Future High Streets Fund

Call for Expressions of Interest

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Application Form

Applicant Information	
Bidding authority:	Hart District Council
Area within authority covered by bid:	Fleet Town Centre
Bid Manager Name and position:	Regeneration and New Settlement Manager
Contact telephone number:	
Email address:	
Postal address:	Civic Offices, Harlington Way, Fleet GU51 4AE

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

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

Submission of proposals:

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

An electronic copy only of the bid including any supporting material should be submitted to highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk.

Enquiries about the Fund may be directed to highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk.

SECTION 1: Defining the place

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

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

1.1 Geographical area:

Include information setting out the extent of the high street/town centre area covered in the proposal and a description of this centre.
Please include maps and supporting evidence as annex documents if required.
Please limit your response to 500 words.

Our bid is focussed on the town centre of Fleet. Situated in the north east corner of Hampshire, Fleet is the administrative and commercial centre of the District of Hart. It is surrounded by thriving towns, including Basingstoke, Camberley, Guildford, Reading and Winchester, as well as many rural villages. The town centre is 38 miles from London and has direct links to the capital either by the M3 or by a 40-minute journey by rail from Fleet Station to London Waterloo. Please see **Appendix 1**.

Fleet Town Centre is the only town centre within the district and provides the majority of retail and town centre uses, as well administrative and other service facilities. The town centre is elongated and stretches along Fleet Road (A3013) from the junction with Kings Road to the northeast to the crossroads with Reading Road North/ Reading Road South to the southwest. This effectively forms the high street and is approximately 1km long.

Fleet is a relatively young town and expanded as a result of the railway line, with a small station built in 1847 to the north east, outside of the town centre. The high street is traditional in format with the majority of shops fronting onto the main road through the town, together with the Hart Shopping Centre, a covered shopping centre constructed in the 1990's located just off the high street.

The Civic Quarter, constructed in the 1970/80s, is located at the far south western end of the high street and includes the District and Town Council offices, police station, library, theatre (the Harlington Centre) and other community facilities. Behind these administrative and leisure buildings is a small park called The Views, which also includes a very popular skate park and children's playground. The Views is largely hidden from the high street and is only really visible from one of the town centre car parks. Its presence and influence within the centre is therefore limited.

Fleet Railway Station, located approximately 1km to the northeast, is largely divorced from the town centre. Local buses provide services from Fleet Railway Station and the surrounding towns with bus stops located on the high street. A large percentage of people visiting the town do so by car and there are several surface car parks that serve the town centre, in addition to a multi-storey car park located above the Hart Shopping Centre.

The town centre consists of no national heritage assets but does include a small number of locally listed buildings.

1.2 Population and links to wider economic area:
Information on the population living and working in the town centre area, how the area acts as a centre of social and economic activity and its links to the wider economic catchment area.
With supporting evidence to include:
Resident and workplace population, travel to work catchment area, town centre footfall, commercial space, retail activity, cultural activities, diversity of uses and social/ historical importance of the centre
Please limit your response to 750 words.

Hart District falls within the Guildford–Aldershot travel to work area. This large area covers the territory of seven local authorities. Hart's strongest labour market ties are with Rushmoor, Surrey Heath, Basingstoke & Deane Local Authority Districts.[1] Additionally many residents commute to via road/rail to London.

The town of Fleet has a population of just over 39,000, representing 43% of the population of the district. Fleet Town Centre however serves a much wider population than just Fleet. As the administrative and commercial centre of the district, the town centre's influence extends to the population of the district, approximately 91,000[2]. This is not surprising given that Fleet is the district's only town, with other settlements being significantly smaller and classified as primary or secondary local service centres or villages.[3] The town also plays a vital part in the social interaction of the population and has the ability to strengthen the critical mix of social, cultural, leisure, retail and residential facilities that will foster community cohesion.

The influence of Fleet Town Centre is evidenced in a recent town centre survey, which is a useful benchmark for the purposes of this bid.[4] In line with national averages, the majority of people visiting Fleet Town Centre are local, those who live within a post code covering the town (61%). The percentage of people visiting who live in an area less than a 30-miunte drive however is 32%, significantly higher than the national average of 22%. Critically this has increased by 15%, from 17% in 2012, confirming that the catchment of the town centre covers the majority of the district. The town is less attractive to tourists, with only 6% of visitor classified as tourists, 8% less than the national average.[5] Footfall is nearly double that of the national average for small towns at 182 (compared to 93), and up 7 from 2012.[6]

Fleet provides employment for approximately 3,440 people (approximately 10% of employment within the district) [7]. The town centre has a total of 223 commercial units, which classifies it as a 'small town' in the 'People and Places Insight Limited Town Benchmarking System' analysis. Whilst the percentage of retail shops selling comparison/convenience goods is broadly in line with national averages, the town centre's retail offer is limited. Local people describe the town as being a centre dominated by hairdressers/barbers, estate agents and coffee shops. There is some truth in this as the town centre does have a higher proportion of cafes/restaurants than the national average and less than half the total number of shops are independent traders. In addition to a

[1] Source: Page 2, Hart Functional Economic Area Analysis - 2014
[2] Source: 2011 Census
[3] Source: Page 16, A Settlement Hierarchy for Hart District – January 2010
[4] Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[5] Source: Page 43, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[6] Average number of people per 10 minutes between 10am and 1pm. Source: Page 18, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[7] Source: Page 14, Hart Functional Economic Area Analysis - 2014

limited retail offer, the percentage of non-residential intuitions such as health centres, crèches, schools, museums, libraries, halls etc, within the town centre is also limited and less than half of the national average. [8]

At 10%, the level of vacancies in the town centre is at the national average[9] but over 80% of local businesses felt the number of vacant units was negative.[10] Well over half the respondents to the survey saw the 'retail offer' as the most negative aspect of the town[11], and over three-quarters stated Fleet does not meet all their retail and leisure needs.[12] After a poor quality retail offer, the most negative aspects of the town were listed as a tired physical appearance, poor public toilets and relatively costly public car parking.[13] Over half those who responded to the survey would not recommend a visit to Fleet, significantly higher than the national average.[14]

[8] Source: Page 12, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[9] Source: Page 17, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[10] Source: Page 26, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[11] Source: Page 35, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[12] Source: Page 36, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[13] Source: Page 35, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[14] Source: Page 36, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.

SECTION 2: Setting out the challenges

Clear description of the issues and challenges facing this area.

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

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

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

2.1: Challenges

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

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

The challenges facing Fleet Town Centre are broad and far reaching, and significantly they resonate with every member of our community.

Challenges – Retail in Fleet Town Centre

Over the last 10 years vacancy rates have remained constant at the national level of 10%[15]. Whilst this can be described as a positive given the current trends in the retail market, this achievement has come at the expense of choice, variety and individualism and as a result has created a very vulnerable town centre.

Fleet Town Centre has a higher percentage of national retailers in comparison to the national average. 28% of A1 Shops within the town are occupied by national retailers, 10% higher than the national average. At the other end of the spectrum, Fleet Town Centre has significantly less independent retailers at 49%, which is 10% lower than the national average.[16]

Over recent years, many national retailers with premises in Fleet have left because they doubted whether the town centre could continue to attract sufficient shoppers. Other retailers have gone into administration. This has left vacant units throughout the high street. Departing retailers included Next, Burton/Top-Man, La Senza, Brantano, Cargo, Woolworths, Poundland, Game, Iceland and Phones 4U. With uncertainty in the retail

[15] Of all commercial units within the town centre as compared to national small towns (town with less than 250 units). Source: Page 17, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[16] Source: Page 16, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.

market, retailers continue to critically review their portfolios to identify stores in poorly performing towns which could be at risk. With no advanced long-term investment plans, Fleet is being identified as an investment risk, and with a higher percentage of national retailers, Fleet Town Centre is more vulnerable than most town centres to national and global changes in the retail market.

The Hart Shopping Centre is particularly vulnerable. There are a large number of national retailers in this part of the town centre therefore the overall offer is not distinctive and the centre itself does not offer any specific point of difference. The size and versatility of the commercial units both within the shopping centre and on the high street also restricts the town's ability to adapt to a changing retail market.

The majority of retail units within the town centre have struggled to adapt to the changing requirements of retail. Even providing basic 'click and collect' facilities for existing stores has proved challenging, with some national retailers unable to offer the ability to collect goods ordered on-line. This is a significant disadvantage particularly being located within the south of England where the impact of digital retail is predicted to be greater.

The overall composition of the town centre has also changed. Hairdressers/barbers, estate agents and coffee shops combined now occupy about a quarter of all commercial units within the town centre. Beyond the primary shopping area, a number of former offices have recently been converted to residential thereby reducing the commercial floorspace available within the town and the associated footfall from local employees. Despite these recent residential conversions, opportunities for housing within the town centre are low, although there is a growing local need for affordable housing. The changing composition, in combination with the balance of national retailers to independent retailers, impacts the overall quality of the town centre. The town centre's attraction, beyond its immediate catchment, is therefore limited.

Fleet town centre is located in close proximity to several significantly stronger centres, offering either a very attractive town centre environment (e.g. Farnham) or a wider range of retail and leisure provision (e.g. Camberley, Basingstoke and Guildford). Other towns in the region, such as Farnborough and Aldershot, have been identified by the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as of strategic importance and are benefiting from significant investment by the LEP. Fleet Town Centre is relatively small, plain/unremarkable in appearance and has a limited retail and leisure provision. It has no significant features or offers which sets it apart from other nearby towns. With no point of difference or unique selling point (USP), Fleet Town Centre has never been able to compete with its neighbours[17] and, with a shrinking pool of national/regional retailers, the evidence suggest that it will continue to suffer disproportionately in comparison to its surrounding neighbours.

Challenges – Business confidence and local community discontent

The confidence of local business within Fleet Town Centre is extremely low, with 44% of businesses surveyed reporting that compared to last year, turnover has decreased. To put this into context, the national average for businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover

[17] Competition from nearby towns and out-of-town shopping designations was listed as key negative aspects of the town centre by 55% and 59% of survey respondents respectively. This is significantly higher when compared to the national averages of 24% and 37%. (Page 26, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.)

is 32%. In line with turnover, profitability has also decreased for 56% of businesses (again highlighting the significant challenges in comparison to the national average).[18]

The confidence local people have in and the value the local community places on Fleet Town Centre is also extremely low and is decreasing. 88% of participants to the recent town centre survey stated that Fleet Town Centre does not meet all of their retail and leisure needs, with 52% confirming that they would not recommend a visit to the town centre, an increase of 14% from 2015.[19] The main focus of discontent concerns the poor retail offer, with 67% of participants considering that it reflected negatively on the town centre.[20] Interestingly less than a quarter of participants to the survey stated that the physical appearance contributed positively to the town centre, 19% less than the national average[21]. This highlights that both the offer and physical environment are impacting on the success of the town centre.

The lack of public transport, public safety fears and the lack of leisure facilities, cultural activities and events were also viewed by participants as a significant negative aspect of the town centre.[22] The lack of provision for leisure facilities and cultural activities in particular are key challenges for the town centre, as both have been identified as critical for future proofing town centres. It is now widely accepted that "town centres are more than just places to go shopping. They are places to meet and socialise. They are the spatial expression of community identity and provide a sense of belonging."[23] "High Streets will become more of a leisure destination than a shopping location"[24] and therefore "town centres need to become community hubs based on health, education, entertainment, leisure and arts and crafts."[25]

Challenges – Event and the urban environment
Despite the clear disadvantages of Fleet Town Centre, footfall is nearly double that of the national average for small towns at 182 (compared to 93), and up 7 from 2012.[26] However this high footfall has been artificially boosted by the hard work of the Town Council and Fleet BID, and to a degree the proliferation of coffee shops and restaurants across the high street (13% of occupied units, which is 5% higher than the national level).[27]

In 2012, only two events were held in the town centre every year. In 2018, approximately one event was held every week. These events ranged from a collection of safari animals models scattered across the centre for a month in the summer, one-day events including the Fleet Food Festival, the Lions Beer Festival, the Fleet Carnival, fireworks night and a Christmas market, as well as shows/performances at the Harlington Theatre. Despite the increase, the provision of events within the town centre is still limited. As the high street is an 'A' road (A3013), there are restrictions on its closure for public events and markets. It is a reasonably narrow road and two bus companies operate along its length and their routes

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[18] Source: Page 24, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[19] Source: Page 36, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[20] Source: Page 35, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[21] Source: Page 34, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[22] Source: Page 38, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[23] Source: How can we breathe new life into Britain's town centres? by Steve Milligan in New Statesman City Metric - 7th July, 2017
[24] Source: 'What we're seeing is a revolution': How the internet is remaking the British High Street by Oscar Williams Grut in Business Insider - 18th August, 2017
[25] Source: Town centres could become ghost towns, warns former retail chief by Ian Westbrook, BBC News - 4th July, 2018
[26] Average number of people per 10 minutes between 10am and 1pm. Source: Page 18, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.
[27] Source: Page 12, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.

have to be diverted when events take place. These challenges mean that the number of road closures for events on the high street is normally restricted to three per year.

The events are very popular and well-loved, although the benefits to local retail and businesses have been mixed. Some local businesses have identified a disconnect between the promotion, location and type of events held in the town centre, which do not readily complement the existing businesses in the town. The problems associated with the closure of the high street, the elongated linear form of the high street, the layout of the public realm and the separation of The Views public open space (where some of these events are held) from the high street have limited the ability of local businesses to capitalise on the increase in footfall.

In other words, the physical design and layout of the town centre and the public realm is hindering events and the ability of local businesses to benefit from them.

Challenges – Meeting the needs of a growing and more divergent population
In recent years, a number of large urban extensions have been developed on the periphery of Fleet. The sustainable links between these periphery developments and the town centre are weak and as a result traffic and congestion within the town has increased. These developments have increased the population of Fleet and in particular the number of young families to the area. In addition, a significant number of town centre office blocks have been converted to small apartments which primarily attracts first time buyers. These developments have begun to change the age profile of the town and there is a growing need to provide facilities and services that better reflect the changing needs of the community. In the same breath, there is also a requirement to address the needs of the existing ageing population. The challenge for Fleet Town Centre is therefore to create imaginative and dynamic place with sustainable access that draws in young people and address the needs of an ageing population.

Challenges - Attracting investment
Recent studies into the effects the changing global retail market has had on Britain's towns and cities generally confirm that regeneration, investment and community-led initiatives can stabilised occupancy rates in retail and leisure and improve the centre's outlook and future prospects. In 2013, Knight Frank were commissioned to undertake a review of Fleet town centre and noted that a 'do nothing' scenario would not be viable in Fleet and would result in a further decline in its retail offer and ranking.

Regeneration in Fleet Town Centre has always been restricted by the lack of available land and the fact that the large majority of properties within the town centre are in private ownership (multiple ownership) making land assembly very difficult. Despite many attempts to regenerate Fleet Town Centre, the last major investment was in the 1990s and as a result the town centre appears tired, unattractive and un-fit for the changing trends and demands. Even with a very strong residential market at the district level, residential opportunities, in particular affordable housing, within the town have been limited. In 2012 13% of respondents considered that the lack of affordable housing within the town was a negative feature, this increased to 27% in 2018, 10% higher than the national average.[28] The District and Town Councils are small and have not had the resources or skills to successfully bid for large funding initiatives in the past.

[28] Source: Page 26, Fleet Town Benchmarking Report by People and Places – July 2018.

A comprehensive plan, one which is proactive and strategic and creates a point of difference for Fleet, is being developed and all the key town centre stakeholders are at the table, willing change to happen.

Summary
The challenges facing Fleet Town Centre as detailed above are well known to our local communities and their frustrations with the town are well documented. The focus of change must address the key challenges facing the town centre today, as well as those challenges that we anticipate that the town centre will face in 20-30 years' time.

The key challenges are:
- The town centre has no USP;
- The town centre is not seen as an attractive proposition for investment, particularly retail;
- Local business turnover and profits are low;
- Local businesses are failing/unable to capitalise on the increase in footfall;
- The town centre is not attractive, has poor sustainable access provision and does not provide for the needs of its local community;
- Critically, the local community does not value its town centre

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

Fleet is the administrative, commercial, leisure and retail centre for the district. It experiences high levels of social and economic activity and acts as an important service centre for an extensive catchment. There are no other town centres within Hart, with the next largest centre in the hierarchy being district centres. District centre catchments are localised and therefore would not qualify for this bid.

Fleet is located in a reasonably affluent area yet it is consistently seen as an unattractive proposition for investment. Fleet Town Centre is located in close proximity to much stronger town centres, and as a result has been consistently ignored by the retail market and private investment. Because of its smaller size and the strength of the neighbouring towns and cities, Fleet Town Centre cannot directly compete but equally it does not have a strong enough USP to attract investment.

As a relatively young town, it does not have an historic high street or mass of historic buildings. Leisure facilities, beyond restaurants and take-aways, are limited and its main green space, The Views, is under used and divorced from the high street. In other words, it's not a pretty town and its retail/non-retail offer is limited.

Despite significant effort in the past by the Local Authority to attract investment and promote regeneration or transformative schemes within Fleet Town Centre, the town has remained almost untouched since the development of the Hart Shopping Centre in 1991.

Numerous of management plans, development briefs, frameworks and design studies have failed to inject any significant investment into Fleet Town Centre. The ideas promoted within these documents are not without merit and are largely consistent with other examples of good practice across the country but have failed because the delivery model was reliant on the open market.

The most recent attempt to invest into Fleet was made by the Town Council. The Town Council provided a very compelling business case for a new theatre to replace the existing, which is dated and no longer fit for purpose. Whilst the Town Council were able to raise funds for the development and the principle of a new theatre was supported, public opinion did not support the development of a new theatre on Gurkha Square, and the project stalled.

Town centres are vital components in people's opinion of place and Fleet's town centre is central in the wider image of the town and the district. The importance of the town centre cannot be under-estimated and extends well beyond local considerations. With the local population growing, the town centre is under increased pressure to provide amenities for the increasing number of people. The draft Fleet Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges that "Fleet Town Centre must respond by offering something unique, attractive and special to ensure that it continues to succeed even in tough conditions."[29]

In order to break the deadlock, a step change is required. The Future High Streets Fund is required to provide a catalyst for change.

[29] Source: Page 18, Fleet Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032: Submission Plan

SECTION 3: Strategic ambition

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

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

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

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

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

3.1 Town centre vision and ambition for change
Set out your vision for regenerating your high street and how this links with the challenges outlined in section 2.
Please limit your response to 750 words.

Hart District Council, Fleet Town Council and the Fleet BID independently concluded that Fleet Town Centre must make some significant changes in order to be successful. To this end, each of the three organisations has prepared an ambitious vision to guide change:

- Hart District Council's bold draft 2040 Vision states that one of its key ambitions is to become THE place to live[30]. To achieve this, the town centre needs to respond positively to current and future change to ensure it continues to be at the heart of its community.

- Fleet Town Council's vision, within the draft Fleet Neighbourhood Plan, is to *"create an accessible, sustainable, green town with an active population and a vibrant business, cultural and community focus."*[31]

[30] Source: Page 3, Hart in 2040 Our Vision - 2019
[31] Source: Page 17, Fleet Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032: Submission Plan

- Fleet BID's vision is to create a vibrant town to be proud of, where businesses prosper, communities thrive and visitors choose to shop and do business.[32]

Working as a partnership, these individual visions have now been combined to create a unique vision which speaks directly to the challenges facing Fleet Town Centre. If we address the challenges facing the town now and those likely to be faced in the future, then we will be able to create an attractive and sustainable town centre to be proud of, with a vibrant business, cultural and community space at the heart of an active and engaged population. If we can achieve this, then we will make Fleet THE place to live.

Part of our dynamic solution to deliver against this vision, and our key transformative change, is focused on the civic quarter and the way in which the civic quarter responds to the high street. One of our greatest challenges is that Fleet Town Centre is not distinctive and has no USP. In comprehensively redesigning and repurposing the civic quarter, it is our ambition to create one. There is a real opportunity to create a distinctive, highly-valued, community focussed space, which would create positive benefits to local businesses.

The main elements of the transformative project are:
- To create a new town centre square, which 'spills out' into the high street in the form of a safe, inclusive and flexible public realm. This space could be semi-pedestrianised, which would reduce the restrictions/administration burdens on future events within the town. If successful, the safe, inclusive and flexible public realm could extend all the way to Fleet Station, enhancing sustainable access between the town and station, as well as to other peripheral parts of the town. This element of the project would also speak to the Council's 2040 Vision and the ambition to create a Green Grid.[33]
- To enhance and better integrate The Views, existing Skate Park and children's play facilities with the High Street.
- To enhance the connections between The Views and Calthorpe Park (nearby public open space) to make both spaces more accessible to the town centre.
- To enhance the link between the high street and car parking provision within the civic quarter.
- To create a new focal point for administration, leisure and community uses.
- To provide residential dwellings, including a large percentage of affordable housing, throughout the civic quarter.
- To utilise sustainable and innovative technology throughout the civic quarter.

The civic quarter is perfectly positioned to create an environment that combines convenience, valuable services and a powerful sense of community. Specifically, the project will change how the civic quarter is perceived and used by creating a dynamic, sustainable and innovative environment for all ages of the local community to feel proud of. With a focus on enhanced public open space and pedestrian/cycle linkages, the space becomes people orientated and convenient. With a new focal point for the administration, leisure and community uses tailored to meet the needs of the local community, footfall within the civic quarter increases and consequently dwell times within the town will increase. And with additional new market and affordable housing, the civic quarter becomes not just a valued social and commercial place but also a home. See **Appendix 2**.

[32] Source: Fleet BID website: https://findyourfleet.org/
[33] Hart's Green Grid will link together all of Hart's towns and villages by creating a series of green corridors/networks to enable safe pedestrian and cycle access across the district.

The ambition of the project demonstrates our commitment to the town centre, which we are confident will increase opportunities for future investment by the private sector.

3.2 Engagement and alignment of vision
Set out how your town centre vision aligns with other funding streams, both public and private, including details of partnership working with the private sector in this area.
Show how your vision fits with wider strategic plans such as housing, transport and Local Industrial Strategies.
Please limit your response to 750 words.

The Council's vision for Fleet Town Centre aligns with the Council's long-term draft vision for the District, the draft Fleet Neighbourhood Plan, the BID's aspirations as well as the M3 LEP's wider vision and priory for the region.

Council's 2040 Vision (Draft)
Two of the three key ambitions of Hart District Council's bold 2040 Vision (draft) align with the combined vision for Fleet Town Centre. Specifically:
1. Become THE place to live:
- Ensures work, education, health and other facilities are easily reachable through effective road and rail transport links

2. Become THE place to work:
- Helping our micro/small businesses grow and our residents to work flexibly, with casual office space providing high speed internet

The alignment of the visions demonstrates that the long term aspirations of the District Council complement the regeneration aspirations for the town centre.

Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032 (Draft)
The draft Hart Local Plan is in the final stages of development and is likely to be adopted mid-2019. The draft Plan includes policies which confirm Fleet's position in the hierarchy of centres within the district and provides support for development proposals which deliver regeneration improvements in Fleet Town Centre, including those promoted through neighbourhood plans.[34] The civic quarter is located within the town centre boundary and the draft Local Plan confirms that the following town centre uses would be acceptable: retail, leisure, entertainment and recreation uses, offices and arts, culture and tourism as well as residential.

The draft policies within the Local Plan would support the combined vision for the civic quarter as outline in question 3.1 above.

Fleet Neighbourhood Plan (Draft)
The Fleet Neighbourhood Plan (submitted for Examination in January 2019) provides a strong and robust planning policy framework for the regeneration of Fleet Town Centre. The draft plan details policy to guide development with the aim to improve the long-term vitality and vibrancy of the centre.

[34] Source: Paragraph 238, Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2016-2032 – Proposed Submission Version (February 2018)

The draft Neighbourhood Plan identifies the civic quarter as the focus for appropriate new development within the town centre:

"[The civic quarter] has the greatest opportunity to make significant improvements to the town centre. Its scale and depth offers an opportunity to create a vibrant community space that will provide a focus for the cultural and social activities of the town and, in so doing, contribute to the success and ongoing resilience of the town centre."

In addition to identifying the civic quarter, the draft Plan also promotes the following regeneration aspirations:
- Improvements to the public realm and open spaces and enhance accessibility across the town
- To protect and improve the unique green character of Fleet
- Greater opportunity for residential properties within the town

The vision and objectives of the draft Neighbourhood Plan clearly align with the vision and the proposed transformative project.

Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) identifies the strategic priorities for economic growth in an advanced digital and low carbon economy. Of these priorities, Priority 5 'Dynamic Communities and Sustainable Growth Corridors', speaks directly to the future of town centres and the need to create imaginative and dynamic places that draw in young people, support flourishing communities and address the needs of an ageing population.

The proposed vision and associated transformative project is an innovative way for Fleet Town Centre to achieve the objectives of Priority 5 of the SEP.

Hart Economic Development Strategy
The Hart Economic Development Strategy aims to maintain the District's competitive and entrepreneurial performance, which focus on the requirements of local businesses. One of its three principle objectives concerns the creation of a 'desirable business location', with the provision of a 'creative and vibrant place' as a key aim. The strategy acknowledges that two of the top scoring concerns in the Hart Business Survey[35] were filling empty retail units and supporting high streets, and that strengthening the vibrancy of town and village centres is a key priority for the District. The strategy commits the District Council and its partners to actively promote high street events and activities, and enrich the District's retail and cultural offer, which will build on the experience of Fleet Town Centre.

The vision and objectives of the Economic Development Strategy clearly align with the vision and the proposed transformative project.

3.3 Support for town centre vision
Provide details, including letters of support, for your vision from (where applicable):
• Other tiers of local government including Mayoral and non-Mayoral Combined Authorities and county councils where applicable

Other local stakeholders including:

[35] Undertaken to inform the Economic Development Strategy - 2014/2015.

• Local Enterprise Partnerships
• Business Improvement Districts
• Private sector
• Community groups
Please limit your response to 500 words and include evidence of this support as an annex where appropriate.

The vision and transformative project, as highlighted in question 3.2, have been developed from a number of District and Town Council strategic and detailed visions/policies and fit with the LEP's SEP. These foundational documents have been subject to public consultation and therefore it can be demonstrated that the principle of the vision and transformative project enjoys support from the local community. Of specific note is the consultation associated with the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan (from the early phases through to the final submission version), which very closely aligns with this vision and transformative project.[36]

Identification of and support for the redevelopment of the civic quarter
The regeneration of the Civic Quarter to enhance the vitality and viability of Fleet Town Centre is an idea that has been voiced for over a decade. Many visions, design frameworks and development briefs have been produced in order to stimulate investment into the area, all of which were subject to public consultation.

In particular, a number of public consultation events went on to inform the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan. In 2012, a public meeting was held to ask residents which infrastructure and services projects should be paid for with the developer funding. The majority of comments prioritised town centre improvements (38%) and the redevelopment of the Harlington (27%), whilst transport and better pedestrian and cycle access came in third and fourth place, 10% and 7% respectively.

In 2013, a group of local volunteers formed 'Fleet Future' and were tasked with developing an evidence-based plan to bring about improvements to the town, which had the support of the community. Of the development options presented, redevelopment of land within the civic quarter to include residential, commercial, community, entertainment and cultural activities, whilst preserving a town square and links to the Views, was supported by 56% of respondents. When analysing the results in greater detail, it was apparent that respondents under the age of 65 voted by more than 2:1 for the redevelopment. 79% of respondents supported improvements to The Views to create a central place for residents to gather and events to take place and 92% supported enhanced cultural and leisure opportunities within the town. The Fleet Neighbourhood Plan built upon the work undertaken by Fleet Future, whilst continuing to consult with the community.

In 2015 and 2017, Fleet Town Council consulted separately on the future of the Harlington, specifically whether the building should be repaired, refurbished or rebuilt. In both consultations, a clear majority favoured rebuilding.

In 2018, consultation was undertaken on the draft Fleet Neighbourhood Plan. Draft Policies 1-4, which concern the redevelopment of the civic quarter, were all supported (receiving 51%, 84%, 92% and 90% of the votes respectively in the 2018 consultation).

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[36] Source: 'Appendix 7 - Fleet Consultation Statement on Neighbourhood Plan', Fleet Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032 – Submission Plan

In addition to the public support, we also have support from the key town centre stakeholders. To this regard, we include their letters of support at **Appendix 3**.

3.4 Estimate of revenue funding needed
Provide details of how much revenue funding you need to develop project plans for capital funding (including detailed business cases).
Include estimated breakdowns of how you would spend this revenue funding
Please limit your response to 500 words.

To deliver against our ambitious vision and develop our project plans for capital funding (including a detailed business case prepared in accordance with the Five Case Model), we would require £100,000.

This would be broken down as follows:

To progress the vision into a detailed project:

- Public Consultation and Engagement	£15,000
- Architecture and masterplanning	£25,000

To prepare a detailed business case (Green Book):

- Baseline studies/evidence (for use in Business As Usual)	£5,000
- Business Case Expertise	£55,000

In relation to capital funding, Fleet Town Council are in a position to raise a loan to pay for a new theatre. This funding stream will act as co-funding for the purposes of this bid.