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If you would like your business to become a member of the town centre partnership, contact the town centre manager now!



Station Road frontage original design

Wynd Redevelopment - Full Steam Ahead?

Now that the dust is beginning to settle on the approval of the street scene planning application, we look ahead to the scheme for redevelopment of The Wynd, which is due to be considered by the council's Planning Control Committee in June.



Station Road frontage with the new roofline

Later in this Trading Up Special, two of our members explain why they back the exciting proposals to bring new shops, parking and living accommodation to this key site at the very heart of the Garden City. Here we look at the current state of the application, and summarise its main

points, together with some of the amendments that have been made since the application was submitted in October 2007.

What the scheme comprises

In summary, the redevelopment of The Wynd will provide

- Additional retail floorspace – 23 new shop units in a range of sizes
- A new food store
- Living accommodation – 112 new apartments
- A children's play centre
- More car parking – 358 spaces on two levels
- Greatly improved pedestrian links to the rest of the town centre

Designed to enhance the family-friendly nature of Letchworth Garden City town centre, the design and layout of the proposed scheme will complement the already-approved street scene, encouraging people to explore other parts of the town and spend more time here per visit.

Changes to take account of comments made

In response to concerns that have been raised since the planning application was made last year, amendments made by the applicant, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, include the following:

- amended roofline to Station Road frontage
- minor amendment to Leys Avenue elevation
- "mirroring" of the play centre roofline

Why we support the revitalisation: stakeholders speak out!



Leys Avenue with the amended roof detail

Chris Gerard



The proprietor of Broadway Hotel & Carvery gives the background to his decision to venture into business in Letchworth and spells out his reason for supporting the Heritage Foundation plans

In 2003 I left the comfort of a director's salary of a large PLC to start my own small business. My first investment decision with my own money was here in Letchworth. I acquired a twenty five year lease on Broadway Hotel, took out a mega mortgage and refitted the business. I risked all and threw the dice, with Letchworth as my roulette table!

I made my decisions then based on a view that Letchworth had potential. I recognised that Letchworth was and is individual, personal and friendly, with many unique small retailers marking the town out as special. My views have been justified and proven by the Broadway Hotel's success. I believe Letchworth's potential remains and I continue to champion the town and its future.

I consider that we are most fortunate to have in the Heritage Foundation a charitable trust with the means to invest and assist the town's repositioning, and wholeheartedly support the plans to rejuvenate our town. I am in Letchworth for 25 years, I am here for the long term, the present tired, lacklustre ambience of Letchworth must change.

We must build a relevant and unique town centre with offers strong enough to hold the attention and attract the cash of those that live here, make us proud of our town and bring destination shoppers to unique and individual retailers that will mark us out.

Colin Bell



The manager of Garden Square Shopping Centre explains why the present owners acquired the centre early last year and what it was that attracted them to invest in the town

Vale Retail, who purchased the centre in February 2007, specialises in the acquisition and asset management of retail focused investments and developments

throughout the UK and Europe. The company has a track record of developing and improving its assets – unlike some institutional owners for whom a shopping centre is merely an anonymous piece of real estate in a property portfolio.

The chief attractions to purchase in Letchworth were

- the opportunities that the centre provides – the ability to build on the strength of the existing retail “names” that are represented here
- the location and the transport infrastructure of the town
- Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation's vision for the town's future, and their ability to deliver it.

As far as the latter is concerned, the Vale team were very impressed with the Foundation's assessment of the needs of the town based upon the research that it had commissioned from retail specialists. Equally, they recognised the worth of the high quality design criteria that have been adopted to create the physical environment needed in today's fiercely competitive market.

Garden Square Shopping Centre supports the LGCHF redevelopment proposals, and will be delighted to play their own part in bringing a new vibrancy and vitality to Letchworth.



Martin Fletcher

The town centre manager recalls his impressions on his first visit to the town centre and what made him want to work here

As I hadn't come to the town centre on previous visits to the area, when the job of town centre manager was advertised towards the end of 2006, I had to come and see for myself whether it was a place that I would feel able to champion and see what special qualities it held for me.

On a wet autumn morning, I parked in the multi-storey car park and explored on foot, recording my impressions in a notebook and with a digital camera. My memories of that day are still clear.

I saw a town with a good basic layout, a wealth of the beautiful original Arts & Crafts architecture, and a good mix of national multiples and independent retailers. On the other hand, there was clearly a shortage of high street names that are so important in attracting customers; many of the vacant shops would not be suitable for modern retailers; and the public realm – the paving, street furniture etc. – was tired and run-down.

By the time I left for home several hours later, the sun had come out and I had read about the Foundation's plans to not just increase the value of its own estate with new shops, but also to invest heavily in the much-needed street scene renewal. Here was a visionary landlord with the will and the resources to make positive change happen. What town centre manager would not want to be part of such an exciting project?



"Shopping in town centres is important for the social life of a town. I welcome these efforts to stop the drift away to other towns."

William Armitage David's Bookshops



"This is just the sort of shot in the arm that the town needs. Let's hope there will be no delays."

Jonathan Medlock, Surfin Café



"I believe that the much-needed redevelopment of our town centre will result in an exciting and more appropriate retail offer both for existing customers and, importantly, for potential customers in our region who presently choose to shop elsewhere. Although trading conditions will be difficult during the necessary major construction work, I am sure that the end result will make the pain worthwhile."

**Annie Vernon
Annie's Chocolate Emporium**



"The overall concept and proposed mix of uses fulfil the criteria that contribute to successful town centre regeneration, and as such are very necessary to the town's future."

Letchworth Town Centre Partnership (comments on the planning application for The Wynd)



"The sooner these improvements are carried out, the sooner we can start to attract new customers to Letchworth."

**Hugh Harper chairman
Letchworth Town Centre Partnership**

membership

Join us today! Please contact Martin Fletcher if you wish to become a member of the Partnership.

Outstanding subscriptions: If you've received a renewal form, please settle payment with us!



contact us on 01462 486999 or email: martin_fletcher@btconnect.com

Business Breakfasts: where friends meet and ideas are exchanged!

The famous Partnership breakfast at Broadway Hotel – still only £5 for a full cooked breakfast, tea or coffee, and fruit juice – takes place from 07.30 to 09.00 on the first Tuesday of the month. If you haven't been for a while, it's time to get the habit again!

Tuesday 6 May

Several members have encountered a big increase in their business rates for the current year. We have invited Howard Crompton, Head of Revenues and Benefits at North Hertfordshire District Council to attend this meeting and explain the background to this form of taxation which the council collects, but does not keep (it is passed directly to central government). We are currently trying to put together an information package for members needing advice and considering whether they have grounds for an appeal.

Tuesday 3 June

Our guest at this meeting will be Paula Reidy of Inpsyde, a consultancy that specialises in visual merchandising advice for small, independent businesses. Paula says, "We have been implementing Visual Merchandising projects since 1999. In that time we have worked with over 400 businesses covering the whole spectrum of retail activity." Their approach in a variety of town centre situations in and around London has shown demonstrable benefits in terms of increased footfall and improved sales.

Our friends at the Goldsmith Management Centre manage bookings for the breakfast on our behalf. Contact them now in order to be sure of your place at the above meetings: telephone Sally Woodhead, business sales co-ordinator, on 01462 650266 or e-mail SWoodhead@nhc.ac.uk

Town Centre Dates for your diary

**May 6
Business Breakfast**

**May 17
Farmers' Market**
Leys Square 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. For details telephone 01462 486999

**June 3
Business Breakfast**

**June 21
Farmers' Market**
Leys Square 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. For details telephone 01462 486999

**June 26, 27 & 28
French Market**
Leys Square. For details telephone 01462 486999

**July 1
Business Breakfast**
Broadway Hotel 7.30 a.m. For details telephone 01462 650266

**July 19
Farmers' Market**
Leys Square 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. For details telephone 01462 486999

**July 26 to August 3
Letchworth Festival
Featuring continental
market in Eastcheap
2-3 August**
Festival organised by Rap-Aid. For details telephone 01462 671702

**Special thanks to
Prontaprint
(01462 674674)
for printing this issue. Please call them
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**Special thanks also to
Nomad Graphique
(01462 483898)
for producing the artwork
for this issue.**

