

Part IV Delivery

10 Implementation

10.1 The implementation of this town centre strategy presents unusual issues in that the main freehold interest for the vast majority of the land within the town centre is in a single land ownership - the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

10.2 This means firstly that problems, such as assembling land, are less than in most town centres, but secondly delivery of the opportunity sites in the strategy will in large part be outside the direct control of the County and District Councils.

10.3 It should be understood though that this strategy has been prepared strictly independently and is open to full public scrutiny and democratic decision. This strategy has been prepared independently by the District as the Local Planning Authority with full consultation as set out in the District's Statement of Community Involvement.

10.4 Because of the unique delivery role of the Foundation this section does not contain policies on delivery, the strategy itself has an 'enabling role'

for partnership working between the Councils, the Foundation and others to deliver projects.

10.5 Key in this partnership are the roles of the County Council and District Council, partly in their role as landowners, partly as occupiers of property, as well as their statutory roles as providers of services and of giving regulatory approval to schemes.

10.6 A range of potential partnership models will be discussed with the Foundation and other key stakeholders including the Letchworth Garden City Town Council and the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Partnership about how the Town Centre Strategy development and public realm proposals can be delivered.

10.7 In many ways the Foundation is effectively acting as 'agent' to deliver public realm works. With the role of the County as Highways Authority and the District in its planning role there is an increasing need to formalise joint partnership working arrangements. The need for joint working was a fundamental finding and aspiration of the District's streetscene fundamental service review. Indeed such joint arrangements are expressly recommended in 'Manual for Streets' to avoid unimaginatively designed streets that favour motorists over other user groups.

10.8 Phasing of projects is a key implementation issue. Strong efforts will need to be undertaken to avoid disruption to the operation of the town centre.

10.9 As indicated under Policy Guidance 34 compulsory purchase may need to be a key component of project delivery.

10.10 Planning obligations will be negotiated within the context of this strategy and the District's adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document. Over time it is likely that there will be direct provision of schemes linked to where the need is generated by development.

11 Town Centre Management and Promotion

11.1 The town centre manager will be a key agent and link. Promotion and marketing will continue to be the joint responsibility of the Foundation, the District Council and the Town Centre management function. With a dedicated project management resource the town centre manager will be increasingly able to focus on promotion, marketing, events and the needs of individual businesses, particularly those effected by the development process.

Appendix A Policy Sources and Evidence Base

National Policy

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005)
PPS3 – Housing (DCLG, 2006)
PPS6 – Planning for Town Centres (ODPM, 2005)
PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004)
PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (ODPM 2005)
PPS 22 – Renewable Energy (OPPM, 2004)
PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment (ODPM, 1994)

Regional Policy

RPG9 for the South East (DETR, 2000)
Draft East of England Plan (EERA, 2004) and Secretary of State 2006 proposed modifications

Structure Plan Policy

Policy 16 - Retailing
Policy 17 – Location of New Retail Development

Existing Local Plan Policies

Policy 42 - Shopping
Policy 43 – Shopping Areas in Town Centres
Policy 44 – Other Areas in Town Centres
Policy 58 – Garden City Design Principles

Community Strategy

Corporate Plan
Strategic Objective 1
Promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements
Strategic Objective 5
Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development
Medium Term Actions 2006/07-2008/09:

- We will deliver agreed plans for Hitchin
- We will agree plans for Letchworth Garden City town centre

- We will agree plans for Baldock town centre

Longer Term Actions:

- We will deliver agreed plans for Letchworth Garden City town centre
- We will deliver agreed plans for Baldock
- We will agree plans for Royston town centre

Other Sources

NHDC – Town Centre and Retail Study by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (2004) and updated 2006
Baldock and Letchworth Urban Transport Plan (to be adopted 2007)

Appendix B Urban Design Appraisal

B1.1 Layout Principles - In the town centre buildings line the streets with focal buildings positioned at corners with some buildings arranged to create open spaces. The Broadway and the remaining streets to the east closely follow the pattern of the 1903 masterplan although the area to the west of the Broadway and around Broadway Gardens have evolved in a slightly different manner as explained in the previous section.

B1.2 The character is that of narrow facades or, where there are longer buildings, the elevations are modelled and divided to produce vertical emphasis.

B1.3 The positioning of the buildings along the main commercial streets results in most of their front elevations being joined to produce a continuous façade and a constant building line, with a strongly defined street character (see fig 3).

B1.4 The commercial centre and Broadway Gardens are surrounded by forest type trees but within the commercial parts of the centre smaller species are used.

B2.1 Building Form and Scale- Buildings are typically of two and a half or three storeys. The continuous façades with a back pavement edge building line marks out the commercial parts of the town centre from the rest of the Garden City. The height becomes slightly lower in the areas of smaller two storey buildings, along Leys Avenue and Station Road. The scale and mass of buildings is counterbalanced by the relative width of the streets.

B2.2 The buildings in the Town Square are positioned with their front elevations facing onto Broadway Gardens. The elevations mainly have a strong horizontal form, balanced by vertical details and proportions. The buildings are relatively large in scale and are complemented by the size and shape of the Broadway Gardens.

B2.3 In the commercial parts of the town centre the form and scale varies, with the largest buildings situated around Station Place, along the majority of Eastcheap and Broadway and along the top sections of Leys Avenue and Station Road. The individual buildings are largely based on rectangular forms, with the ridgeline following the line of the road, with frequent use of gabled elements to front elevations.

B2.4 The buildings at the top of Leys Avenue and Station Road, around Station Place, and along Eastcheap and Broadway are taller buildings mainly of two and a half to three storeys in height. The overall height of these buildings is generally constant. These buildings are mainly designed to contain four to six shops. They are rectangular in shape and lie parallel with the street. The overall building is usually divided into composite parts, usually with a central section. The buildings have carefully conceived proportions based on the dimensions of the classical style. The blocks are large in scale and their height provides a sense of enclosure to the streets relaxed to some extent by the relative widths of the streets.

B2.5 The buildings further down Station Road and Leys Avenue are lower, generally two storeys and appear more domestic in scale. In some cases buildings containing three to four shops are also seen at this smaller scale, reflecting the principles of the larger blocks in proportions and divisions. However, the

majority of the buildings of this smaller scale are individually designed and constructed rather than forming a block. The ridges continue to run parallel to the road providing continuity to the overall building form. Some of these buildings respect the classical proportions.

B3.1 Gateways and Connectivity - A good part of the sense of place of an area is defined by buildings and areas which act as 'gateways' giving visual cues that you are entering an area with a different function. The edges of the Town Centre are mostly well defined by landmark buildings or open spaces which emphasise this (see fig 4.), although this has been eroded at the eastern end of Station Road by the loss a distinctive hotel and lamppost

B3.2 The extent to which an area is user friendly is also in good part determined by how convenient and pleasant visual and pedestrian connections are between places. There are strong connections along Eastcheap and Leys Avenue and visually if not functionally along Broadway. However the connections between these areas, and between them and the Station, which acts as a key point of arrival for visitors, is poor. There is also poor permeability through parts of the town centre caused by the Garden Square development, with potential routes leading into back alleys and service yards. An obvious circuit or quadrangle route for shoppers is also lacking, with visitors complaining that they are naturally led to the south end of Eastcheap, or the western end of Leys Avenue, with then nowhere else to go. This means that the centre has many of the problems of linear town centres with lack of opportunities to wander, discover, linger and spend.

B3.3 Morrisons is now also a key point of arrival however, pedestrian links through to

Eastcheap are poor. The Gernon Road car park is a forbidding quality point of arrival and leads on to the equally forbidding Garden Square Shopping Centre.

B3.4 Pedestrian connections to surrounding residential areas are of mostly good quality and frequency, however the railway acts to some extent as a barrier; in addition connections to the west are limited in number.

B4.1 Vistas and Landmarks - The dominant visual structuring feature of the town centre is the vista from Station Place down the Broadway. This greatly aids the 'legibility' of the town - that is the extent to which it can be visually understood. The vista effect is less prominent south to north partly because of the lie of the land and partly because of the screening of the station by planting.

B4.2 There are a number of less prominent vistas throughout the town centre (see fig 5).

B4.3 There are a number of landmark structures throughout the centre which aid legibility, notably the Broadway Gardens fountain, as well as buildings which successfully 'turn the corner' such as the Colonnades and the Cinema.

B4.4 Along the Broadway and around the Town Square/Broadway Gardens are a number of buildings with cupolas, these acting as landmark features and emphasise civic character. These include the Town Hall, the former estate offices and the modern addition of a cupola to the Nexus building, as well as the clever use of the air conditioning unit on the Goldsmith building.

B5.1 **Character Areas** - The town centre has areas of very different character (see fig 6):-

B5.2 **The Broadway Boulevard and Station Place**; Broadway runs in a north-easterly direction, towards the Town Square/Broadway Gardens and into the town centre. The line of Broadway was an important design concept of the Master Plan, creating long vistas. From Eastcheap the land slopes down towards Howard Park Gardens and Norton Way South, creating view up and down Leys Avenue and Station Road, towards Howard Park or Station Place.

B5.3 Broadway between Broadway Gardens and Station Place contains a Broadwalk forming the main axis, which runs through the middle of the road, providing a green barrier and corridor, which reinforces the street pattern of buildings lining the road with a constant scale and building line. The Broadwalk consists of a wide path with strips of planting on either side. Shrubs are planted between regularly spaced trees, creating a formal avenue. The Broadwalk is an important part of the layout and brings a green open character into the town centre and linking the open character of Broadway Gardens. The Broadwalk also provides vistas from the station to Broadway Gardens. While these spaces together contribute to the open space pattern and landscape character of the Garden City conservation area, they also provide an ecological benefit to wildlife and provide opportunities for enhancement to biodiversity.

B5.4 The character of the Broadway has been improved by the development of the Morrisons Store, and Goldsmiths College, in scale and character with other Broadway buildings. The college building neatly turns the corner onto Broadway Gardens as does Morrisons onto a new open space with a statue of Howard.

A5.5 The Arena Parade colonnades breach the building line (unlike those fronting Station Parade) and the car park behind the town hall is visually intrusive and leads to a break in the sense of enclosure and building lines along the Broadway.

B5.6 Station Place forms a terminus not only for the main axis of Broadway, but also the other town centre roads such as Eastcheap, Leys Avenue and Station Road. It therefore links these roads together and provides them with a focal point.

B5.7 The buildings surrounding Station Place respect the lines of the roads, with some of those positioned on corners stepped back. This is clearly seen on the corners of Eastcheap and Broadway producing open spaces and reinforcing the overall open character of Station Place. The 60s block Station Parade detracts from the area.

B5.8 **Openshaw Way/The Wynd - 'Backyards'**; The character of the area around Openshaw Way is very utilitarian with small workshops and outbuildings reflecting the original 'backyard' industries nature of the area. Within the loop formed by Openshaw Way, the Wynd is a small street to the rear of the main commercial streets and also has a utilitarian character. It has a strong building line, formed by the façades of two rows of single storey buildings.

B5.9 **The Gernon Road Edge**; Gernon Road forms a boundary and area in transition between the residential zones to the south and the town centre. The lower end of Gernon Road contains housing to the southern side, however as the road progresses towards the Town Square the building types change to more public buildings such as the Town Lodge and Library, and on the eastern side the multi-storey car park and

District Council main office block. Other edges to the town centre are defined by boundary features such as rear lines of building plots or the railway. Of the Edges of the area this is the only one divided down the centre of the road. This produces an uneasy contrast of scales and frontages with a number of the commercial buildings treating Gernon road as a back rather than a front.

B5.10 The Civic Area – Town Square/Broadway Gardens; The area now known as Broadway Gardens has previously been known as Kennedy Gardens and forms the focal point of what has historically been called the Town Square.

B5.11 The Town Square is formed around Broadway Gardens, which is part of a wider area listed grade II on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (shown on fig. 20). Broadway Gardens is a large green open space a rectangular oval in shape and formal in character. It forms an essential part of the main axis of Broadway, providing a focus to the wide linear road to the south and the Broadwalk to the north. The size and shape of the space was planned originally in scale to form the outer edge of a square which were designed to accommodate large public buildings as the central focal feature. The formal character of the gardens, recently subject to a major improvement programme, complements the formal layout of the area with buildings lining and defining the outer edge of the square.

B5.12 The open character of Broadway Gardens provides a buffer between the shopping and commercial parts of the town centre and the residential areas. This is an important transition forming part of the character of the Town Centre and Conservation Area.

B5.13 The buildings surrounding the outer edge of Broadway Gardens largely follow the

line of the road, enclosing a central space. Most of the buildings are set back slightly from the road edge fronted either by grass verges planted with hornbeams, and or pavements. The building layout strongly relates to the central gardens and surrounding road. The axis roads also provide uniform breaks in the layout.

B5.14 The buildings in the Town Square are positioned with their front elevations facing onto Broadway Gardens. The elevations mainly have a strong horizontal form, balanced by vertical details and proportions. The buildings are relatively large in scale, most being two to three storeys in height, apart from the Nexus Building. However, the density is relatively low due to the open space provided by Broadway Gardens and the front verges. The grassed verges between the road and the frontages of the buildings are important to the open character of the square, complementing the central open space and relieving the sense of enclosure provided by the buildings. Two undeveloped plots lie on the South east side of the square (see Part III).

B5.15 The 'Classical' Shopping Core – Northern Eastcheap and Leys Avenue; This area is that of the main shopping streets of the town centre. It was developed as a series of parade blocks fronting and built right up to the pavements. The slope down from Station Place and the curvilinear nature of both streets provide a 'serial ision', which encourages visitors to walk along both streets as vistas open up.

B5.16 The focal point of this area is around the confluence of the streets of Station Road, Leys Avenue and Eastcheap which largely contain the envisaged classical buildings, formal in character and dominant in size and scale.

B5.17 A number of shopfronts and key buildings in this area have recently been restored,

including the Collonade and the glazed roofed area known as the Arcade.

B5.18 The Mid-Late 20th Century Parades and Precincts; The 1958 development of Arena Parade breaks with a number of key features of earlier parts of the town centre, in terms of roof form, building line and the southern and originally the eastern facing parades not matched by facing shops.

B5.19 The 1974 development now known as Garden Square led to the loss of an earlier shopping street along Commerce Way. Its central open area is cramped and the centre's entry points are dark and uninviting. Its small indoor market looks particularly run down. A hall above it is unused.

B5.20 Station Road and Leys Avenue East– The 'Village' Approach; The eastern parts of Leys Avenue and Station Road are different in character from the central shopping core with mostly two storey buildings, some of which are individually designed. The effect is more like shops in a village or small country town. These areas, particularly the eastern part of Station Road, have much lower pedestrian flows and are mainly occupied with specialist shops and restaurants. 24-44 Station Road are the early Garden City Silver Birch Cottages.

B6.1 Listed Buildings The Town Centre has relatively few listed buildings. The statutory list for Letchworth now needs updating. Where appropriate the Council will consider serving Building Preservation Notices served on or make requests for spot listing as it feels is appropriate. It is likely that a number of notable buildings within the centre – such as the former pioneer health food store and the Broadway Cinema,

have not been listed because of significant internal alterations.

B6.2 The listed buildings in the Town Centre are the Edwardian Station, the former Estate Offices (Parker and Unwin), the Museum (by Barry Parker), 50-58 Leys Avenue, and the Free Church.

B7.1 Other Important Buildings The HSBC Bank occupies a prominent site, on a triangular plot on the corner of Leys Avenue and Station Road, facing into Station Place opposite the train station, providing a strong linkage between the two roads and the central space. Opposite is the fine regency inspired Collonade.

B7.2 At the top of Eastcheap on a corner plot with Gernon Road is the cinema designed to fit the acute shape of the plot, designed by Bennett and Bidwell in the Art Deco style. This is a prominently positioned and effectively designed building which relates well to its surroundings.

B7.3 The Town Hall is situated to one side of the central axis of Broadway facing into Broadway Gardens. It is a dominant Classical building, with an elaborate door surround and cupola on the roof.

B8.1 The Architectural Character of the Buildings Architects working in the Garden City designed many of the earliest buildings in the town centre to follow the Classical style. However, other styles are seen including the arts and crafts interpretation of vernacular housing (more characteristic of the residential areas), as well as a couple of buildings, namely the Post Office and the original estate office building, displaying elements of a Tudor style. Both main styles are characteristic and their distribution varies in different parts of the town centre.

B8.2 The Classical style was envisaged for the town centre for two main reasons. Firstly a formal character was required, which it was felt the heights, building forms, design and materials of the Classical style would clearly produce. Secondly, it was thought that the zones of the town should be clearly defined and the town centre should be distinctive and contrast from other parts of the town.

B8.3 Some of the buildings in the commercial town centre display features often seen on early 16th century buildings when the classical influence was just starting to reach Britain. Other buildings are more vernacular in form with gabled roof forms facing onto the street. A few buildings display projecting gables and bays supported on brackets, following the Arts & Crafts style of the residential areas of Letchworth.

B8.4 As in the residential areas the amount of detailing to the buildings varies. However, the larger buildings and terraced blocks tend to display more sophisticated details and complete compositions. The smaller buildings tend to have simple forms of detailing.

B8.5 Three classically inspired buildings around the Town Square were constructed, namely The Museum, The Grammar School Building and The Town Hall. Apart from the vaguely moderne style of the 1930s library the other buildings are of more modern styles of the 1960s and 1970s.

B8.6 The classically ordered buildings follow the classical proportions and concepts of symmetry. Constructed of red brick largely with sash windows.



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(Cantonese)

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(Polish)

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(Punjabi)

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(Italian)

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(Turkish)

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(Urdu)