responsible for the implementation of the arrangements in this case defined in the plan as the ‘Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd’.
- “BID Company” is the ‘Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd’ and is accountable for the budget and delivery of the BID Arrangements in accordance with this BID Proposal and Business Plan.
- “BID proposer” means the person or body who draws up BID proposals as defined by the BID Regulations, in this plan it is the ‘Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd’
- “commencement date” subject to regulation 9(12) of the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004, means the day, pursuant to Section 53 of the 2003 Act, the BID arrangements are to come into force.
- “hereditament” means anything which is or is treated as being a hereditament by virtue of the provisions of or any provisions made under Section 64 of the 1988 Act including any hereditament to which regulation 6 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1989 applies but otherwise excluding any hereditament to which regulations made under Section 64(3)(b) of the 1988 Act apply.
- “renewal ballot” means a ballot under Section 54(2) of the 2003 Act.
- “BID Levy” means a charge imposed on the non-domestic ratepayers, or a class of such ratepayers in the district

Appendix 2 – Streets included in the BID Area listed alphabetically

A complete list of all streets, roads and squares in the BID area.

Road Name	Limitations
Bridge Road (part of)	Between the beginning of The Campus and the Hunters Bridge railway bridge to the east
Church Road	
College Way	
Digswell Road (part of)	Between the Campus and 8 Digswell Road
Fretherne Road	
Howardsgate	
Osborn Way	Between Bridge Road round about and the southern end of the Osborn Way long stay car park
Parkway (part of)	1 - 101
Stonebank	
Stonehills	
The Campus	
Sir Theodore's Way	
Wigmores North	
Wigmores South	

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Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire Constabulary
Hertfordshire LEP
Partnerships for Better Business Ltd

Further information

For more information about the BID or to discuss any aspect of this business plan please contact Mariana Bitonte or Nicola Wolff by calling 01707 497930 or e mailing bid@welwyngarden.co.uk

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