



WELWYN GARDEN CITY BID

BUSINESS PLAN
2027-2032

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BUSINESSES OF



**WONDERFUL
WELWYN GARDEN CITY**
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Contents

1. Foreword	4
2. Welwyn Garden City BID Limited.....	5
2.1. WGC BID Board Members and Directors	5
3. The value of the Welwyn Garden City BID.....	6
3.1. BID background	6
3.2. The benefits of Welwyn Garden City BID	6
3.3. The role of the BID	7
3.4. The Vote	8
3.5. Ballot Timetable	9
4. Ten Years of Wonderful WGC	10
5. Welwyn Garden City Today: its strengths, opportunities and challenges	12
5.1. At a glance	12
5.2. A Changing Town.....	12
5.3. Why the BID Matters More Than Ever - Local Government Reorganisation	12
6. Working Together will make a difference	14
6.1. Services provided by the Public Bodies.....	15
6.1.1. Council Support for Welwyn Garden City BID	15
6.1.2. Councils' Vision for the BID'	15
6.1.3. Council Services for Business.....	16
6.1.4. Individual Baseline Statements.....	16
6.1.5. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Operational Support for Welwyn Garden City BID	17
6.1.6. Monitoring and Review	17
6.1.7. Monitoring of basic service provision	18
6.2. Relationship with other WGC plans and strategies.....	18
6.2.1. Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016–2036	18
6.2.2. Welwyn Hatfield Economic Development Strategy 2026	18
6.2.3. Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026–2036	19
6.2.4. Local Government reorganisation.....	19
6.2.5. Using these plans to support the BID's aims.....	19
7. The Research and Consultation	20
7.1. Background.....	20

7.2.	Aims of the research	20
7.3.	Research and consultation activity	20
7.4.	Business feedback	21
7.4.1.	Proud Place	21
7.4.2.	Thriving Economy	22
7.4.3.	Welcoming Environment	23
8.	The BID's response	24
9.	Our Vision and Objectives for the new term 2027–2032	25
9.1.	The Vision	25
9.2.	Objectives	25
9.3.	Projects & Measures	25
9.3.1.	Objective 1: Proud Place:	25
9.3.2.	Objective 2: Thriving Economy	26
9.3.3.	Objective 3: Welcoming Environment	27
10.	Our Approach to Delivery	28
10.1.	Key Principles	28
10.2.	How delivery will be monitored	28
10.3.	Measuring Our Impact - KPIs, reporting and accountability	29
11.	How the BID Works - Organisation, Resources, Delivery	30
11.1.	How the BID will champion businesses	30
11.2.	Duration and commencement date of BID Arrangements.....	31
11.3.	Alteration of BID Arrangements	31
11.4.	The Finances	31
11.5.	The BID Area	31
12.	Welwyn Garden City BID Finances	33
12.1.	Balancing the Budget	33
12.2.	Welwyn Garden City BID 5-year Budget: 2027–2032	34
12.3.	Cost of the BID Renewal	35
12.4.	Sources of Additional Funding.....	35
12.5.	Application of Funds and Alteration of BID Arrangements	35
12.6.	Governance and management of the BID Budget	35
13.	BID Levy Criteria for Welwyn Garden City BID	36
14.	The Importance of the BID	41
14.1.	The responsibilities of BID Company.....	41
14.2.	BIDs in other places	41

14.3.	The Importance of Voting ‘YES’	41
14.4.	Working with key partners	41
14.5.	Sustainable mechanism for the development of WGC.....	41
14.6.	The Ballot.....	42
14.7.	The levy	42
15.	Final thoughts	43
16.	Appendices	44
16.1.	Appendix 1 - BID Background and Technical Information.....	44
16.2.	Appendix 12– Definitions.....	45
16.3.	Appendix 3 – Streets included in the BID Area	46
17.	Acknowledgements	47
18.	Further information.....	47

1. Foreword

Message from the Co-Chairs of Welwyn Garden City BID

As we look ahead to the next five years of Welwyn Garden City BID, it is the perfect opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved together and set out a clear vision for the future of our town centre.

Since the BID was established in 2017, our purpose has remained unchanged: to ensure Welwyn Garden City is a thriving, vibrant and successful place to do business. What began as a collective ambition shared by local businesses has evolved into a powerful partnership that delivers meaningful projects, supports business growth and champions the interests of our town centre.

This Business Plan has been shaped by you. Through surveys, workshops, meetings, consultations and ongoing conversations, businesses have told us what matters most, where the challenges lie, and where the BID can make the greatest impact. The priorities in this plan are a direct response to your feedback and the ambitions of our business community.

Together, over the past decade, businesses have invested more than £3 million through the BID to make Welwyn Garden City a vibrant place to shop, work and visit. From award-winning events and Christmas lights to marketing campaigns, business support, training opportunities, recycling services and representing your interests, the BID has become an integral part of our town's success.

Today, the BID is about far more than the events for which we are widely recognised. We are a trusted voice for businesses, working with local authorities, landlords and key stakeholders to influence decisions, attract investment and ensure businesses remain at the heart of the town's future.

At a time of economic uncertainty, increasing pressures on businesses and significant changes through Local Government Reorganisation, the BID's role is more important than ever. As the local landscape evolves, businesses need a strong, independent voice championing their interests, influencing policy, securing investment and providing strategic leadership for the town centre. Looking ahead, we want to build on our successes, strengthen our town centre offer, attract further investment, support business growth and continue enhancing Welwyn Garden City's unique character and appeal.

Welwyn Garden City remains a truly unique place. Its heritage, character and founding principles continue to set it apart from other town centres. Our role is to build on those strengths, helping to create a vibrant destination that is fit for the future while keeping true to the qualities that make our town special.

We believe the BID has an increasingly important role to play in shaping that future. We will continue to work hard on your behalf, providing leadership, support and investment that benefits businesses and contributes to the long-term success of our town centre.

We hope you will agree that this new Business Plan provides a clear vision and a strong foundation for the future. However, none of this can continue without your support. Without a renewed BID, the events, Christmas lights, marketing campaigns, business support services and dedicated voice for the town centre that businesses rely on would come to an end.

We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and grateful for the support businesses have shown over the past decade. With your continued backing, we can deliver even more over the next five years.

Please vote YES in the renewal ballot and help us continue shaping a vibrant, successful and prosperous future for Welwyn Garden City.

Mike Paraliki and Mounia Le Gaufey
Co-Chairs WGC BID Ltd

2. Welwyn Garden City BID Limited

2.1. WGC BID Board Members and Directors

Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd is a business-led company established to propose and deliver the Business Improvement District. It is a company limited by guarantee, set up by and is accountable to businesses in the BID area, and is responsible for implementing the BID Plan in line with the BID Statutory Provisions.

The membership of the Board of the company is open to all business levy payers in the BID area. Membership of the company is open to all BID levy payers, 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 Welwyn Garden City BID Board are as follows:

Name	Business Name
Mounia Le Gaufey (Co-Chair)	Ewart Price Solicitors
Mike Paraliki (Co-Chair)	Stonehills Hairdressing
John Beech	Landlord Representative
Claire Dolan	Oaklands College
Camden Ford	Pier Pressure Welwyn Escape Rooms
Terry Mitchinson	Resident Representative
Sabrina Murphy	John Lewis
Ka Ng	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Toma Navickiene	Kutchenhaus WGC
Jane Quinton	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Victoria Smith	The Howard Centre

3. The value of the Welwyn Garden City BID

3.1. BID background

Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, are created by businesses and organisations that come together to collaborate on initiatives that improve the location where they trade or do business. Business Improvement Districts are driven by participating businesses that 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 seeking to lever in additional funding where possible for investment into the delivery of projects for the benefit of businesses.

In Welwyn Garden City, the BID has already demonstrated how businesses working together can reshape perceptions, attract investment and improve the day-to-day trading environment. This new Business Plan builds on ten years of delivery and a clear mandate from local businesses to do more.

This levy is collected by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed, 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 town centre BID area to manage the delivery of the Business Improvement District Business Plan.

3.2. The benefits of Welwyn Garden City BID

The Welwyn Garden City BID has been operating for 10 years, supporting businesses and steadily changing perceptions of the town centre and Welwyn Garden City BID as a whole. The BID has worked closely with key partners and stakeholders in the town to represent the interests of levy-paying businesses, influence key decisions, and encourage investment and development which improves the town centre both now and in the future. At the previous renewal ballot in 2021, the BID secured the support of more than 80% of participating businesses, providing a strong mandate for its continued work.

Over the last five years, Welwyn Garden City BID has played a central role in supporting and championing town centre businesses. Through a wide range of events, activities and partnerships, the BID has driven footfall, improved perceptions and enhanced the visitor experience.

Welwyn Garden City BID supports the town centre through initiatives focused on safety, sustainability, promotion and business growth. Safety is enhanced via the Welwyn Garden City Watch radio scheme, while a free recycling partnership helps businesses reduce costs and environmental impact.

The BID invests in the town's appearance, delivering award-winning floral displays and popular features like the Christmas Lights Trail, helping to create an attractive and welcoming environment. Under the Wonderful Welwyn Garden City brand, the BID has built a strong marketing presence, with over 50,000 social media followers, a dedicated website, business directory and promotional campaigns to support local businesses.

A vibrant events programme, including the World Food Festival, Screen on the Green, Christmas Lights Switch-on and seasonal activities, and drives footfall throughout the year.

Through partnerships, communications and ongoing investment, the BID continues to raise the profile of Welwyn Garden City and supports a thriving, well-connected town centre.

Strategically, Welwyn Garden City BID works closely with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and other partners to shape town centre regeneration, giving businesses a clear voice in key projects, while supporting investment, business engagement, and the town's economic, transport and cultural development.

As Welwyn Garden City adapts to economic and commercial challenges, the BID remains committed to supporting its business community, promoting the town's unique strengths, and ensuring it remains a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

The real power of the BID lies not only in its guaranteed budget but in the collective influence of businesses speaking and acting together. It gives businesses the influence to change the key issues that affect how your business operates and succeeds, such as promotion of the town centre, crime and safety issues, and the attractiveness of the town centre for your 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.

Although Welwyn Garden City town centre benefits from a strong mix of national retailers, independent businesses, and a growing programme of events and investment, perceptions have not always kept pace with its continued development. The town is evolving into a vibrant, community-focused destination, defined by its award-winning environment, diverse events offer and active business community under the Wonderful Welwyn Garden City brand. With increasing footfall, a thriving social and cultural calendar, and ongoing enhancements to the public realm, the town centre is reshaping its identity as a welcoming, modern and dynamic place; one that reflects both its Garden City heritage and its ambition for future growth.

This plan has been developed to ensure that it:

- is balanced to cover all business sectors
- builds on the successes of working together to date over the last 10 years
- clearly defines the role of the BID
- seeks to create and take advantage of new opportunities
- has focused activity but remains relevant for the next five years
- has deliverable and achievable objectives

It takes account of the changes which have occurred that affect the way in which the business environment operates in recent 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. 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 position Welwyn Garden City and build its profile as a destination of choice for local residents and visitors.
- To work collaboratively and strategically, representing business interests to encourage growth, development and investment of businesses in Welwyn Garden City.

3.4. The Vote

The BID is renewed every five years through a formal ballot of the businesses within the BID area. This ensures that businesses have a regular opportunity to decide whether the BID should continue, and whether they support the Business Plan and investment proposed for the next five-year term.

As this BID term is coming to an end, you have the opportunity to vote YES to renew the BID for another 5 years, 2027-2032.

For the BID to be renewed, the ballot must pass **two tests**:

- A simple majority of those who vote must register a YES vote.

AND

- The aggregate rateable value of those that register a + vote must also represent the majority of the vote.

In simple terms, the BID needs both a majority of businesses voting in favour and a majority by rateable value for the renewal to be successful.

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 Returning Officer, Ka Ng, will be the returning officer for the Ballot Holder for the Business Improvement District. Details of voting procedures and how you can confirm persons entitled to vote can be found by contacting 01707 357300 or by e-mail elections@welhat.gov.uk.

3.5. Ballot Timetable

BID Ballot – Ballot Date INDICATIVE TIMETABLE		
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)	Target date:
		Fri 22 May 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 25 June 2026
2	Establish Register of Businesses as specified in BID proposal	Target Date:
		Thu 10 September 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
3	BID Proposer requests Billing Authority to instruct Ballot Holder to hold a Ballot (BID proposals need to be completed)	Target Date:
		Thu 27 August 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
4	Billing Authority formally requests Ballot Holder to hold ballot	Target Date:
		Mon 07 September 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
5	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:
		Wed 09 September 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
6	BID Proposer or Ballot Holder mail out copies of the BID Prospectus to potential levy payers	Target Date:
		Wed 09 September 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
7	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:
		Wed 09 September 2026
		Latest Date:
		Thu 17 September 2026
8	Ballot Holder Issues ballot papers (at least 28 days before Ballot Day)	Wed 23 September 2026
9	Last day to appoint a proxy (tenth day before Ballot Day)	Mon 19 October 2026
10	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 23 October 2026
11	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 26 October 2026
12	Ballot Day (up to 5pm)	Thu 29 October 2026
13	Count and announcement of result	Fri 30 October 2026
14	Disposal of ballot papers	Sat 01 May 2027

4. Ten Years of Wonderful WGC

Welwyn Garden City BID has now been operating for almost 10 years, having been established in 2017 and successfully securing a further five-year term through its renewal ballot in 2021. As the BID enters its tenth year, it has built a strong track record of delivering projects and initiatives that support businesses, promote the town and enhance the experience of those who live, work and visit Welwyn Garden City. The following provides a summary of some of the BID's key achievements during its most recent term, from 2022 to 2027.

WGC BID Achievements 2022-2027

Objective 1: Celebrate Wonderful Welwyn Garden City

Over the BID term, we have successfully positioned Welwyn Garden City as a destination of choice for visitors, residents and businesses through a strong, recognisable brand and high-impact marketing activity.

- The Wonderful Welwyn Garden City brand is now firmly embedded.
- Our digital presence has grown to over 50,000 followers and more than 9 million annual impressions.
- Our website and business directory have provided a central platform to promote local businesses, events and opportunities.
- Printed publications such as the Enjoy WGC Guide and Discover WGC magazine have extended our reach across the region.
- We have delivered consistent promotional campaigns, including transport advertising, seasonal campaigns such as Love Local and Giftmas, and ongoing press and radio engagement.
- Content creation days have directly supported businesses to improve their own marketing, helping to increase footfall and visibility.
- Events have been at the heart of our place-making activity.
- Flagship events such as the World Food Festival, which has attracted over 30,000 visitors, have drawn footfall and strengthened community pride.
- Events including Screen on the Green, Vintage Festival, Street Food Heroes, Vegan Markets and seasonal celebrations have added to the town's vibrancy.
- Major moments such as the Women's World Cup screenings, Summer of Sports and the Knife Angel installation have further elevated Welwyn Garden City's profile and social impact.

Objective 2: Enjoy Vibrant and Sustainable Welwyn Garden City

Creating an attractive, safe and sustainable town centre has remained a core priority, with significant investment in environmental enhancements, safety initiatives and business support.

- Our award-winning floral displays have achieved multiple Gold awards at Anglia in Bloom and national recognition at Britain in Bloom.
- The Christmas Lights Trail has become a regional attraction and is recognised as one of the best free displays in Hertfordshire.
- We have delivered practical sustainability initiatives, most notably the free recycling scheme in partnership with KP Waste, saving businesses thousands of pounds and diverting significant waste from landfill.
- Discounted waste services and continued exploration of greener solutions show our ongoing commitment to sustainability.

- Safety and security have been strengthened through WGC Watch, retail crime partnerships and new digital tools that improve communication between businesses, police and CCTV networks.
- The BID has also built community spirit through networking events, training, fundraising initiatives and regular communication, advice and signposting.

Objective 3: Invest and Grow in Welwyn Garden City

Over the last five years, the BID has played a key role in supporting economic growth, attracting investment and ensuring businesses have a strong collective voice.

- We have worked closely with landlords, agents, local authorities and stakeholders to encourage new investment and support business expansion.
- This has helped maintain a diverse and resilient town centre offer.
- We have worked in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, delivering town centre improvements worth £9 million.
- We have actively represented business interests in planning, development and policy discussions, ensuring change reflects the needs of the business community.
- Through sponsorship, grant funding and partnerships, we have leveraged additional income to enhance BID delivery and extend activity beyond levy funding alone.
- Our business support offer has included recruitment promotion, training opportunities, networking events and regular communication.
- Initiatives such as Tap to Donate and community fundraising have reinforced the BID's wider social value.

Most importantly, the BID has provided a structured, democratic and business-led platform for collaboration, helping Welwyn Garden City to adapt, grow and thrive in a challenging economic landscape.

5. Welwyn Garden City Today: its strengths, opportunities and challenges

Over the past ten years, Welwyn Garden City BID has delivered a wide-ranging programme that has strengthened the town centre, supported businesses and enhanced the town's reputation as a vibrant destination. Despite challenging economic conditions, the BID has continued to deliver real value through promotion, events, business support and investment in the public realm.

5.1. At a glance

- £3 million+ reinvested into Welwyn Garden City town centre since 2017.
- Tens of thousands of visitors attracted each year through events and activities.
- Hundreds of events, campaigns and initiatives delivered.
- Business support and money-saving initiatives delivered for town centre businesses.
- A safer, more welcoming town centre developed with partners.
- 9.5 million people reached by Wonderful Welwyn Garden City in 2025 alone.

These achievements demonstrate what focused, business-led investment can deliver, even in challenging conditions.

5.2. A Changing Town

The challenges facing businesses today are very different to those we faced when our current term began. Rising costs, changing consumer habits, increasing competition and local government reorganisation all create uncertainty for businesses. We understand the pressures many of you continue to face, and this new Business Plan has been developed with those challenges firmly in mind.

5.3. Why the BID Matters More Than Ever - Local Government Reorganisation

Hertfordshire is entering a period of significant change. Local government reorganisation will see the current council structure replaced by new unitary councils from April 2028, subject to parliamentary approval.

While the aim is to create a more streamlined and efficient system, any major change of this scale brings uncertainty. Responsibilities will move, teams will change and priorities may shift as the new councils are established.

This is exactly why Welwyn Garden City needs a strong, independent business voice.

The Wonderful Welwyn Garden City BID provides continuity for businesses through this period of change. Unlike local authority structures, the BID is focused solely on supporting our town and the businesses that invest in it.

The BID will continue to deliver the things that matter to businesses every day – keeping the town clean, supporting a safe and welcoming environment, delivering events and initiatives that bring people into the

town, promoting Welwyn Garden City and creating opportunities for businesses to connect, collaborate and grow.

We will also continue to work closely with the new local authority arrangements, ensuring that the voice of Welwyn Garden City's businesses is heard and that the town's needs remain firmly on the agenda.

The next five years will be a period of change – but businesses should not have to navigate that change alone.

A renewed BID gives Welwyn Garden City the stability, resources and collective voice needed to protect what works, respond to new challenges and continue investing in the future of our town.

With your support, we can make sure Welwyn Garden City remains a vibrant, successful and ambitious place to do business, throughout local government reorganisation and beyond.

6. Working Together will make a difference

The last few years have been challenging for town and city centres across the UK, with many facing rising operating costs, inflationary pressures and significant changes in consumer behaviour. The national economy remains uncertain, and businesses continue to navigate a rapidly evolving commercial environment.

Alongside these economic challenges, businesses are also facing a period of significant policy and governance change. The Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire will see the current council structure replaced by four new unitary authorities from April 2028, with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council being replaced by a new Central Hertfordshire Council. As businesses adapt to this changing landscape, it will be increasingly important to have a strong, independent organisation that can represent business interests, provide continuity and ensure that Welwyn Garden City's voice is heard.

Technology is also continuing to transform the way people live, work and spend their leisure time, while reshaping how businesses engage with customers and deliver services. Long-term trends such as the growth of online shopping, changing working patterns and evolving expectations of town centres continue to influence how places function and develop.

However, these changes also present opportunities. People are increasingly valuing their local towns and centres as places to meet, socialise, work, enjoy leisure and spend time. The town centre of the future will not simply be a shopping destination, but a place that supports a wider range of activities and experiences for its community, visitors and businesses.

For Welwyn Garden City, this creates an opportunity to build on what already makes the town special. There is a strong sense of community and a genuine desire among businesses to improve the town further. Creating a place to be proud of. The town has a distinctive identity, a unique Garden City heritage, an attractive and well-planned environment, excellent transport connections and a diverse mix of businesses and services. These are significant assets, but there is an opportunity to make more of them by working together and promoting the town's collective offer more effectively.

Our ambition is to build a town centre that businesses and the wider community can be proud of; one that is attractive, distinctive and well cared for, with its unique identity and heritage recognised and celebrated. At the same time, we want to create the conditions for a thriving economy, where existing businesses can flourish and grow, new investment is encouraged and the town is able to respond positively to changing markets and customer expectations. Just as importantly, Welwyn Garden City should be a welcoming place – safe, accessible, vibrant and enjoyable, where people want to visit, spend time, work and do business.

The extensive surveys and discussions with businesses and key stakeholders undertaken in developing this BID Proposal identified a clear desire to work more closely together, and with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, the future Central Hertfordshire Council and other strategic partners. There is a strong recognition that a collective and focused approach can raise the town's profile, improve the trading environment and strengthen its appeal to visitors, customers, businesses and investors.

Welwyn Garden City is well placed to build on its strong foundations. As the second Garden City in England and one of the first new towns, it has a distinctive heritage and character that provides a strong platform for its future. Its central location and excellent rail and bus connections provide access to London, surrounding towns and wider business markets, while its established business community provides a strong base from which to grow.

The opportunity now is to bring these strengths together, build greater collaboration across the town centre and ensure that Welwyn Garden City continues to evolve in a way that reflects the needs of businesses and the wider community.

Working together through a Business Improvement District provides the means to do this. By combining the knowledge, influence and resources of the business community with those of the Council and other key partners, there is significant potential to strengthen the town's identity, support a thriving economy and create a welcoming environment for everyone.

Together, we can continue to make Welwyn Garden City a great place to visit, live, work and grow a business.

6.1. Services provided by the Public Bodies

The BID is built on a strong partnership with public bodies, ensuring that BID activity is additional to, and complementary with, core council services.

6.1.1. Council Support for Welwyn Garden City BID

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council fully supports the Welwyn Garden City BID. In particular, they endorse 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 existing Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council and the Central Hertfordshire Council once formed. If there is a need for any change in service levels provided by the councils, these will not be disproportionate to other parts of the local authority area outside the BID area.

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

- An Operating Agreement, which sets out Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's operational support for the BID on a number of specific issues. These commitments will pass to the Central Hertfordshire Council once formed.
- A set of Baseline Service Statements, each defining the benchmark for a specific service provided by the councils and other agencies within the BID area.

6.1.2. Councils' Vision for the BID'

Beyond their clear commitments set out in the Operating Agreement, both Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council welcome the opportunities offered by the BID to continue to develop a strong and dynamic partnership between the councils themselves and the Welwyn Garden City BID town centre businesses. The councils intend that this forward-looking relationship with businesses should take shape along the following lines during the five-year BID period:

- Maintaining a constructive dialogue with Welwyn Garden City town centre 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 business community serving both businesses 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.

6.1.3. Council Services for Business

Businesses will continue to benefit from the statutory council services provided for the benefit of all stakeholders in Welwyn Garden City town centre, including cleaning, lighting, access, safety and highways maintenance. In addition, both councils provide a range of discretionary services, delivered either directly or through third parties, which support businesses collectively and individual businesses. Further details of these services are available on the dedicated business pages of the respective councils' websites:

<https://www.welhat.gov.uk>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk>

6.1.4. Individual Baseline Statements

In full support of the above commitments, Heads of Service within each council will continue to review their Baseline Statements on the specific services they are responsible for. These documents define the benchmarks for the provision of these services and confirm that any changes will not have a disproportionate impact on the BID area compared with other areas outside the BID within the local authority's administrative boundary. They also cover how the services are measured. Both councils attach particular importance to the incorporation of value for money principles and measures within all the Baseline Statements.

Baseline Services include the following:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

- Business Engagement
- Building Services
- Street Scene Services
- CCTV
- Community Safety
- Environmental Health, Public Health, Licensing
- Events, Markets and Tourism
- Marketing and Communications
- Management of On-Street and Off-Street Parking
- Festive Lighting

Hertfordshire County Council

- Street Lighting
- Winter Gritting
- Public Transport
- Highways Maintenance (not yet received)

Other public bodies:

- Police

The process of creating the baseline agreements 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 give tangible benefits over and above those derived from the projects outlined below.

6.1.5. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Operational Support for Welwyn Garden City BID

The 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.
- Subject to a positive outcome of the BID ballot, collecting the BID levy, as defined in the BID Business Plan, from businesses within the Welwyn Garden City BID area and transferring the levy sums directly to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company. The council will pay the gross levy sums to the Welwyn Garden City BID Company within 30 days of collecting it.
- Nominating a senior officer and/or a councillor to serve as either a Director or an Observer on the BID Company Board.
- Providing a senior council officer to act as a business-focused liaison on all BID matters between the BID Company and senior council officers.
- Paying the appropriate BID levy set out in the Business Plan in respect of all its own hereditaments within the Welwyn Garden City town centre BID area.

6.1.6. Monitoring and Review

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 Welwyn Garden City BID Company. This will be carried out as follows:

- The council monitors performance of key services through the Council's Business Plan, with monitoring reported to the Cabinet. Where there is a specific issue with service delivery within the BID area, the respective Head of Service will discuss this with the Welwyn Garden City BID Company.
- There will be annual reviews of each of the specific services for which a Baseline Statement is shown above. This will be led by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed, which will discuss with the Welwyn Garden City BID Company how service commitments have been delivered during the review period and, where necessary, update service levels to reflect the services that will be provided in the following year. These reviews will be scheduled to have the best effect on the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed, and Welwyn Garden City BID Company's yearly budgeting cycles.
- The Welwyn Garden City BID Company and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed, will meet regularly at mutually agreed intervals to review the operation of the BID arrangements. These meetings will include monitoring the implementation of the Operating Agreement and the collection and transfer of BID levy payments, including any outstanding issues, queries or areas requiring action. The frequency and timing of these meetings will be agreed between both parties to ensure effective oversight and timely resolution of any issues arising.

6.1.7. Monitoring of basic service provision

The Baseline Service Statements from both Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council 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 in the statements. Experience from other BID areas demonstrates that this approach improves service delivery and helps ensure that funding provided through the business rates mechanism is targeted appropriately and spent effectively. This means that local businesses have some influence over business rates investment in their area and the effectiveness of local authority service provision.

6.2. Relationship with other WGC plans and strategies

6.2.1. Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016–2036

The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016–2036 was formally adopted by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in 2023. Local Plans typically take five to ten years to prepare, whereas consumer behaviour, technology and town centre functions have been changing dramatically in the last five years.

A Local Plan cannot make a town centre successful, busy or vibrant, but it can determine:

- Land use.
- Where housing can be built.
- Where employment land is protected.
- The scale and location of retail, leisure and commercial development.
- Design standards and place-making requirements.
- Infrastructure contributions from developers.
- The legal basis for deciding planning applications.

This Local Plan therefore still provides a valuable framework for the BID to reference in its planning and delivery of projects.

Factors that now determine the success of a town centre, such as vibrancy, identity, experience, community engagement, events, footfall and business collaboration, are increasingly delivered through place management rather than land-use planning.

That is why organisations such as BIDs have become more strategically important over the last few years, while Local Plans have become more of a framework document within which those place-shaping activities operate.

6.2.2. Welwyn Hatfield Economic Development Strategy 2026

The Welwyn Hatfield Economic Development Strategy 2026 aligns strongly with the ambitions of Welwyn Garden City BID. Its priorities for a thriving town centre, business support, a resilient local economy and improved skills complement the BID's objectives to create a 'Proud Place', support a 'Thriving Economy' and deliver a 'Welcoming Environment'.

The Strategy highlights opportunities to diversify Welwyn Garden City, grow the evening economy, increase footfall, support events and improve the visitor experience – areas where the BID already has a strong track record and can continue to play a key delivery role.

It also provides a strong framework for partnership working between the Council, businesses and the BID, while strengthening the BID's position as the collective voice of town centre businesses and providing leverage when seeking investment, developing partnerships and demonstrating its contribution to the town's long-term economic growth.

6.2.3. Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026–2036

Although the Strategy does not specifically reference BIDs or Welwyn Garden City, there are clear areas of alignment with the BID's role and objectives.

A key theme is ensuring that “Places and communities thrive”, recognising the importance of vibrant towns as economic and community centres. The Strategy also places strong emphasis on business-led economic development and collaboration with local partners.

This provides a natural fit for Welwyn Garden City BID as a business-funded and business-governed organisation, with a proven role in delivering local economic and place-based initiatives. The BID can therefore play an important part in translating the Strategy's wider ambitions into meaningful local action, working alongside Hertfordshire Futures, the Council and other partners.

6.2.4. Local Government reorganisation

At the time of this BID Proposal and Business Plan being developed, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council are set to transition into a new Unitary Authority, the new Central Hertfordshire Council. According to the current Local Government Reorganisation timetable, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council will cease to exist and will merge into the new unitary structure in April 2028.

The BID will be the only local body with the sole purpose of supporting businesses and the development of Welwyn Garden City town centre in the future.

6.2.5. Using these plans to support the BID's aims

By understanding and taking account of these overarching plans and strategies in the development of the BID's proposal and business plan, this will give the BID leverage in gaining support for the delivery of its own vision and objectives.

The BID has the potential to make a significant contribution to the local economy by providing the support businesses in Welwyn Garden City need and acting as a collective voice to represent their interests.

7. The Research and Consultation

7.1. Background

The BID undertook extensive research with businesses, organisations and stakeholders to ensure this plan is firmly grounded in the views and aspirations of those who trade and work in the area.

Research and findings from the surveys and interactions with businesses and organisations from across the Welwyn Garden City BID area have been considered in shaping the ultimate vision, objectives and their associated activities.

7.2. Aims of the research

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 complement 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.
- This research directly informs the Vision, Objectives and activities set out in this Business Plan.

7.3. Research and consultation activity

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

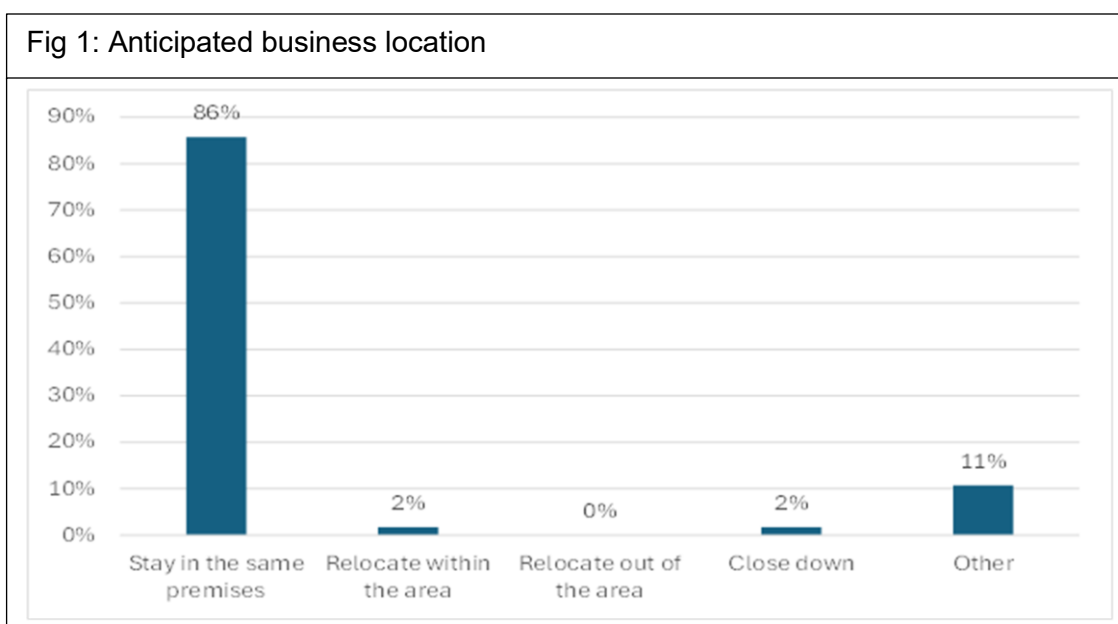
- In March 2026, a detailed survey was produced to get the views of businesses in the BID area.
- All potential levy-paying businesses in the BID area were mailed survey forms and asked to complete them, seeking their opinions on a variety of issues, through e-bulletins, during a visit from a BID representative and via the BID website. All businesses were also provided with the opportunity to meet with a member of the BID team in person, via telephone or video call.
- All potential levy-paying businesses were included in mail shots and publicity including newsletters and e-bulletins where e-mail addresses were available.
- 124 personal business visits were made in total, with 79 of these being unique visits, which represents 36% of the 219 occupied and trading businesses which meet the levy criteria having had a visit to discuss the BID.
- Detailed four-page surveys were conducted with businesses which covered 36% of the hereditaments which met the levy criteria.
- A number of meetings 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 two sets of workshops in April and June 2026.
- 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

7.4. Business feedback

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

Despite the economic uncertainty and cost of living challenges, the confidence to remain trading in Welwyn Garden City is strong. 86% of businesses surveyed anticipate that they will stay in the same premises. Only 2% of the businesses surveyed stated that they planned to close down.



7.4.1. Proud Place

Both related to this objective, 'Destination marketing and brand promotion, including developing, protecting and promoting the Wonderful WGC brand' and 'Building a strong business community, through networking and social events that encourage collaboration, connection and shared success' were joint second when businesses were asked how beneficial these current projects were, with 80%.

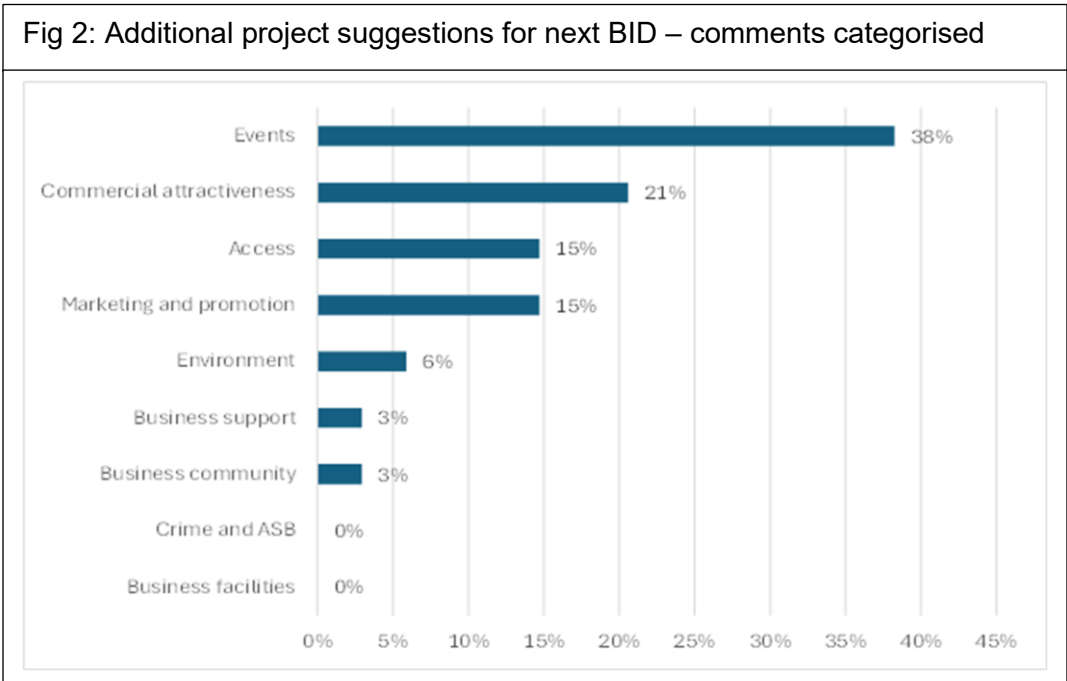
'Feeling part of Welwyn Garden City BID and its activity' and 'Promotion and awareness of reasons to visit' also scored highly in the survey in relation to importance, both with 82% of businesses saying they were important to them.

Also in the survey, when asked what additional support their business needs, the second greatest number of comments were in the 'Marketing and Promotion' category. Comments included more marketing and content creation, brand awareness to different generations and helping to promote local businesses in the town.

Another important part of this objective is working with businesses and other organisations to develop and organise events to create an animated feel to the town. In the survey, 100% of businesses said that they are aware of 'Major events and footfall-driving activity, including the World Food Festival, Screen on the Green,

Christmas Lights celebrations and the popular Christmas Lights Trail’, with 86% also saying that these were beneficial to them (this was the top aspect for both awareness and being beneficial).

Also in the survey, when asked what additional projects you think the BID could consider delivering for the next BID, the greatest number of comments were in the ‘Events’ category. Comments included there being more frequent events/markets and exploring new events and new trails to bring in more variety of customers. There was also a suggestion to do more events that bring the community together.



7.4.2. Thriving Economy

In the survey, the aspect that scored highest for being either very poor or quite poor was ‘Range of shops’, with 69% of businesses surveyed giving it one of these rankings. This also scored second in terms of importance, with 86% of businesses saying this was important to them.

‘Things to do in the evening and nighttime’ and ‘Things to do for the family, visitors and local people during the day’ were also in the top five for being either very poor or quite poor, with 34% and 33% of businesses respectively giving it one of these rankings. ‘Leisure and culture facilities (Museums, Cinemas, Bowling Alleys etc..)’ also scored highly in terms of importance, with 82%.

Also in the survey, when asked what additional support their business needs, the greatest number of comments were in the ‘Commercial Attractiveness’ category. Suggestions included improving things for people to do in the town, having more shops and more bars and nightlife.

This was also echoed in both the workshop and the Renewal workshop for the Board, as in both meetings the most discussed topic was around ‘Commercial Attractiveness’ of the town. Comments included improving the offer and variety of retail, developing a better evening economy, filling empty shops and presenting the case to potential business investors to bring in others.

7.4.3. Welcoming Environment

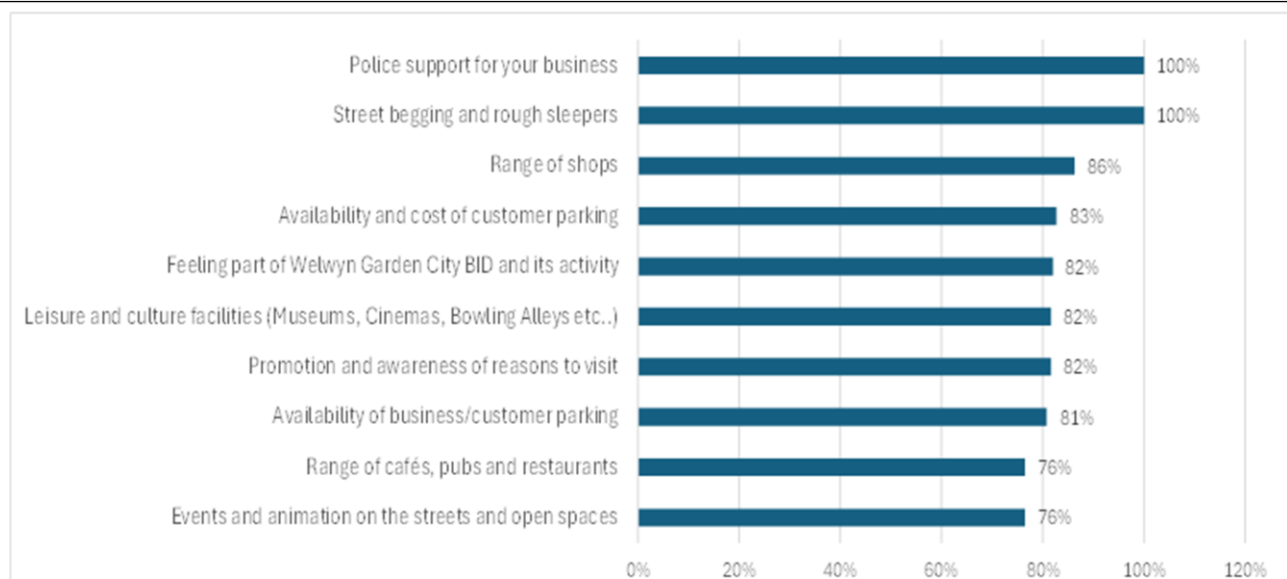
In the workshops, the second most discussed topic was around 'Environment'. Comments included that first impressions need to be considered, having more artwork, making more of the green spaces, making the flower displays better and getting businesses to take more pride in their own appearance.

In the survey, 'Environmental and public realm enhancements' scored highly both in terms of awareness and being beneficial with 91% of businesses saying they were aware of this (the second highest aspect) and 75% of businesses saying it was beneficial (the third highest aspect).

From the survey results, it is clear that reducing crime and enhancing safety is important to businesses in Welwyn Garden City and is something that therefore requires continued focus. 'Police support for your business' and 'Street begging and rough sleepers' were the joint top aspects in terms of importance, with 100%. They however did not score particularly highly in terms of being very poor or quite poor, with 11% for 'Police support for your business' and 15% for 'Street begging and rough sleepers'. These findings highlight the importance of continuing the BID's work with the police, local authority and partner agencies to maintain business confidence, enhance perceptions of safety and address emerging issues as they are important to businesses.

The final part of this objective is to create an accessible town and, in the survey, the second and third highest ranking aspects for being either very poor or quite poor were 'Availability and cost of business parking' and 'Availability and cost of customer parking' with 65% and 46% of businesses respectively giving it one of these rankings. They also scored highly in terms of importance, with 'Availability and cost of customer parking' at 83% and 'Availability and cost of business parking' at 81%.

Fig 3: Top ten aspects ranked by businesses as important



8. The BID's response

The research and consultation undertaken with businesses has provided a clear direction for the next BID term. While businesses remain confident in Welwyn Garden City, they have identified a number of important challenges and opportunities, particularly around commercial attractiveness, events and footfall, the town's environment and appearance, safety, parking and the overall visitor experience.

The BID's response is therefore focused on the key areas and priorities that reflect the issues raised by businesses and the areas where collective action through the BID can make a meaningful difference.

The BID is well placed to respond to these challenges. Over the past ten years, it has developed strong relationships with businesses, the local authorities and other partners and has established itself as an effective platform for collaboration, representation and delivery. The next five years provide an opportunity to build on this experience, strengthen existing partnerships and develop new initiatives in response to the changing needs of the town.

Welwyn Garden City, like all town centres, continues to experience significant changes in how people live, work, shop and spend their leisure time. The economic and social changes of recent years have accelerated these trends, making it increasingly important to adapt the town centre offer and ensure that Welwyn Garden City remains attractive to businesses, residents, visitors and investors.

The BID will act as a **catalyst for positive change**, bringing businesses and partners together to address shared challenges, promote the town and support its long-term economic success. It will use its collective business voice to influence key decisions, champion the interests of businesses and identify opportunities to attract investment, increase footfall and strengthen the town centre offer.

The proposed Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire, with new unitary council arrangements expected from 2028, also presents a period of significant change. The BID will ensure that the interests and voice of Welwyn Garden City businesses remain clearly represented throughout this transition, while building strong and effective relationships with the new Central Hertfordshire Council and other relevant partners.

The BID will also continue to build on the **Wonderful WGC** identity, celebrating the town's unique Garden City heritage and characteristics and promoting it as a vibrant, sustainable and welcoming destination.

This BID Proposal and Business Plan has therefore been developed to ensure that BID investment delivers practical benefits for as wide a range of businesses as possible. Through its three project areas, the BID will focus on **promoting the town, strengthening its economy, improving the environment and supporting a safer and more welcoming town centre**.

Most importantly, the BID will continue to provide a **business-led, democratic and collaborative platform** through which businesses can work together to influence the future of Welwyn Garden City, respond to change and create a town centre in which businesses can thrive.

9. Our Vision and Objectives for the new term 2027–2032

9.1. The Vision

To establish Welwyn Garden City as a place which is innovative, vibrant and sustainable, building on the unique Garden City principles and characteristics to make it a wonderful place to visit, work and invest.

9.2. Objectives

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

Objective 1: Proud Place

Celebrate and promote Welwyn Garden City as a distinctive, vibrant and welcoming Garden City destination, enhancing its identity, supporting businesses and delivering exceptional experiences that foster pride amongst residents, businesses and visitors.

Objective 2: Thriving Economy

Support a resilient and prosperous business community by driving investment, strengthening partnerships, championing business interests and enhancing Welwyn Garden City's economic offer for current and future generations.

Objective 3: Welcoming Environment

Create a safe, attractive and welcoming town centre environment where businesses can thrive and people feel confident, comfortable and encouraged to spend time.

9.3. Projects & Measures

9.3.1. Objective 1: Proud Place:

Celebrate and promote Welwyn Garden City as a distinctive, vibrant and welcoming Garden City destination, enhancing its identity, supporting businesses and delivering exceptional experiences that foster pride amongst residents, businesses and visitors.

Projects

- a. **Place Identity & Brand:** Strengthen and promote a distinctive town centre identity that celebrates Welwyn Garden City's heritage, values and ambitions, fostering pride among businesses, residents and visitors.
- b. **Destination Development & Promotion:** Position and promote Welwyn Garden City as a vibrant destination, increasing visitor numbers, dwell time and engagement through coordinated marketing, campaigns and promotional activity.
- c. **Marketing & Communications:** Deliver integrated marketing, digital, PR and stakeholder communications that raise awareness of the town centre offer, support businesses and reinforce Welwyn Garden City's brand and reputation.
- d. **Events & Place Animation:** Develop, support and attract a diverse programme of events, markets and cultural activities that increase footfall, enhance the visitor experience and reflect the Garden City principles.
- e. **Business Engagement & Advocacy:** Foster strong relationships with and between businesses and stakeholders through effective communication, collaboration and engagement.

- f. **Customer Experience & Town Centre Excellence:** Champion initiatives that enhance the quality of the visitor experience, celebrate business excellence and encourage high standards of customer service across the town centre.

Measures and results

- Town centre footfall trends (measured annually and against benchmark locations where available).
- Visitor and business perceptions of Welwyn Garden City as an attractive, distinctive and welcoming destination (through regular perception surveys).
- Reach and engagement of BID marketing, communications and promotional activity across digital, social and media channels.
- Number of visitors and participants engaged through BID-supported events, campaigns and town centre initiatives.
- Business participation in BID-led marketing, promotional and place-making initiatives.

9.3.2. Objective 2: Thriving Economy

Support a resilient and prosperous business community by driving investment, strengthening partnerships, championing business interests and enhancing Welwyn Garden City's economic offer for current and future generations.

Projects

- a. **Vision & Partnerships:** Lead the development and delivery of a shared vision and strategic plan for the town centre, working collaboratively with businesses, partners and stakeholders to shape its future.
- b. **Investment & Place Promotion:** Enhance the profile of Welwyn Garden City as a premier location for investment, business growth and development, attracting investors and funding while supporting the delivery of regeneration priorities and the Garden City vision.
- c. **Business Growth & Collaboration:** Foster a thriving business community by encouraging collaboration, networking, knowledge sharing and skill development, strengthening connections across Welwyn Garden City and supporting sustainable business growth.
- d. **Town Centre Development:** Champion initiatives that strengthen the town centre offer, including the development of a vibrant evening and leisure economy and ensuring businesses are represented in the planning and delivery of public realm and development projects.
- e. **Membership & Engagement:** Develop and grow a voluntary membership network that strengthens connections between town centre businesses, organisations and surrounding commercial areas, supporting a stronger local economy.
- f. **Performance, Insight and Resources:** Use market intelligence, visitor data, economic data and performance indicators to inform decision-making, demonstrate impact and maximise the BID's ability to deliver its objectives.
- g. **Business Resilience & Support:** Support businesses through periods of change, challenge and emergency by facilitating effective communication, partnership working and coordinated responses that strengthen confidence and resilience.

Measures and results

- Number of businesses actively engaged in BID programmes, events, consultations and initiatives.

- Value of additional investment, sponsorship, grant funding and partner contributions secured to support BID priorities.
- Town centre occupancy and vacancy trends.
- Business confidence and perceptions of Welwyn Garden City as a place to invest, trade and grow.
- Number of collaborative projects, partnerships and business networking initiatives delivered.

9.3.3. Objective 3: Welcoming Environment

Create a safe, attractive and welcoming town centre environment where businesses can thrive and people feel confident, comfortable and encouraged to spend time.

Projects

- Public Realm Infrastructure:** Work in partnership to support the development and enhancement of infrastructure that enables the effective, sustainable and flexible use of streets, public spaces and town centre assets.
- Engagement Officer:** Serving as a primary point of contact for BID businesses to understand their operational needs, collect feedback, and address high-street issues. Work closely with the Police, local authority teams and partner agencies to share intelligence and support initiatives that reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Environmental Enhancements:** Enhance the attractiveness and vitality of the town centre through targeted investment in landscaping, floral displays, public art, seasonal installations and creative lighting schemes.
- Resilience, Community Safety & Crime Reduction:** Support a safe and welcoming environment by strengthening business crime reduction partnerships, maintaining initiatives such as Welwyn Garden City Watch, and working closely with the Police, CCTV services and other key stakeholders.
- Accessibility:** Working with partners, encourage and enable ease of access and use of the town centre for vehicles and pedestrians.

Measures and results

- Business and visitor perceptions of safety, cleanliness and overall town centre environment.
- Levels of reported business crime and anti-social behaviour, where partner data is available.
- Number of businesses actively participating in safety and crime reduction initiatives.
- Delivery of agreed public realm, environmental enhancement and accessibility improvement projects.
- Number of business interactions and issues resolved through the BID Engagement Officer and partnership interventions.

10. Our Approach to Delivery

10.1. Key Principles

Section 9 (above) sets out what the BID will deliver between 2027 and 2032. Equally important is how those projects are planned, prioritised and delivered.

As Welwyn Garden City enters a new BID term, businesses increasingly expect investment that is accountable, forward-looking and responsive to changing needs and opportunities. The BID will apply a consistent set of guiding principles across all its activity.

These principles will inform decision-making, shape the development of projects and partnerships, and help ensure that every investment made through the BID contributes positively to the town's long-term success.

Together, they reflect the values, ambitions and distinctive character of Welwyn Garden City, while ensuring that BID resources are used effectively to create measurable benefits for businesses.

The key principles are:

- **Sustainable by design** – ensuring environmental responsibility, resource efficiency and long-term resilience are embedded within all projects.
- **Creating a people-centred place** – prioritising inclusivity, health, safety and positive experiences for all users of Welwyn Garden City.
- **Creating a distinctive identity** – celebrating heritage, identity and the unique character of Welwyn Garden City.
- **Data-led and insight-driven** – ensuring decisions are informed by robust data, real-time intelligence and business insight, enabling effective use of BID resources, responsive delivery and measurable impact across all activity.
- **Collaborative and business-led** – harnessing the collective voice of businesses and partners to shape and deliver shared outcomes.
- **Wonderful by design** – embedding the ambition to make Welwyn Garden City a 'wonderful' place in every aspect of BID activity, ensuring projects, services and experiences positively contribute to the town's attractiveness, distinctiveness and overall quality of place.

These principles provide a clear framework for action and accountability throughout the life of the BID. They will strengthen the BID's ability to deliver lasting value, maximise return on investment and continue to build a Welwyn Garden City that businesses are proud to be part of and invest in.

10.2. How delivery will 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.

10.3. Measuring Our Impact - KPIs, reporting and accountability

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.

11. How the BID Works - Organisation, Resources, Delivery

11.1. How the BID will champion businesses

Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, owned and governed by the businesses in the BID area. It is legally and operationally responsible to the businesses in the BID area for all BID activities and acts on their behalf and is 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 Board is elected by the members of 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 project. It will continue to be driven by the private sector and includes a Councillor from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council or the new Central Hertfordshire Council when formed, and one Senior Council Officer.

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 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.

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 organisations 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 a hands-on dedicated BID Manager 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 as 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.

11.2. Duration and commencement date of BID Arrangements

Subject to the successful ballot in October 2026 our proposal is for the Arrangements for the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District Proposal and Business Plan to operate for five years and to commence, on the 1st April 2027 until 31st March 2032. After five years, in 2032, it can be extended or renewed – but only after being subject to a renewal ballot.

11.3. Alteration of BID 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 12.5

11.4. The Finances

The BID is funded by a levy which is collected on behalf of the Business Improvement District (BID) by the 'Billing Authority' Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed, 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 which meet the levy criteria, regardless of whether or not they voted in the BID ballot, or how they voted. It is collected by the 'Billing Authority' in much the same way as business rates.

The way the BID Levy charge is calculated is defined in Section 13.

11.5. The BID Area

The shaded area on the map represents the full extent of the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Business Improvement District.

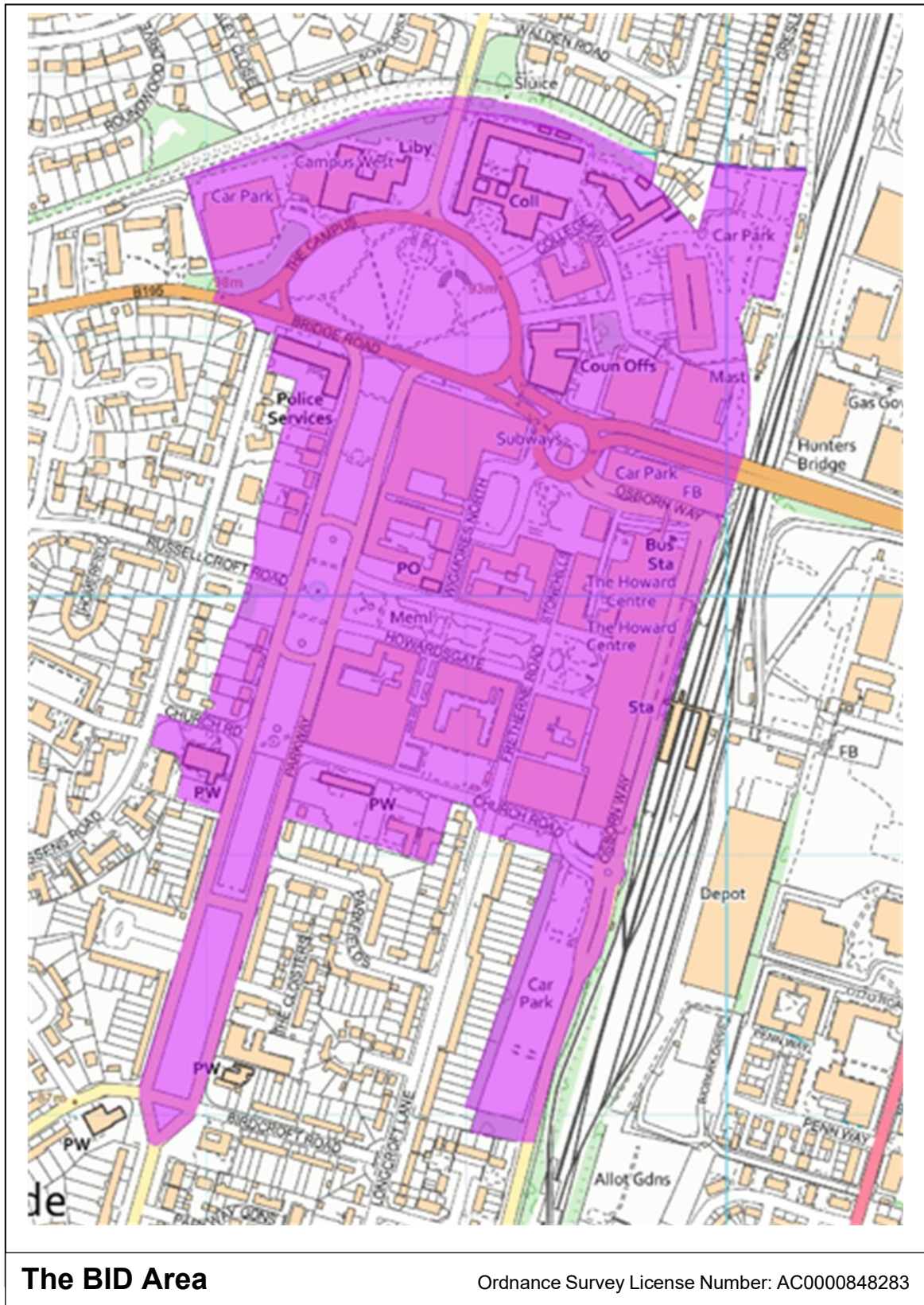
The BID area covers the core of Welwyn Garden City's town centre – the primary destination for retail, leisure, services and employment in the town.

The Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District (BID) covers the town centre, extending from Campus West and the College in the north to the edge of the railway line in the east. From there, it runs south alongside the railway to the Osborn Way car park, with Parkway forming the western boundary.

A list of streets within the BID area is shown in Appendix 3 All non-domestic hereditaments within the BID area will, if the BID is approved, be liable for the BID levy (as defined in Section 13).

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, recruitment agents, retail and health and beauty outlets, solicitors, hotels, museums, the bus station 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 13, contribute to the BID's collective funding and activities flowing from the combined budget.

See map below:



12. Welwyn Garden City BID Finances

12.1. Balancing the Budget

Businesses across Welwyn Garden City continue to face significant economic challenges. Rising operating costs, including employment, energy, insurance, property and supply chain costs, have increased pressure on businesses of all sizes. At the same time, town centres continue to experience rapid changes in consumer behaviour, increasing competition for customers, evolving expectations around place quality and safety, and ongoing pressure on profitability. Welwyn Garden City is no exception.

In developing this Business Plan, the BID Board has carefully considered the balance between the cost of the BID levy and the need to generate sufficient investment to support businesses, enhance the town centre and deliver measurable benefits over the next five years. The aim has been to ensure that the BID remains both affordable for levy payers and capable of delivering the projects, services and representation that businesses have identified as priorities.

Several important factors have influenced the proposed levy arrangements:

- The real value of the BID's income has reduced significantly over time. While the BID levy income in 2026–27 is only marginally higher than it was in 2017–18, inflation has increased by almost 40% over the same period, meaning the spending power of the BID has reduced substantially.
- Changes in rateable values have reduced the amount of levy generated from individual properties, despite the costs of delivering projects and services continuing to rise.
- The cost of delivering events, marketing activity, place management initiatives and business support services has increased significantly, reflecting wider inflationary pressures affecting all organisations.
- Businesses have consistently identified a desire for the BID to continue and strengthen its role in promoting the town centre, supporting business growth, improving the visitor experience, influencing investment and representing the interests of businesses.
- The BID will continue to seek external funding, sponsorship, grants and commercial income wherever possible to maximise the return on levy payer investment and increase the overall value delivered.

Without this adjustment, the BID's ability to deliver projects and services at a meaningful scale would diminish over the course of the new term. The proposed levy multiplier is therefore set at a level intended to protect the BID's capacity to deliver effective support for businesses, maintain a strong collective voice for the town centre and ensure that Welwyn Garden City remains competitive, attractive and vibrant.

The Board believes it represents a balanced and proportionate investment in the future success of the town centre. It reflects both the reduced real value of BID income over recent years and the ambition of businesses to continue benefiting from an organisation that can attract investment, leverage additional funding, influence key decisions and deliver projects that no individual business could achieve alone.

With a 2.75% of rateable value contribution in year 1, the indicative costs to a business would be:

Rateable Value	Annual	This equates to weekly cost of	This equates to a daily cost of
£0 - £4,999	zero	zero	zero
£5,000	£138	£2.64	£0.38
£15,000	£413	£7.93	£1.13
£20,000	£550	£10.58	£1.51
£50,000	£1,375	£26.44	£3.77
£100,000	£2,750	£52.88	£7.53
£250,000	£6,875	£132.21	£18.84
£500,000	£13,750	£264.42	£37.67

12.2. Welwyn Garden City BID 5-year Budget: 2027–2032

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	% to total
Income							
BID levy revenue (Note 1)	£ 397,700	£ 405,654	£ 413,767	£ 422,042	£ 430,483	£ 2,069,647	91%
Other Income (Note 2)	£ 40,000	£ 40,800	£ 41,616	£ 42,448	£ 43,297	£ 208,162	9%
Total Income	£ 437,700	£ 446,454	£ 455,383	£ 464,491	£ 473,781	£ 2,277,808	100%
Expenditure							
Objective 1 – Proud Place	£ 175,000	£ 175,972	£ 176,963	£ 177,975	£ 179,006	£ 884,916	40%
Objective 2 - Thriving Economy	£ 90,000	£ 90,500	£ 91,010	£ 91,530	£ 92,060	£ 455,100	20%
Objective 3 - Welcoming Environment	£ 75,000	£ 75,417	£ 75,841	£ 76,275	£ 76,717	£ 379,250	17%
Central Management Costs, Administration, Office (Note 3)	£ 65,739	£ 67,054	£ 68,395	£ 69,763	£ 71,158	£ 342,108	15%
Levy Collection costs (Billing Authority)	£ 12,076	£ 12,318	£ 12,564	£ 12,815	£ 13,071	£ 62,844	3%
Contingency (Note 4)	£ 19,885	£ 20,283	£ 20,688	£ 21,102	£ 21,524	£ 103,482	5%
Total Expenditure	£ 437,700	£ 441,542	£ 445,462	£ 449,459	£ 453,537	£ 2,227,700	100%
Accrual for Renewal (Note 5)	£ -	£ 4,912	£ 9,921	£ 15,031	£ 20,244	£ 50,108	

Notes

1. Assumes a 95% collection rate and 2% per annum inflation
2. Including income from landlords, associate members of the BID, commercial and other sources (including in-kind)
3. Central admin, office and fixed overheads
4. Calculated as 5% of total levy billed
5. 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

12.3. 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.

12.4. Sources of Additional Funding

The BID has a proven track record of securing additional funding and resources to supplement levy income and will continue to actively pursue grants, sponsorship, partnerships and commercial opportunities to maximise the value generated from every pound invested by businesses. The BID Company intends to continue to seek additional funding where possible to increase the benefits that can be delivered by the BID to businesses.

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.

The BID also generates commercial revenue from its online shop where it sells its own bespoke Welwyn Garden City merchandise and, wherever possible, commercial arrangements with event organisers for events organised in the town centre.

It is estimated that over the life of the BID this additional funding could generate around £200,000 over the five-year period.

12.5. 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 8 (The BID's Response).

As part of the Alteration of BID Arrangements (see Section 11.3), 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 9.

12.6. 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 9, 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.

13. BID 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 which will become the Central Herts Council with effect from 1st April 2028. 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 23rd September 2026, with the close of ballot at 5pm on 29th October 2026. 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 2027 and will run until 31st March 2032. Levy bills will be issued for the first payment due 1st April 2027 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 2027 to 31st March 2028, will be 2.75% of the 2026 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the billing authority's) NNDR billing system as at 17th September 2026 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 17th September 2026 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 17th September 2026 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 fall under the management of a shopping mall operator and who 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 2027 to 31st March 2028 will be 2.41% of the 2026 rateable value shown on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's (the Billing Authority's) NNDR billing system as at 17th September 2026 for each defined business (including any premises operated and occupied by the shopping mall operator within the scope of this criteria), with the exception of those premises with a rateable value of less than £5,000 showing on the Billing Authority's system as at 17th September 2026.
 - 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 17th September 2026 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 13 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 13 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 until such time as this council is dissolved and the new Central Hertfordshire Council will become the new Billing Authority. 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 second billing cycle commencing 1st April 2028 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 November 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 will be 365 days (366 in a leap year) from 1st April 2027 to the 31st March 2028 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 the Billing Authority for a refund for the remainder of the period if an apportionment is required between the outgoing and incoming liable parties. The minimum refund will be £100. The new liable party will be charged on a pro-rata basis for the chargeable period remaining from the effective date of change recorded in the Rating List as per paragraph 14.e below.
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 £100 or more. The charge or refund amount will be calculated pro rata between the effective date of the amendment recorded in the Rating List 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 17th September 2026:
 - a. **New premises**, or properties which were not on the rate valuation list at the 17th September 2026 but become subject to rates in the BID area or new streets raised in the BID area since that date will be expected to pay a BID Levy based on the % criteria for that year, in relation to its new/current rateable value with effect from the date at which it becomes subject to a business rates charge.
 - b. **Where property is split**, two or more BID levies should be charged at the appropriate levy rate % of the new/current rateable values of the revised premises from the effective date of the split valuation.
 - c. **Where premises are merged** the BID Levy should be charged at the appropriate levy rate % of the new/current rateable value of the merged property from the effective date of the merged valuation.
 - d. **Any change of use or ownership** (or the creation of a new business within the BID boundary) will be liable to the levy charge applicable from the effective date recorded in the Rating List.
 - e. **Where there is a change in occupation** the new occupier will be liable for the levy charge applicable from the effective date recorded in the Rating List.
 - f. **Where a property is deleted from the Rating List** or has been assigned a zero rateable value and is added back on or assigned a rateable value of more than zero or is relisted on the Rating List, revised bills or credits will be issued.
 - g. **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 effective date of the amendment recorded in the Rating List.

- h. **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 effective date of the amendment recorded in the Rating List.
- i. **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 17th September 2026.

Where any of these changes occur, adjustments will be made and revised bills issued based on the levy charge applicable at the time of change provided that the amount due on charge or refund is £100 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 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 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.

16. 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 13 of this business plan 'Levy Criteria for the Welwyn Garden City BID'

17. 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 11 in this Proposal and Business Plan which fall within the levy criteria of Section 13, from the 17th September 2026 at any time during the life of the BID but which are not specifically identified on the map in Section 11, with effect from the date at which their rateable value takes effect.
18. The BID levy contribution will not be reassessed if the rateable value is amended after the end of the BID.
19. 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.
20. 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.

14. The Importance of the BID

14.1. The responsibilities of 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 BID, the businesses in the area and everyone who relies 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 to highlight the consequences of not adopting the principles of the BID and the benefits that accrue from the delivery of the plan.

14.2. BIDs in other places

BIDs have been proving their worth and commercial value across the UK over the last twenty years as effective mechanisms to improve trading environments for all sorts and types of businesses. Over the last few years, during the challenges faced by businesses during the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, 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 turnouts than the first time of voting. They are seen as providing businesses with very effective returns on investment.

There are many towns and cities around Welwyn Garden City which have Business Improvement Districts, including St Albans, Luton, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Watford and Milton Keynes.

14.3. The Importance of Voting 'YES'

If you want the BID – with its collective influence and associated benefits – to continue supporting your business, you need to vote for it. If the vote 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 2027.

Without the BID, there will be no collective voice or mechanism to shape and control the support you receive. Businesses will be left to face future challenges and uncertainties alone.

14.4. Working with key partners

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, Local Authorities and the Police. It will seek, wherever possible, to influence larger projects to the benefit of its own aims while supporting others to achieve their own objectives.

In working with others, the overriding 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.

14.5. Sustainable mechanism for the development of WGC

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 businesses and organisations which pay a levy will have the final say. At the end of the 5 years, if no discernible 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. End-of-year accounts will be produced and 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 also benefits from mutual trading status, meaning that it is exempt from any Corporation Tax liability on the levy and grants revenue received.

14.6. The Ballot

The BID renewal ballot will be conducted by post in September and October 2026. All businesses liable to pay the BID levy will be entitled to vote and will receive a ballot paper. Completed ballot papers must be returned by post so that they are received by the ballot deadline of 29th October 2026.

If the ballot is successful, the Business Plan will be activated and all eligible businesses within the BID area will be required to pay the BID levy in accordance with the arrangements set out in this Business Plan.

Businesses eligible to vote and liable to pay the levy are the ratepayers of non-domestic properties within the Business Improvement District. Properties with a rateable value of less than £5,000 will be excluded from both the ballot and the BID levy.

14.7. The levy

In developing this Business Plan, the BID Board has carefully balanced the need to keep the BID affordable for businesses while ensuring sufficient investment to deliver the projects, services and representation identified as priorities by businesses.

The proposed levy reflects the increasing costs of delivering events, place management, marketing and business support, together with the reduced real value of BID income caused by inflation and changes in rateable values. The Board has therefore set the levy at 2.75% of rateable value for businesses outside the shopping centre, a level intended to protect the BID’s ability to continue delivering meaningful benefits and securing additional investment over the next five years. For businesses located within the shopping centre, a lower levy rate of 2.41% will apply. This recognises that some services and activities funded through the BID are already provided by the shopping centre management and funded through existing service charges paid by occupiers. The Board believes this approach represents a fair, balanced and proportionate investment in the future success, attractiveness and competitiveness of Welwyn Garden City town centre.

This levy arrangement will generate around £2.1 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 £200,000 over the life of the BID. This will be used to fund the projects identified in this Business Plan.

15. Final thoughts

When Welwyn Garden City BID was established in 2017, businesses came together with a shared ambition to invest in the future of our town centre. Over the past ten years, that collective investment has delivered real, lasting change and created benefits that no individual business could have achieved alone.

Together, we have invested more than £3 million into Welwyn Garden City, helping to secure £9 million of public realm improvements, promoting the town to millions of people and attracting thousands of visitors through events, campaigns and initiatives. Along the way, we have built strong partnerships, supported businesses through challenging times and ensured the town centre has a dedicated voice representing its interests.

Some of the achievements we are most proud of include:

- Creating the Wonderful Welwyn Garden City brand, giving our town a strong identity and a recognised destination brand.
- Building a digital audience of more than 50,000 followers and generating over 9 million annual impressions, promoting local businesses and encouraging people to visit and spend locally.
- Delivering award-winning events including the World Food Festival, Screen on the Green, Vintage Festival, Street Food Heroes and a wide programme of seasonal activities that bring life and footfall into the town centre.
- Investing in award-winning floral displays, nationally recognised Christmas lights and environmental improvements that enhance the visitor experience.
- Improving business safety through initiatives such as WGCWatch, retail crime partnerships and stronger links with the police and CCTV network.
- Helping businesses reduce costs and improve sustainability through recycling schemes and discounted waste services.
- Providing business support through training, networking, marketing opportunities, recruitment promotion and regular communication.
- Working alongside landlords, developers and public sector partners to influence investment and ensure the interests of businesses are represented in decisions affecting the town centre.

These achievements belong to every business that has supported the BID. They demonstrate what can be accomplished when businesses work together with a shared purpose and a long-term commitment to the success of Welwyn Garden City.

A **YES** vote will allow us to build on these foundations, continue investing in the town centre, support businesses through the challenges ahead and create an even stronger, more vibrant and prosperous Welwyn Garden City for everyone.

Together, we have achieved so much. Together, we can achieve even more.

Please vote YES and help us continue shaping the future of Welwyn Garden City.

Mike Paraliki & Mounia Le Gaufey

Co-Chairs, Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd

16. Appendices

16.1. Appendix 1 - BID Background and Technical Information

Business Improvement Districts are a proven model for business-led investment in town centres. 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 340 BIDs have been proposed and approved by business communities in England and Wales. These include St Albans, Luton, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Watford and Milton Keynes.

There are more than 290 BID areas which have been operating for more than five years and have gone through a renewal ballot; more than 100 have now entered their third term having gone through a third ballot, 62 into their fourth term and 13 in their fifth term. In most cases, BIDs going on to a second term and further terms 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 Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts>

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, or the new Central Hertfordshire Council once formed. This charge is payable by non-domestic rate payers and is collected by the Council in much the same way as business rates. The way the BID Levy charge is calculated is defined in the Levy Criteria, Section 13.

All works and services will be contracted by Welwyn Garden City BID Ltd, the BID body for the BID area. The objectives and aspirations of 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 and the British Property Federation.

16.2. Appendix 12– 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.

16.3. Appendix 3 – Streets included in the BID Area

Streets within the Welwyn Garden City BID area, listed alphabetically.

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		

The BID area includes any road or street and all small business areas, courtyards and parks located off these roads that are located within the boundary of the defined BID area as per the shaded area on the map shown in section 11 in this Proposal and Business Plan, even if they are not listed in the tables in Appendix 3.

It will also include any roads yet to be constructed and named and any new development sites created within the shaded area of the map shown in section 11 in this Proposal and Business Plan and any building, land or property, which exists within the shaded area, which falls within the levy criteria of section 13, but which is not specifically identified on the map in section 11.

17. Acknowledgements

The Welwyn Garden City BID Board would like to acknowledge the support of the following in preparing this Business Plan:

- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Partnerships for Better Business Ltd

Everyone from businesses and organisations who has spent time and energy supporting the Board or providing input into surveys, workshops and interviews.

18. Further information

For more information about the BID or to discuss any aspect of this business plan please visit the BID's website www.wonderfulwgc.co.uk or contact the BID Managers Nicola Kane or Mariana Bitonte on 01707 497930 or email bid@welwyngarden.co.uk



VOTE YES

for five more years
of investment in
Wonderful Welwyn
Garden City

CONTACT:

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