

Future High Streets Fund

Call for Expressions of Interest

Application Form



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Applicant Information

Bidding authority: Rushmoor Borough Council

Area within authority covered by bid: Aldershot Town Centre

Bid Manager Name and position: Tim Mills - Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing

Contact telephone number: 01252 398542

Email address: tim.mills@rushmoor.gov.uk

Postal address:

Council Offices, Farnborough Road,
Farnborough
GU14 7JU

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.

Aldershot town centre is located within the Borough of Rushmoor, which sits on the Hampshire / Surrey border. It is a relatively small (3,905 hectares), highly urbanised and densely populated Borough, with a comparatively well-defined built-up area made up of two major settlements whose boundaries adjoin one another:

- Aldershot – In the south of the Borough (population; 36,321)
- Farnborough – In the north of the Borough (population; 57,486)

Definitive in terms of the Borough's heritage, and intrinsic to the creation of Aldershot town centre, the Army Garrison lies to the north. It was established in 1854 as the first permanent Army training camp and is well known, both by locals and nationally, as the 'home of the British Army'. In just 10 short years, a small market village transformed into a vibrant and bustling melting pot of activity that has continued to grow and evolve over a century and a half into the town we know today.

Aldershot town centre is characterised by its Victorian heritage with a number of modern infill developments and today functions as a local centre within a challenging retail hierarchy, commensurate to providing for local shopping, leisure and service needs ([Appendix 1](#))

It acts as a hub of social and economic interaction, concentrating activity and performing an essential function to the local population. By supporting a mix of uses, the town centre provides for the diverse local groups that call our Borough home.

The town centre boundary is defined by the Rushmoor Local Plan. The main retail offer of the town is focused around the pedestrianised Union Street, Wellington Street and the Wellington Centre. This area represents the town's primary retail frontage with a predominance of Class A1 use and the highest footfalls. There is also a significant independent retail presence on surrounding streets (defined as secondary frontage) with a highly valued cluster of specialist ethnic shops along Station Road that meet the needs of the Nepali community within the town.

Important civic/community functions are also contained inside the boundary, including the Princes Hall theatre, Aldershot library, the West End Arts Centre, the Princes Gardens GP surgery and the Empire Banqueting Hall.

Additionally leisure and entertainment provision forms a key aspect of Aldershot's offer with the Westgate centre, completed in 2012, containing a multi-screen cinema accompanied by a number of national restaurant operators including Nandos and Pizza Express.

As one large development of the past defined Aldershot's historic trajectory, another is poised to shape its future. Over the next 15 years, Wellesley¹ will deliver up to 3,850 new homes to the north of Aldershot town centre within a comfortable walking distance, increasing the town's population by over 10,000. The first of these houses are already occupied as part of the first phase of development (Maida). This transformational expansion represents a real opportunity and ensures the town centre will not only continue, but grow in importance as the community's heart, needing to provide a variety of uses, functions and services long into the future.

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.

The wider Aldershot area is home to a young, vibrant and affluent population who have full time jobs and own their own homes. Families with young children make up more than 34% of the area's catchment demographics.² Keen, high spending shoppers, this group represents a very strong consumer lifeblood, one that will be strengthened further in the Wellesley development.³

Currently this consumer lifeblood does not flow into Aldershot town centre. As of 2013, Holistic Retail Ltd identified nearly 500,000 people who live within Aldershot's catchment area and nearly 125,000 dwell within the primary catchment band. However, Aldershot has a shopper population of just 31,277 ranking it 443rd nationally. Leakage is very high to large centres such as Guildford (14.8%) and Basingstoke (3.2%) and smaller centres such as Camberley (12.8%), Farnborough (9.6%) and Fleet (6.9%).⁴

Looking at the resident population within Aldershot town centre itself, the demographics are substantially different, with an older and low spending population. Helping to explain

¹ <http://www.wellesleyhampshire.co.uk/>

² Aldershot Retail Factsheet and Business Prospectus, 2012

³ The Galleries, Aldershot: The Opportunity, Holistic Retail Ltd, March 2013

⁴ The Galleries, Aldershot: The Opportunity, Holistic Retail Ltd, March 2013

this is the Nepali community's particularly strong presence within residential accommodation in the town centre. Lower Layer Super Output Area 142 ([Appendix 2](#)) best aligns with the town centre boundary and has a population of 1,931. 26% of the population are 'Asian/Asian British: Other Asian' and a vast majority are Nepali.⁵ Due to the Gurkha connection with Aldershot Garrison during their service, when these retired Gurkha soldiers were granted a right to settle, many returned to Aldershot with their families.

Aldershot town centre has historically focused on its role as a shopping destination and consequently is the largest retail centre in the Borough, with 201 retail / service uses.⁶

Provided in [Appendix 3](#) are:

- A breakdown of the diversity of uses present in the centre in terms of the number of units;
- A breakdown of comparison shop units by category. Notably over 50% of Aldershot's retail premises are independent stores;
- A breakdown of service uses by category.

Our footfall information is limited however, figures from the Wellington Centre showing an average of 306,293 visits per month during 2018 are indicative of the main retail area.⁷

Aldershot's cultural offer is centred around the Princes Hall theatre, which contains a 595 seat auditorium and has over 100,000 visitors each year.⁸ The town also has a central library, on High Street albeit on the far edge of the centre, and a full programme of street-based events.

As noted above, supporting the town's evening economy is the Westgate development, which is home to a seven screen Cineworld cinema alongside national restaurants.⁹

In terms of the historical importance of the town, Aldershot is widely regarded as the 'home of the British Army'. The establishment of the Army Garrison transformed the town. Its population soared from 1,000 to 16,720 in just 10 years. Aldershot's Military Tattoo dates back to 1894 and in its heyday of the 1920s and 1930s, attracted 500,000 visitors. This military history and Victorian heritage continues to be celebrated through regular events, including the Military Festival and Victoria Day.¹⁰

⁵ LSOA population Data for Aldershot Town Centre,

⁶ Occupancy Rates, January 2019 – With the adoption of the new Local Plan, the monitored frontages have been extended and so more retail and service uses are counted than the previous TC1 saved policy.

⁷ 'Wellington Centre Footfall Totals', 2016 - 2018

⁸ <https://www.princeshall.com/>

⁹ <https://www.westgate-leisure.co.uk/>

¹⁰ Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus, Supplementary Planning Document, January 2016

Aldershot plays a role in the sub-regional economy, with a traditional focus on manufacturing and light industrial activities¹¹ however, as part of the Farnborough aerospace cluster, this includes elements of that supply chain. It contains a number of small industrial estates located in close proximity to the town centre that meet the needs of SMEs. More significantly, Aldershot has a growing digital industry and was identified in the Tech Nation 2018 report as one of the super suburbs.¹² In this it is closely linked to Guildford one of the main centres of the digital gaming industry in the UK and to the developing digital hub in Basingstoke forming a corridor linking to the Thames Valley and Reading.

Rushmoor is very much an urban Borough that is densely populated. The Borough makes a substantial contribution to the Blackwater Valley by being located in the centre of this large urban area.

Rushmoor borough falls within the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The M3 LEP area is a major component of the South East economy. (Appendix 4) The economy of the area is reliant on a network of towns of which Aldershot is one. It is identified as a “Step up town” within the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and is consequently recognised as an area of *‘latent economic potential, which currently experience[s] barriers to growth’*.¹³ The growing Digital and 5G sector in Aldershot is identified as a key element in both the SEP and the developing Local Industrial Strategy of the LEP.

¹¹ Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Joint Employment Land Review Update: Final Report, November 2016

¹² ‘Connection and collaboration: powering UK tech and driving the economy’, Tech Nation, 2018

¹³ ‘The Enterprise M3 Strategic Economic Plan – 2014 – 2020’, EM3 LEP, March 2014

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*

Aldershot town centre is failing, and has been for some time.

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, its position as a medium sized town centre left it disproportionately susceptible to national retailer's reorganisation strategies. One after another, big high street names vacated the centre and in the space of only a few years, Aldershot had lost the likes of Dorothy Perkins, Evans, Next, Top Shop, Burtons, Woolworths and most notably M&S. (Appendix 5)

As highlighted in the published 'Call for Proposals', the pace of technological change has far outpaced the capacity for most high streets to adapt. Aldershot has been particularly affected by this process due to the prevalence of its independent businesses. They are small, local and have limited resources to invest in technological expertise and consequently have struggled to compete with massively expanding online retailers. The Council has gone some way to tackling this issue, but further support is required for Aldershot's independents to thrive in the new digital age.

There are currently 38 vacant retail units within Aldershot Town Centre, with a vacancy rate of 29%, almost triple the regional average of 10.14%.¹⁴ The reason for such a high proportion of vacant units is partly attributable to the vacant Galleries Shopping Centre. Although transferring ownership a number of times, it has remained vacant for over a

¹⁴ Occupancy Rates, January 2019 (Rushmoor Borough Council)

decade. This large, and highly visible, vacancy serves as a constant reminder to visitors and residents alike of Aldershot's deterioration. Even excluding the Galleries, the vacancy rate is 15.5%, ranking Aldershot as the worst town centre in the South East by 3.8 percentage points according to the most recent Springboard statistics.¹⁵

This disproportionately high vacancy rate is by no means a recent phenomenon. Vacancies have been a persistent and sustained blight on Aldershot town centre's vibrancy and vitality for a number of years.

Year	Total Units	Vacant	% Vacant
Aug-10	145	37	26
Jan-11	144	36	25
Jan-12	144	30	21
Jan-13	144	38	26
Mar-14	136	34	25
Apr-15	137	34	25
Dec-16	139	39	28
Oct-17	135	38	28
Jan-19	131	38	29
Without Galleries	110	17	15.5

The loss of M&S, as the town's anchor store in 2015 only served to accelerate the decline that has continued unabated. In its wake, the three pound shops that used to occupy substantial town centre floor space have had to close their doors, a testament to the town's ailing fortunes.

The Wellington Centre has not been immune to the pressures facing the wider town and has suffered in recent years. Footfall data gathered by its owners, London and Cambridge, points to a drop of 30% in the month of December from 2016 to 2018. This pace of decline has meant prominent retailers such as Mothercare and Superdrug have recently vacated their premises, serving to further entrench this cycle.

Aldershot town centre's retail offer has collapsed and over the past 10 years nothing has succeeded in filling the void. It is, as the Guardian put it in 2018, 'a graveyard of British retail.'¹⁶ (Appendix 6)

For so much of Aldershot's history it prided itself on retail success, and so, this single aspect came to define the town. In the collective consciousness Aldershot was / is a retail destination above all else, and so the vacancies and store closures have had a much more profound impact. In a place survey conducted by the Council in 2018, respondents were asked what they thought were the most important factors in making somewhere a good place to live.¹⁷ Those from Aldershot identified shopping facilities as the key. The town centre is currently undergoing a process of transformation and vacancy rates are

¹⁵ Springboard Vacancy Rate – October 2018

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/17/it-was-heartbreaking-what-happens-to-a-town-when-its-marks-and-spencer-closes>

¹⁷ Rushmoor as a Place to Live 2018, August 2018

symptomatic of its struggle to evolve. A resurgence of big brand retail in Aldershot is highly unlikely given its position in the retail hierarchy. Retail specialist Harper Dennis Hobbs published a 'Vitality Index' in 2017 which ranked Aldershot 979 out of 1000 UK centres, and second worst town in the South East Region.¹⁸

As set out in the '*High streets and town centres in 2030 Eleventh Report of Session 2017-19*', the retail picture in Aldershot reflects one of the systematic issues in that our high streets and town centres are too retail-focused and have 'too much retail'. Time Retail calculated Aldershot's total retail floorspace at 720,000 sq. ft. This is almost 50% above the average for other 'small towns' whose floor spaces rarely exceed 500,000 sq. ft.¹⁹ Retail is not the main anchor any more for the 21st century, and it needs to be replaced with other activities. From the evidence set out above, the situation in Aldershot is one that sees it identified as one of the least vital town centres across the UK and in need of urgent addressing. The future success of the town is reliant on getting the right balance between retailing, leisure, hospitality, health, services and residential.

Many towns are focusing on leisure and entertainment provision in an effort to diversify and protect against the contracting retail sector and increase dwell time. These spaces are valuable as community meeting hubs and focus on customer experience, two factors which make them resistant to the expansion of the online marketplace. The vision for Aldershot largely aligns with this process. The Local Plan references how an improved evening economy alongside an increased range of cultural facilities will be a key part of the town centre's future.²⁰ However, currently the town falls short. The Westgate development, although a major improvement to Aldershot town centre's entertainment and leisure offer, has suffered in recent years. Subway, Toby Carvery and Prezzo have closed their doors since the development opened in 2012. Moreover, the increased spend and dwell time that leisure trips usually bring to the wider town centre are not apparent in Aldershot. Albeit located in close proximity to the retail offer of the town centre, Westgate tends to operate in isolation with limited pedestrian flow between it and the focus of retail provision. It is a destination in its own right, rather than complimentary to the wider town centre's offer. Other than Westgate, Aldershot's leisure provision is weak, making the separation between the two even more pronounced.

The commercial office market offers an alternative avenue whereby town centres can remain vibrant and busy in the absence of a strong retail core. However, here Aldershot suffers from an ageing stock profile. The focus of the business sector in and around Aldershot is primarily industrial use, a role that is recognised at a Functional Economic Area (FEA) level. This does little to encourage footfall into the town centre. As a result of lower demand for office space, the market for new development has been limited and, in recent years, the majority of the ageing stock has seen a conversion to residential use via the permitted development route. The town's proximity to more established office markets, in particular Farnborough and Fleet, suggests that the demand for office accommodation in Aldershot is likely to be limited in the foreseeable future due to strong competition.²¹

¹⁸ Harper Dennis Hobbs: 2017 Vitality Rankings, June 2017

¹⁹ 'Aldershot Town Centre', Time Retail Partners, November 2017

²⁰ The Rushmoor Local Plan, February 2019

²¹ Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Joint Employment Land Review Update, November 2016, Page 64

Reference is often made to the value in locating residential accommodation within town centres and how it has the potential to bring in considerable spend and activity. Currently, Aldershot's town centre resident population have very little disposable income and so do not generate this valuable economic energy.²² As previously mentioned, LLSOA 142 represents a majority of the town centre area and is a focus for Nepali residents. The Nepali population face a number of challenges in terms of integration and adaptation to UK society, particularly amongst the elderly. The area is ranked 4,786th out of 32,844, where 1st is the most deprived, for income deprivation, and worst in the country for income deprivation specifically affecting older people. That is, 275 out of 277 residents aged over 60 are income deprived.²³ Crucially all these older people dwell within the town centre as the land north of Wellington Avenue is made up of army accommodation. Evidently, substantial and sustained efforts need to be made to help raise the quality of life of those that currently call the town centre home. However, in conjunction with this, Aldershot is in need of diversifying its town centre population. The Union Street East and Galleries schemes are designed to stimulate this process and aim to attract a more diverse demographic with a greater disposable spend. They both represent a real opportunity to revitalise the town centre population, and will act as a catalyst for further growth.

Aside from the physical challenges facing Aldershot Town Centre, the Institute of Place Management (IPM) report '*High Street 2030: Achieving Change*' was published in December 2018 with the purpose of taking a people and place-based approach to understanding why some high streets thrive whilst others struggle. Aldershot was identified as one of the case studies for consideration by the IPM. As well as picking up on the challenges associated with retail vacancies, the report highlighted the following challenges for Aldershot:

Vision

The Council undertook a substantial programme of public engagement to develop a vision for the town in developing the Aldershot Prospectus ([Appendix 7](#)). This is a Supplementary Planning Document to guide the regeneration of the Town Centre and includes six key themes which underpin the vision. However, the focus of the Council has been on putting in place the development mechanisms and acquisitions to enable the realisation of that vision and due to this, the level of consultation and engagement diminished. This has led to a disconnection of the public and stakeholders with the original vision and strategy. This was identified by the IPM, and is recognised by the Council which is responding to this challenge.

The Council has established an over-arching regeneration programme, Regenerating Rushmoor. This sets a complementary aims for both towns in the Borough. The report talks of 'Farnborough and Aldershot in 2028' as two towns with "unique heritage and histories," defining them as "family-friendly town centres" that complement their "respective global brands".

²² High streets and town centres in 2030, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee Page 18

²³ Understanding the detail of the Indices of Deprivation 2015 in Rushmoor, December 2015

The original vision for Aldershot remains sound however both the retail market and technology have evolved. As part of re-engaging the public and stakeholders, the Council needs to refresh and refine the original vision with them and ensure that the USP for Aldershot is more clearly identified and locally owned.

Failure to effectively develop the heritage of the town

Aldershot is in the enviable position of having something unique and distinctive in its role as the 'Home of the British Army' but this has not been developed nor the existing assets effectively promoted in the development of the centre. Observers from the IPM commented that 'apart from one gun at the station' there is little discoverable making reference to Aldershot's heritage. This is a significant missed opportunity. In the past, the town's storied history has too often been overlooked in favour of a focus on attracting big high street brands. Now, after the multiple retailers that were once the lynchpin of the town have vacated, the importance of ensuring Aldershot's individual identity is vital. The Aldershot Prospectus had as one of its key themes **Affirming the Victorian heritage** but this has yet to be effectively developed or promoted in the development and management of the centre.

Limited knowledge/data gathering

Though several consultants have looked at Aldershot town centre's changing retail offer, the data collected is incomplete. Footfall counting is a data set notably absent for the whole town centre although some indications exist from commercial partners for parts of the centre. Although obtaining footfall figures for the whole town centre is a high priority for the Council, a lack of historical records is / will be restrictive.

Limited partnership working/place leadership

Engagement between the Council, the residents, the business community and other stakeholders having been extensive has become more limited with regards to the regeneration. The work has resulted in a very strong partnership focused on the shared delivery of a substantial programme of events with residents and stakeholders and some good partnership work on operational issues. Vehicles exist (Aldershot Civic Society, Aldershot Retailer and Business Forum etc.) which promote collaboration and partnership. However, they have not been part of an overall approach to engagement in the town recently. Due to this, the mechanisms designed to disseminate information and coordinate communication have been ineffective, leading to myths arising around development and compounding frustrations. Recognising this, the IPM highlights how there is 'no feeling of collective responsibility' between groups, which has led each side to blame the town centre's failings on another. The Council recognises and is starting to address these issues and to put in place more effective shared place leadership.

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

The Borough of Rushmoor comprises of two major towns, Aldershot and Farnborough; each distinct in terms of retail offer, character and heritage. Limited to a transformative submission for a single town centre, we have set out below the rationale for focusing on Aldershot.

A useful starting point is the survey conducted by the Council in 2018, providing evidence of residents' feelings towards the place they live. An individual's perception is built upon a myriad of different factors, big and small, and so is helpful in establishing an overall sense of place. Respondents from Aldershot were significantly less satisfied with Rushmoor as a place to live than respondents from Farnborough, rating it 5.08 compared to 6.34 out of 10.²⁴ A difference of 1.26 points is substantial and hints at numerous disparities which deserve further exploration.

As previously mentioned Aldershot town centre is crippled by vacancies, with empty retail premises a blight on the town environment. Farnborough, by contrast, has a vacancy rate of only 10.7% with 122 units and 13 vacancies.²⁵ This is significantly lower than Aldershot and gives some indication as to the contrasting retail fortunes of the two towns. Farnborough is home to a number of high profile national retailers and has seen recent investment that has resulted in retailers such as Decathlon, Smyths Toys, Dunelm and Hobbycraft moving into purpose built new premises within/on the edge of the town centre.

From a commercial perspective, Farnborough Business Park offers a substantial, prominent high-quality office environment close to the town centre. It is considered one of the premier business locations in the UK, catering to an inward investment and occupier market far removed from local demand and supply drivers. The strategic supply tends to cater for higher value sectors, including activities that demand high quality B1a and B1b floorspace such as corporate office occupiers (IBM, Fluor) and research and development companies (QinetiQ, BAe).

Within the Enterprise M3 LEP's 'Strategic Economic Plan', Aldershot is identified as a 'Step-Up Town' and is consequently recognised as an area of latent economic potential, which has experienced barriers to growth. In contrast, Farnborough is recognised as a 'Growth Town' whose continued success is fundamental to the entire EM3 Area.

Given the polarities observed above, the Council consider that Aldershot town centre should be the focus for the purposes of the Future High Streets fund application.

The Council is also uniquely placed in Aldershot thanks to its policy of land acquisition on Union Street. The Local Plan identifies Union Street East as a key site allocation and so the Council has moved robustly over the past two years to consolidate the fragmented

²⁴ Rushmoor as a Place to Live 2018, August 2018

²⁵ Occupancy Rates, January 2019

land ownership. This means it has the capacity to bring a scheme forward itself without relying on the market to dictate the pace of change, a mechanism absent within Farnborough town centre.

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.

The Aldershot Prospectus was adopted in January 2016 and sets out a vision and strategy for regeneration in Aldershot town centre with 6 key aims.

1. A revitalised town centre offer

Aldershot town centre has an important role to play in meeting the local shopping needs of a growing and affluent population. However, it's retail core faces challenges and cannot compete with regional towns nearby. The Council recognises that in conjunction with redevelopment reducing retail space there is a need to focus on the diversification of the town centre. This will include developing independent retail and arrangements such as a "maker's yard", a focus on relocation of public services into the heart of the town alongside bringing in alternative leisure and office uses.

2. A family-friendly town centre

The Council wants to strengthen the town centre's attraction to families by enhancing its open space and leisure offer alongside improving accessibility. This is with the aim of promoting the town centre as a place where families can relax and enjoy experiences together. There is a need to reconfigure access and parking to address issues arising from the existing layout and intensification of use due to redevelopment. Additional sites are required to achieve this.

3. An improved cultural offer

The Council is committed to building on the existing cultural offer, and is engaging with the community and Arts Council England. The plans for the wider Princes Hall Theatre site are on hold due to delayed release of the magistrates court. However, the Council is pursuing the opportunity to expand and refurbish the theatre. It is working in conjunction with the adjacent West End Arts Centre, Rock & Pop Foundation, and Military Museum, all within walking distance. We are also looking to build on the strong Nepali culture in the design and development of the town.

4. Town centre living

The challenges regarding the current residential offer in the town centre have been set out above. However, Aldershot has a significant requirement for new homes and demand from young professionals who wish to move to the area. Combined with the relatively affordable but increasing values of homes, the area is 'up and coming'.

The redevelopment of Union Street East, the Galleries and other sites will lead to substantial residential development in the town centre providing a range of homes. We estimate that there will be an additional 1000 homes over the next 5 years. This will be supplemented by the growth of the Wellesley development on the edge of the centre.

This diversity will bring vibrancy into the heart of the town helping to revitalise its offer and stimulate change.

5. Investing in street and spaces

A series of improvements to the town's public realm have already been undertaken and creating a central public space for Aldershot is planned as part of the new development.

6. Affirming the Victorian heritage

The Council is enhancing references to the town's military past alongside maintaining the quality of the Victorian buildings, throughout the town centre. It has developed a series of heritage trails which link these elements and has submitted external funding applications to enable their implementation. It is also exploring how it can develop its heritage offer further.

7. New - Digital/5G Aldershot

The Council is building on Aldershot's strength as a location for digital businesses by creating a Digital Games Development Hub. This will provide start-up digital businesses space to grow when it opens towards the end of 2019.

The Council is also keen to ensure that its substantial redevelopment of the town centre is future proofed and able to support the expansion of digital and 5G businesses. To support this, it is working with the EM3 LEP to deliver this new element of the vision.

Proposed Future High Street Funding Interventions:

1. Diversification of Town Centre - £4,800,000

Funding is sought to enable the diversification of uses in the town centre in particular:

- The proposed move of Aldershot Library into the Wellington Centre to better promote the library as a cultural hub and attract more families into the centre
- Fit out of the Union Street East development to enable community and independent business including a makers yard.

2. Reconfiguration of Town Centre - £3,250,000

- As a result of the developments around the town centre we need to reconfigure access and parking. In order to achieve this aim there is a need to acquire additional sites. As part of this approach we are examining car clubs and other innovative approaches.

Total FHSF: - £8,050,000

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.

In May 2018, the Council's Cabinet approved the establishment of the Regenerating Rushmoor programme to drive the regeneration of both Aldershot and Farnborough. The programme is a comprehensive partner co-ordinated approach to addressing the economic and place-making challenges facing the Borough's key towns of Aldershot and Farnborough; whilst also seeking to tackle other borough-wide regeneration issues. It sets out an overarching vision for our town centres in 2028.

In addition to an internal board overseeing the regeneration programme there is a Delivery Coordination Board including the key external partners. This Partnership board comprises of senior officers from RBC (CX Chair), EM3 LEP, Hampshire County Council & Homes

England plus private sector partners Shaviram and Hill Investment Partners. In this way all partners are engaged and aligned with the vision for regeneration in Aldershot and across the borough

During the development of the regeneration programme, the Council identified that it would need to bring in substantial expertise in order for it to deliver a number of schemes within the programme, particularly the more complex town centre sites – the highest priority being the comprehensive redevelopment of Union Street East in Aldershot town centre. Following advice, the Council identified that the best way to achieve the balance between delivery of regeneration at pace, achieving a financial return and mitigating risk was to enter into a form of joint venture partnership with an experienced private sector partner, known as an investment partnership, and structured as a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).

The Rushmoor Development Partnership (LLP) was subsequently established in October 2018 as a joint venture between the Council and Hill Investment Partnerships.

In addition to securing a private sector development partner, the Council has also been successful in securing £8.4 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Marginal Viability Fund, where the Government will provide the final, or missing, piece of infrastructure funding to get additional sites allocated or existing sites unblocked quickly.

The Council's bid was for funding of £5 million towards the Union Street East project, which will bring forward over 150 new homes in the town centre (subject to planning permission) alongside active commercial units and £3.4 million towards The Galleries project, a mixed use scheme of over 400 new homes alongside the provision of a new town centre car park and commercial units (to be delivered by the private sector).

The funding bid specifically sought assistance in the delivery of a sewer diversion on the High Street multi-storey car park, the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and to assist with site assembly for the Union Street scheme.

At a regional level, the Council has been successful in securing £900k of funding from the Enterprise M3 LEP towards the delivery of public realm improvements at Aldershot Railway Station alongside approx. £850k to go towards the delivery of a 5G connected Games Hub (subject to funding agreement). This project is an example of the partnership work that is intrinsic to Aldershot town centre's regeneration involving collaboration between public bodies such as RBC, LEP, HCC and private company Rock and Pop.

We propose to take the opportunity to future proof the regeneration of the Town Centre and deliver a 5G/Digital and Low Carbon Transport infrastructure, bringing together the LEP Digital and Clean Growth strategies. The intent is to create a 5G/Digital/Smart Aldershot where this project will merge the overlap between infrastructure for smart transport, EV charging, 5G and a greener environment while creating a base for future business investment. We are working with Hampshire County Council and EM3 LEP to develop these proposals. This fits with the identification of these sectors as a priority and with the approach to towns in the developing Local Industrial Strategy.

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:

- *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 for Aldershot Town Centre was published in January 2016 and has cross party support. A major public consultation exercise had been undertaken to encourage stakeholders to give their views. This included four, week long, regularly manned, public displays at high profile locations, (shopping centre, theatre, etc.), a large public meeting hosted by the Aldershot Civic Society, and an online survey.

The process to refresh and refine this vision – a need identified in the IPM's recent 'High Street 2030: Achieving Change' report – has led to the creation of the new '**Aldershot Town Centre Task Force**'. This group of key stakeholders, which includes landowners, developers, retailers, businesses and residents, is tasked with '*shaping the further development and delivery of the Aldershot Town Centre Strategy, and acting as a voice for, and supporting the engagement of, a wider group of stakeholders*'

A letter of support from the new Task Force is attached, with additional individual letters provided by some of the major stakeholders, including:

- * **L&C Properties** – owners and operators of the Wellington Shopping Centre
- * **Rushmoor Development Partnership** – developers of the Union Street East scheme
- * **Shaviram plc** – owners and developers of the Galleries & Arcade site

The town has two highly active residents groups that are engaged in the vision and strategic process

The Aldershot Civic Society promote civic pride, and 'aim is to make Aldershot a good place to live, work and visit – a home town to be proud of', and their monthly meetings are well attended. The society are fully engaged in the ongoing work. A letter of support is attached from their Chairman, and long-time Aldershot resident, Justin Coll.

Aldershot Community Together are a vibrant group of residents who work together for the benefit of the town. Formed in 2015, over 40 members meet three times a year for 'full' meetings, with a number of additional 'action group' meetings. Their key focus is on enabling the delivery of events to engender civic pride, but they also regularly engage in strategic matters, most recently undertaking a workshop to generate ideas to assist the town centre through its transition period of construction works.

Aldershot has a resident population who are extremely proud and engaged with the town's history and heritage. The 'Historic Aldershot Military Town' Facebook page, for example, has over 12,000 members.

Rushmoor is part of **the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership**, with Aldershot a designated 'step-up town' - a town that 'has high growth potential within which concerted transformational action will be undertaken'. The LEP is fully engaged in delivery of the vision for the town, and continues to support this through significant funding. A letter of support is attached.

We have a close and productive relationship with our public sector partners, with RBC and HCC working together on a number of significant schemes most notably the Games Hub and the Aldershot station improvements. Two letters from **Hampshire County Council** are attached demonstrating the specific commitment on the library and wider regeneration support.

Letters attached separately.

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).

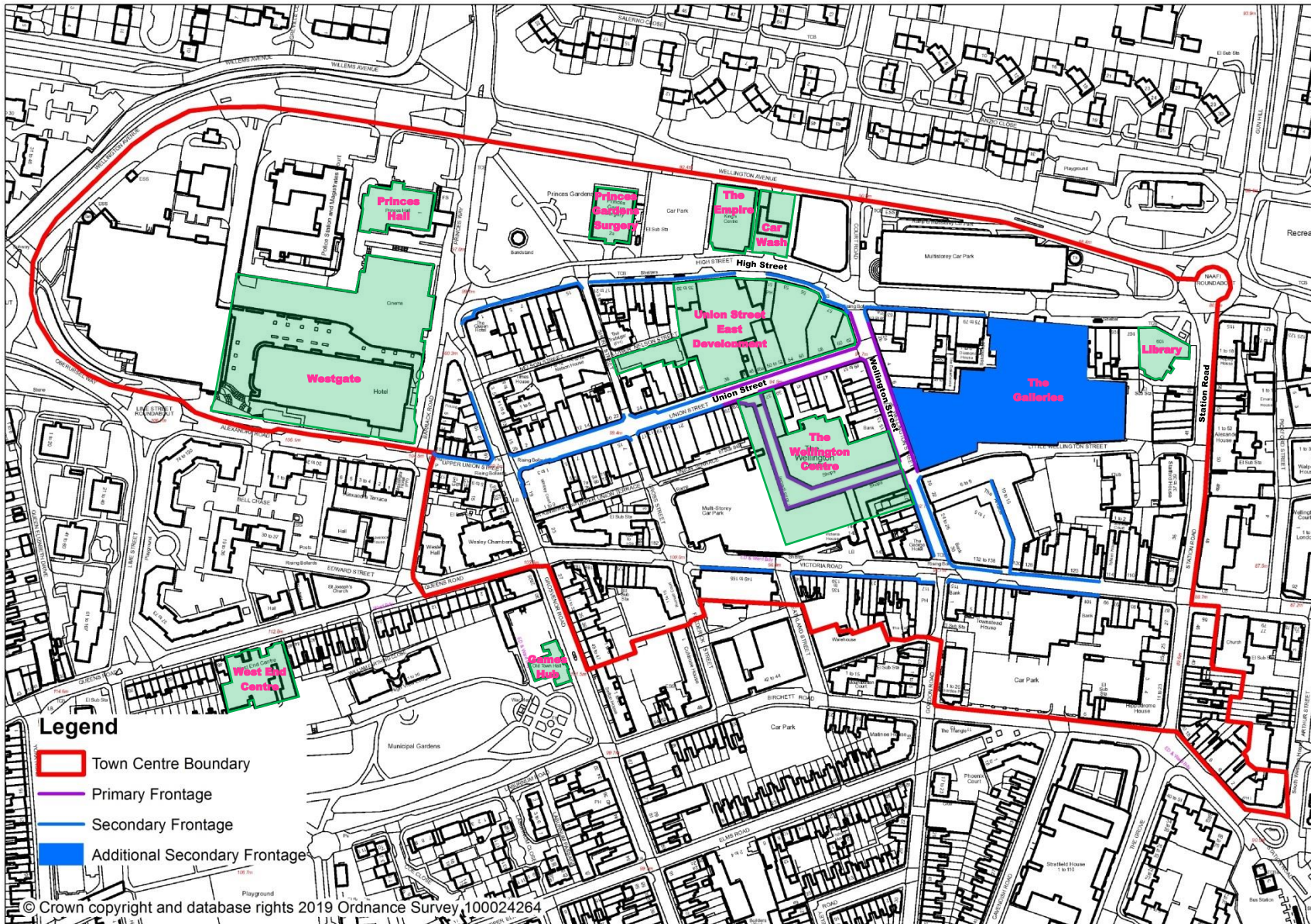
Include estimated breakdowns of how you would spend this revenue funding

Please limit your response to 500 words.

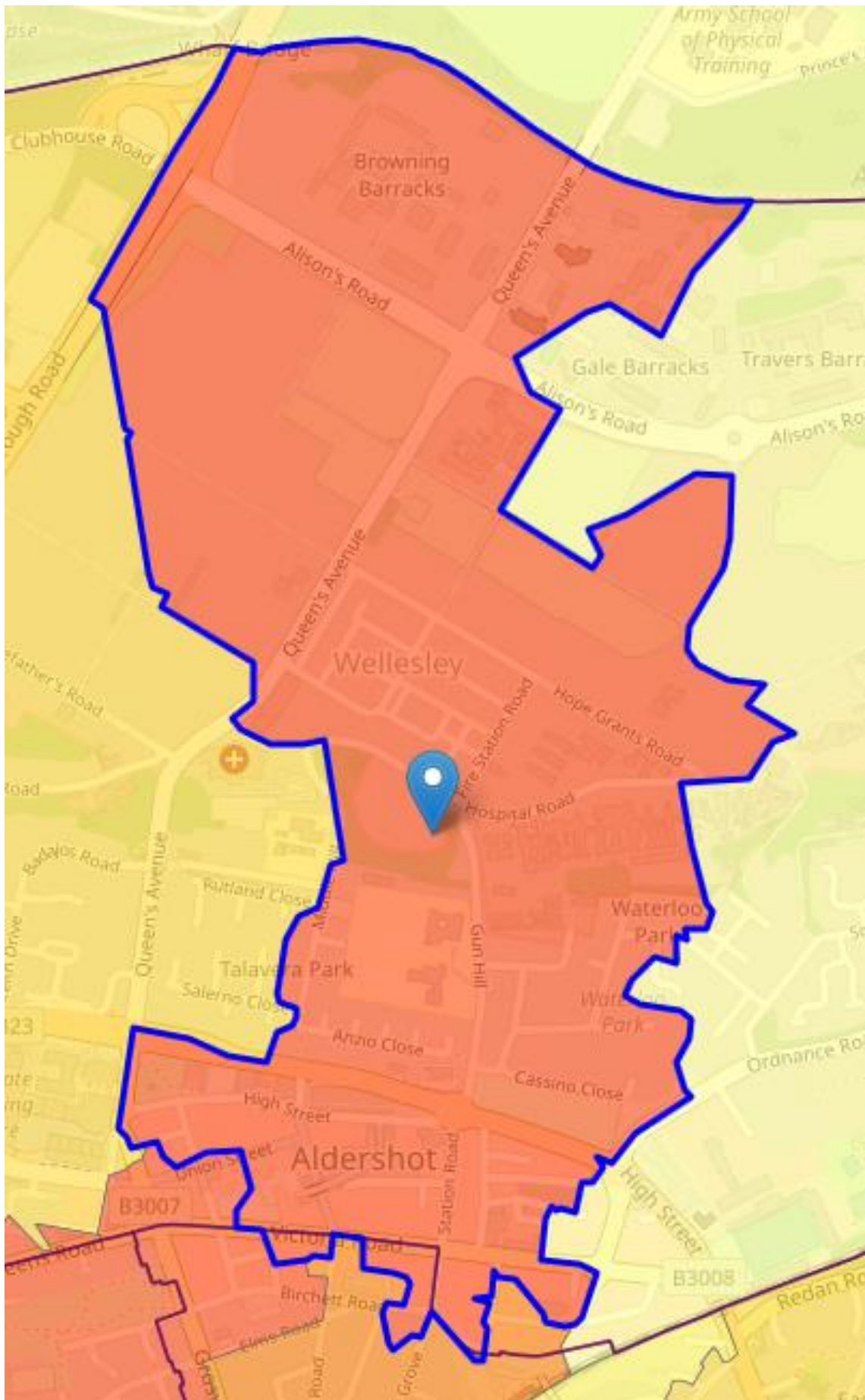
Revenue Funding Requirements:

- £55,000 – Support development of the business case, consultancy support on specific issues around reconfiguration and the associated acquisitions and the green book evaluation - Rushmoor Borough Council
- £30,000 – Support the detailed Library Relocation Feasibility - Hampshire County Council
- £15,000 – Support a wider programme of engagement to reinvigorate public involvement in the town centre regeneration and support its changing focus - Rushmoor Borough Council

Appendix 1 – Town Boundary and Shopping Frontages as defined by the Local Plan



Appendix 2 – Lower Layer Super Output Area 142



Appendix 3 –

Aldershot Town Centre Use Class Mix by Unit

Type of Unit	Units 2014	% of Total Number of Units	
		Aldershot %	UK Average ⁽¹⁾
Comparison Retail	84	27.5	36.0
Convenience Retail	22	7.2	8.1
A1 Services ⁽²⁾	39	12.8	14.1
A2 Services	34	11.1	12.1
A3/A5	46	15.1	14.7
A4 pubs/bar	8	2.6	2.9
Vacant	72	23.6	12.1
Total	305	100.0	100.0

Source: Experian Goad 2014 and NLP 2014

(1) UK average for all town centres surveyed by Goad Plans (March 2014)

(2) incl. hairdressers, travel agents and other Class A1 uses not selling comparison/convenience goods

Aldershot Breakdown of Comparison Units

Type of Unit	Aldershot		% UK Average*
	Units 2014	%	
Clothing and footwear	20	23.8	25.0
Furniture, carpets and textiles	5	6.0	7.4
Booksellers, arts, crafts and stationers	4	4.8	10.6
Electrical, gas, music and photography	10	11.9	9.4
DIY, hardware and homewares	6	7.1	6.4
China, glass, gifts and fancy goods	3	3.6	4.6
Cars, motorcycles and motor accessories	0	0	1.3
Chemists, drug stores and opticians	6	7.1	10.0
Variety, department and catalogue	2	2.4	1.6
Florists, nurserymen and seedsmen	1	1.2	2.3
Toys, hobby, cycle and sport	9	10.7	5.2
Jewellers	10	11.9	5.0
Charity/second-hand	6	7.1	8.4
Other comparison retailers	2	2.4	2.9
Total	84	100.0	100.0

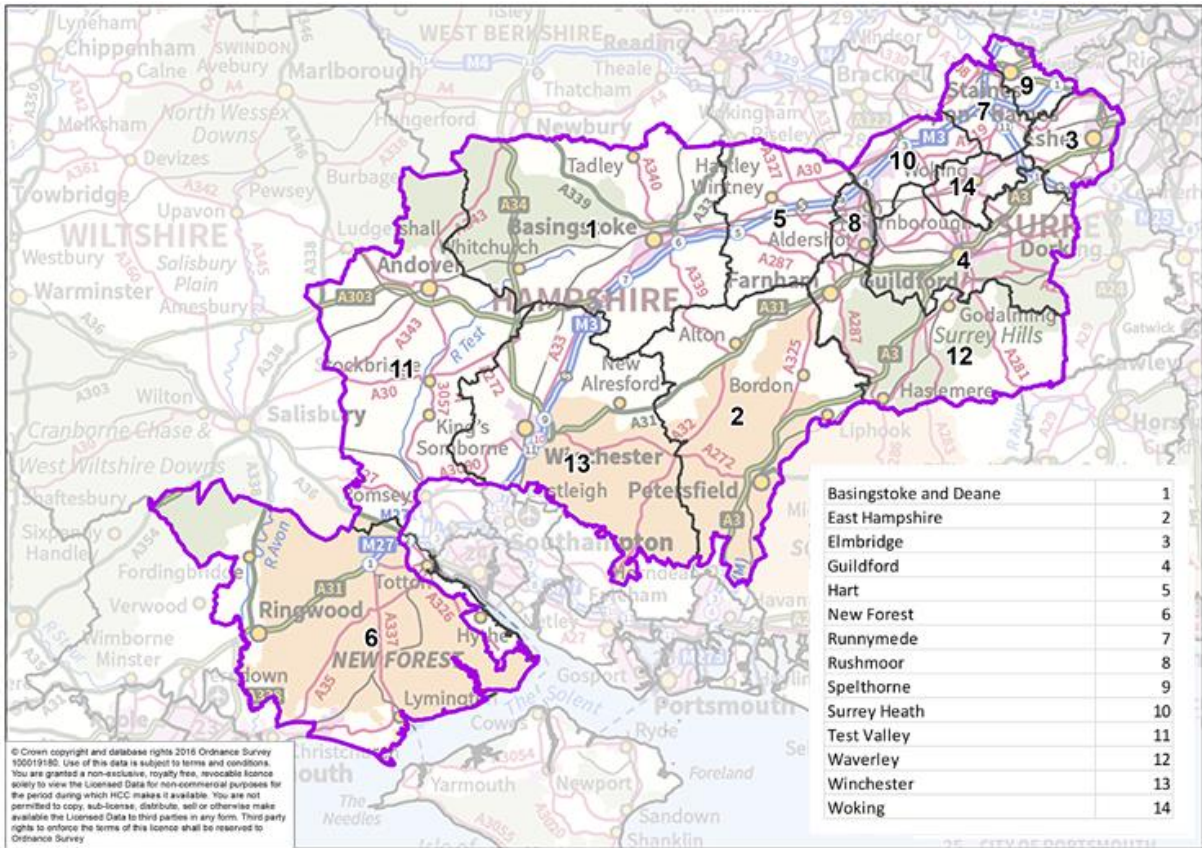
Source: Experian Goad, 2014 *UK average for all town centres surveyed by Goad Plans (March 2014)

Aldershot Analysis of Selected Service Uses

Type of Unit	Aldershot		% UK Average*
	Units 2014	%	
Restaurants/cafés	21	17.2	23.3
Fast food/takeaways	25	20.5	15.2
Pubs/bars	8	6.6	7.6
Banks/other financial services	13	10.7	12.9
Betting shops/casinos	6	4.9	4.0
Estate agents/valuers	15	12.3	9.5
Travel agents	5	4.1	2.5
Hairdressers/beauty parlours	26	21.3	22.9
Laundries/dry cleaners	3	2.5	2.2
Total	122	100.0	100.0
Other A1 Retail Services	5	-	-
Total	127	-	-

Source: Experian Goad, 2014. *UK average for all town centres surveyed by Goad Plans (March 2014)

Appendix 4 - Enterprise M3 LEP Boundary



Appendix 5 – Loss of National Multiples

2007

31 x National Retailers in Union & Wellington Streets



2019

16 x National Retailers in Union & Wellington Streets



Appendix 6 – National News Coverage

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/17/it-was-heartbreaking-what-happens-to-a-town-when-its-marks-and-spencer-closes>

The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on The Guardian's website. The header includes the 'Support The Guardian' logo, navigation links for 'Search jobs', 'Dating', 'Sign in', and 'Search', and the 'The Guardian' logo with 'UK edition' selected. Below the header is a navigation bar with categories: 'News', 'Opinion', 'Sport', 'Culture', 'Lifestyle', and 'More'. The article title is '**'It was heartbreaking': can a town survive when its M&S closes?**'. The byline is 'Marks & Spencer' and the author is 'Simon Usborne'. The article text begins: 'Marks & Spencer's announcement last month that it would close more than 100 stores by 2022 sent shockwaves along UK high streets. In 2015, Aldershot lost theirs - and this is what happened next'. Below the text is a photograph of a storefront with large glass windows and doors, with several people walking past. The author's name 'Simon Usborne' is repeated in a small box on the left, along with the date 'Sun 17 Jun 2018 14:00 BST' and social media sharing icons. At the bottom left of the screenshot, a URL is visible: 'https://www.theguardian.com/profile/simon-usborne'.

Appendix 7 – Aldershot Prospectus

<https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/article/8832/Aldershot-Town-Centre-Prospectus---supplementary-planning-document>