

## Levelling Up Fund Application Form

This form is for bidding entities, applying for funding from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) across the UK. Prior to completing the application form, applicants should read the [LUF Technical Note](#).

The Levelling Up Fund Prospectus is available [here](#).

The level of detail you provide in the Application Form should be in proportion to the amount of funding that you are requesting. For example, bids for more than £10m should provide considerably more information than bids for less than £10m.

Specifically, for larger transport projects requesting between £20m and £50m, bidding entities may submit the Application Form or if available an Outline Business Case (OBC) or Full Business Case (FBC). Further detail on requirements for larger transport projects is provided in the [Technical Note](#).

One application form should be completed per bid.

### **Applicant & Bid Information**

**Local authority name / Applicant name(s)\*:**

Harlow District Council

**Bid Manager Name and position:**

James Gardner, Assistant Director Regeneration

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**Email address:** [james.gardner@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:james.gardner@harlow.gov.uk)

**Postal address:**

Civic Centre, The Water Gardens College Square, Harlow, CM20 1WG

**Nominated Local Authority Single Point of Contact:**

James Gardner, Assistant Director Regeneration

**Senior Responsible Officer contact details:**

Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth & Regeneration

**Chief Finance Officer contact details:**

Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

**Country:**

**England**

**Scotland**

**Wales**

**Northern Ireland**

**Please provide the name of any consultancy companies involved in the preparation of the bid:**

McBains

Deyton Bell

For bids from **Northern Ireland applicants** please confirm type of organisation

Northern Ireland Executive

Third Sector

Public Sector Body

Private Sector

District Council

**Other (please state)**

## PART 1 GATEWAY CRITERIA

Failure to meet the criteria below will result in an application not being taken forward in this funding round

### 1a Gateway Criteria for **all bids**

Please tick the box to confirm that your bid includes plans for some LUF expenditure in 2022-23

*Please ensure that you evidenced this in the financial case / profile.*

Yes

No

### 1b Gateway Criteria for private and third sector organisations in **Northern Ireland bids only**

(i) Please confirm that you have attached last two years of audited accounts.

Yes

No

(ii) **Northern Ireland bids only** Please provide evidence of the delivery team having experience of delivering two capital projects of similar size and scale in the last five years. (Limit 250 words)

## PART 2 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

**Please describe how equalities impacts of your proposal have been considered, the relevant affected groups based on protected characteristics, and any measures you propose to implement in response to these impacts. (500 words)**

In designing all aspects of our proposal we have been mindful of ensuring that the scheme has a positive impact on all residents and particularly groups based on protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the schemes to ensure that any differential impact that might affect any group has been considered and where possible mitigating measures have been identified to counter any negative impacts and incorporated into the brief and detailed design of the scheme.

Overall the plans ensure positive equitable outcomes for all groups in the community. The schemes will in fact have a direct positive impact on many of the protected characteristic groups as it will create:

a) improved access for people with disabilities, older people, and people with young children and babies

b) a safe and inclusive environment which will help reduce the fear of crime and therefore promoting gender, race and sexuality equality.

The introduction of a new arts and cultural quarter is designed to counterbalance the recognised low cultural engagement levels within the town (Harlow is in the bottom third for cultural engagement at 39% according to Arts Council research<sup>1</sup>). Research on the segmentation of arts audiences nationally suggests that there is a higher proportion of BAME people and those of lower incomes and lower educational attainments are less likely to actively engage with arts and cultural activities<sup>2</sup>.

The following key mitigating actions are included to ensure that the scheme has a positive impact on all groups:

- “Secured by design” principles will be incorporated into the schemes ensuring the creation of safe and inclusive spaces that will help reduce the risk of ASB and harassment that may be suffered by particular groups
- DDA compliant guidelines will be followed including street furniture, access and topographical levels
- A pedestrian first design approach will be adopted to create attractive, socially inclusive outdoor activity spaces that will help increase footfall both during the day and develop the night-time economy and so help revitalise the Town Centre
- The creation of attractive and inclusive outdoor spaces that will foster positive community engagement across all groups. The creation of a Playhouse Square will

support a wide variety of free to access arts and cultural activities for all residents and it is expected that programming will also target currently under-represented groups

- The provision of accessible toilets within the Playhouse extension
- Ensuring continued provision of a taxi rank and drop off area enables access to the new facilities and Town Centre as a whole for those groups that rely on cars or taxis for travel
- Improved public transport and active travel infrastructure will support the delivery of affordable sustainable transport options for all groups but particularly supporting those at socio-economic disadvantage

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/areas-low-engagement>

<sup>2</sup> Arts Audiences insights, Art Council, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/areas-low-engagement>

When authorities submit a bid for funding to the UKG, as part of the Government's commitment to greater openness in the public sector under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, they must also publish a version excluding any commercially sensitive information on their own website within five working days of the announcement of successful bids by UKG. UKG reserves the right to deem the bid as non-compliant if this is not adhered to.

Please specify the weblink where this bid will be published:

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/business/regeneration>

## PART 3 BID SUMMARY

<b>Bid Name</b>	Harlow Arts and Cultural Quarter
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**Please provide a short description of your bid including the visible infrastructure that will be delivered/upgraded and the benefits that will be felt in the area. (100 words maximum)**

This bid creates a Arts & Cultural Quarter in Harlow combining the Playhouse Theatre, Gibberd Gallery, Library and Adult Community Learning alongside the creation of a new music/entertainment/arts venue, outdoor performance/event space, public realm, a new music school and additional flexible studio and creative spaces. A new park and sculpture garden surrounding St Paul’s Church (a Grade II listed site)

The area will provide new residential accommodation with parking.

The Quarter will become a destination for arts and creativity, providing infrastructure to expand upon existing provision, whilst making these assets available to all and boosting the Town’s evening economy.

**Please provide an overview of the bid proposal. Where bids have multiple components (package bids) you should clearly explain how the component elements are aligned with each other and represent a coherent set of interventions (Limit 500 words).**

Our proposal seeks to establish a significant Cultural Quarter to become an inclusive arts and enrichment destination, not only for the significantly increasing number of residents in Harlow, but for the wider region. In doing this, the project will act as a regenerative spur for the Town Centre and is a key component of the phased approach that the Council has for this.

The scheme will also enhance the setting of two landmark buildings – Playhouse Theatre and St Paul’s Grade II listed Church.

key deliverables are:

- Playhouse extension building to be operated by the Artistic and Operational teams already in place including:
  - Box-office and Café/Bar which will be a focal point of information and arrival for the Quarter
  - Performance space for live music, comedy, and other acts to provide a facility that does not currently exist
  - Music School to establish instrument tutelage currently absent in the Town Centre
  - Art Studios to provide space for this medium to flourish

- Exhibition, workshop/rehearsal spaces and studios for creative mediums alongside Arts & Crafts, outreach activities and community events
- A second block will provide a new location for:
  - Harlow Library in an inspiring environment which will bring the Literary Arts to the Quarter
  - Adult Community Learning Centre which will establish delivery of further vital enrichment programmes
  - Gallery exhibiting the Sir Frederick Gibberd Twentieth Century Watercolour Collection alongside visiting installations that will provide a centre for Visual Arts and provide accessibility for this medium.
- The new building will also provide residential dwellings to upper floors to support activation of the area and provide passive security during quieter periods.
- A pedestrianised public realm destination which showcases the arts, providing space for the community, performers, and creatives to innovate and create. Transforming a car dominated space into a pedestrian focused area.
- Significant improvements to the junction & road layout will allow the positive augmentation of the scheme, improving access for disabled users and prioritising sustainable transport. Furthermore, improvements to the current roundabout arrangement on Hayden's Road will allow for wider network improvements and improved movement of vehicles in the immediate area.
- A new green play area will complement the quarter providing essential amenity and urban greening to the town and drive footfall and activation to the Quarter.

A vital additional deliverable will be the establishment of a Cultural Quarter Board, to act as a steering group. This group, led by HDC and professionals within the Quarter as well as key local leaders from across all cultural forms and educational organisations, will provide direction and management to the area and will work together to create programming for the new destination. These activities will include collective opportunities for Arts Festivals, outreach programmes, free-to-access programmes and events led by curriculum to capture the imagination of visitors and ensure wide and inclusive resident engagement.

These ambitions will support transformational regeneration of Harlow Town Centre to become a destination of choice for the expanding communities for generations to come.

Scheme designs can be found in APPENDIX 01.

**Please provide a short description of the area where the investment will take place. If complex (i.e. containing multiple locations/references) please include a map defining the area with references to any areas where the LUF investment will take place. For transport projects include the route of the proposed scheme, the existing transport infrastructure and other points of particular interest to the bid e.g. development sites, areas of existing employment, constraints etc. (500 words)**

The area covers three conjoined sites – Playhouse Square, the ex-Occasio House site and College Square, located in the west area of Harlow Town Centre

The site is adjacent to the indoor retail shopping centre, the Harvey Centre (to the north) and The Water Gardens, retail shopping centre (to the south/east)

As well as the site of the former Foyer (Occasio House), the area is home to the town's theatre - Harlow Playhouse as well as St Paul's Church (a Grade II listed site).

The site suffers for significant decay to the public realm and is let down by its poor legibility & connectivity given its strategic location between two successful retail centres.

The proposal include adaptation to the associated junction layout on the prevailing Haydens Road and further incorporates improvements to the extremely dilapidated pedestrian underpass that serves as a sustainable transport connection to the residential areas to the west.

The College Square area acts both as disabled parking (provision maintained in new augmentation), and a formal Taxi Rank, with an informal drop off location within the Playhouse Square. Improved Taxi Rank and drop off provisions are provided towards the west of scheme, associating them directly to the new junction layouts.

The College square is also directly adjacent to the Harlow District Council Civic Centre in the south/east which is housed within The Water Gardens.

**Please confirm where the investment is taking place (where the funding is being spent, not the applicant location or where the bid beneficiaries are located). If the bid is at a single location please confirm the postcode and grid reference for the location of the investment. If the bid covers multiple locations please provide a GIS file. If this is unavailable please list all the postcodes / coordinates that are relevant to the investment. For all bids, please confirm in which constituencies and local authorities the bid is located. Please confirm the % investment in each location.**

CM20 1LS/TL444098  
CM20 1AP/TL444097  
CM20 1LP/TL445098

Whilst the area is split into 3 postal code areas, the sites are conjoined and the redline of the scheme will create one singular area to become the Cultural Quarter in a singular delivery. This area will represent 100% of the total investment.

**Please confirm the total grant requested from LUF (£).**

£19,992,000.00

**Please specify the proportion of funding requested for each of the Fund's three investment themes: a) Regeneration and town centre (%) b) Cultural (%) c) Transport (%)**

100% Cultural

**Please provide details of any applications made to other funding schemes for this same bid that are currently pending an outcome. Where a successful outcome might lead to you no longer requiring the LUF grant please provide details and confirm when might you expect the outcome to be known. (150 words)**

No other applications in for this area.

## PART 4 STRATEGIC FIT

### 4.1 Member of Parliament Endorsement (GB Only)

See technical note section 5 for Role of MP in bidding and Table 1 for further guidance.

<b>Have any MPs formally endorsed this bid? If so confirm name and constituency. Please ensure you have attached the MP's endorsement letter.</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Rt. Hon. Robert Halfon MP  
Member of Parliament for Harlow.

### 4.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Support

See technical note Table 1 for further guidance.

**Describe what engagement you have undertaken with local stakeholders and the community (communities, civic society, private sector and local businesses) to inform your bid and what support you have from them. (Limit 500 words)**

Over the past five years the Council has undertaken extensive consultation and engagement of the town centre and need for regeneration. The feedback and insight gained has informed the overall vision and priorities for regeneration, which includes the ambition for the Harlow Arts and Cultural Quarter.

The Harlow Town Centre Masterplan Framework and the previous Area Action Plan was subject to extensive stakeholder and public consultation, which included the opportunity of bringing forward a redevelopment scheme at Playhouse and College Squares, specific for arts and cultural uses and the need for additional amenity and improved public spaces.

The Masterplan Framework SPD was formally adopted by the Council in March 2022 and can be found at Appendix XX along with the Framework Consultation Report at APPENDIX XX.

Whilst developing the designs for the scheme we have engaged with a range of key stakeholders which included:

- On-going briefings with local Councillors who have helped steer the designs;
- Discussions with St Paul's Church resulting in strong support;
- Engagement with educational and arts organisations to inform and strengthen the plans;
- Detailed presentation to the Harlow Growth Board enabling suggestions to be incorporated and these proposals were endorsed; and
- HGGT Quality Review Panel who were supportive and influenced the final scheme.

The designs and proposed uses have been the subject of significant public engagement and consultation which includes consultation of the original proposals in Spring 2020 and most recently in June 2022.

These activities have included direct presentations to Harlow cultural and heritage organisations as well as the following:

- Face-to-face surveys in the town centre and neighbourhood areas;
- Social Media campaign across multiple platforms;
- Press releases to local/national media resulting in publication and a segment being broadcast on BBC Look East within the BBC Breakfast, lunchtime and evening news programmes (July 2022);
- Online survey;
- Email consultation to various groups including but not limited to:
  - Town Centre Landowners & Tenants
  - Harlow Playhouse Patrons and Resident Companies
  - Harlow Art Trust
  - Resident Associations
  - Youth Council
  - Safer Harlow Partnership
  - Rainbow Services – Community & Voluntary Groups
  - Harlow Education Consortium (Harlow Primary and Secondary Schools)
  - Harlow College
  - Parndon Mill (Artists/Local Businesses)
  - Gatehouse Arts
  - HGGT
  - Harlow Health and Wellbeing Board
  - Harlow Civic Society
  - Active Harlow
- Direct consultation with residents of Dads Wood (adjacent estate to the site); and
- Leaflet drop across Harlow Town Centre Shops.

The results of both stakeholder engagement and public consultation demonstrated that there is an overwhelming level of support for the project (80%) and clear evidence that the proposals should focus on improving the arts, cultural and entertainment offering within the town centre and Harlow in general.

There is also clear support from key stakeholders who have provided letters of support, including the MP for Harlow, Harlow Growth Board, UK Innovation Corridor, Harlow & Gilston Garden Town, Harlow Art Trust, St Paul's Church, Harlow Education Consortium and Town Centre Landowners.

**Has your proposal faced any opposition? Please provide a brief summary, including any campaigns or particular groups in support or opposition, and if applicable, how will you work with them to resolve any issues (Limit 250 words)**

Our bid proposals are not contentious and have received wide support.

Concern that was raised at early design stage was the potential impact on the settings of the two key heritage: St Pauls and the theatre. This issue has been addressed with the Quality Review Panel to ensure that the plans provide a positive and appropriate setting.

Occasio House was previously a housing scheme for young people but closed 7 years ago. The building has remained empty, and due to cladding issues, is unaffordable to refurbish. The new dwellings will be mixed tenure to ensure the scheme viability. Whilst the new scheme has overwhelming community benefits there may be a perceived issue regarding

the loss of the young person’s housing. However no negative comments have been received during consultation regarding this.

During the stakeholder engagement that was complete, a small number of wider concerns surrounding Town Centre Management and the cohesive approach to the regeneration were raised, although generally these were aligned to supportive responses.

The Town Centre Stewardship is subject to a wider review and will be further supported by the Cultural Quarter Board. This work is ongoing and will be concluded in 2023/24 which will relate well to the delivery of these proposals.

This approach, along with the Harlow Landowners Forum, will ensure that development across the town centre is brought forward in a cohesive manner across design & use.

**Do you have statutory responsibility for the delivery of all aspects of your bid?**

No – Highways work is the statutory responsibility or ECC Highways, who will provide relevant expertise and support to the scheme.

### 4.3 The Case for Investment

See technical note Table 1 for further guidance.

**Please provide evidence of the local challenges/barriers to growth and context that the bid is seeking to respond to. (Limit 500 words)**

Harlow is the second most deprived town in Essex, Jobs growth and educational attainment have stalled, and the town has the highest proportion of the population with no qualifications in Essex, with the highest proportion of its population struggling on current incomes.

House prices are significantly lower than surrounding districts, rooted in a new town legacy of poor perceptions, ageing infrastructure, and housing growth potentially constrained by administrative boundaries. The town centre is emblematic of this and therefore a key focus for transformational change. An emergence from stagnation and setting the bar for the quality of place is needed for Harlow to transcend its’ challenges, providing opportunities for residents. Harlow, with the right interventions would provide a significant growth opportunity, so close and well connected to London, and in the UK Innovation Corridor where it can support the delivery of economic success if provided with ‘levelling up’ resources.

The town centre has visibly declined, reflecting ageing infrastructure and the reduction of the retail footprint following national trends. Only residential interest in development is now apparent. This situation will not deliver the high-quality diversification of use required for a thriving centre with Harlow’s opportunities.

Harlow Town Centre requires public sector intervention to initiate and sustain long-term regeneration, enabling it to better serve existing residents and new residents of the HGGT.

A thriving Town Centre is imperative to the success of major investments including the relocation of the UKHSA to Harlow, the development of Harlow Innovation Park, a new hospital, and economic vitality post-Covid.

Following the last significant development in the Town Centre, (The Water Gardens Shopping Centre completed in 2003), opportunities have been limited given the council's lack of ownership in other areas of the town centre.

Regeneration plans for a major indoor shopping facility have been proposed since 2003 but have not transpired. HDC developed a major Town Centre wide regeneration scheme between 2007-2009 and secured a private sector development partner, but the global recession saw the retreat of any suitable investment.

Since then, only piecemeal refurbishments, large scale site clearance and poor-quality residential refurbishment of former office blocks through permitted development have progressed.

Harlow has a rich history among the arts and cultural sectors, however over the last 15 years the sector in Harlow has been hit particularly hard with the closure of venues and the loss of artist studios, exacerbating a decline in engagement and participation of residents and visitors in the arts.

This bid is focussed on immediate and lasting diversification of the Town Centre with interventions to deliver a higher quality destination, that improves security, connectivity, and accessibility. It will deliver long-term transformational regeneration for existing and future generations of residents and visitors. This forms part of the planned phased approach of the Town Centre renewal.

Our project, together with Towns Fund projects and our Town Centre Masterplan, will support the scale of transformational regeneration and diversification needed and provide a platform for further investment, business and jobs growth.

**Explain why Government investment is needed (what is the market failure)? (Limit 600 words)**

Harlow suffers from low land values resulting in complex and challenging viability conditions. This arises from the new town legacy, proliferation of housing type now perceived as outdated and unattractive, not helped by persistent levels of deprivation. For decades, development opportunities have been explored by both public and private sectors, however financial viability and market confidence in local buying power have seen stagnation and stalled developments.

Town Centre sites have been earmarked for redevelopment by private sector landowners, however, none of the catalytic opportunities have been brought to fruition. This market failure has led to piecemeal developments, that due to the current low profitability has not delivered the quality needed, nor added to the vitality of the Town Centre.

This lack of private investment has resulted in a number of strategic sites either being cleared or left empty. This approach has affected other areas of the town centre, resulting in further empty shops and landowners pausing investment, waiting for redevelopment to start. However, market volatility, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic has created an environment of significant uncertainty as to when these redevelopments will commence.

Additionally, the Town Centre has suffered from a decline in its non-retail uses, with both the leisure and night-time economy sector reducing its offer and footprint. Due to the current infrastructure, poor quality offer and challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no indication that this will change, instead, without major intervention it is likely to continue to decline.

This sustained market failure will continue to affect Harlow and its town centre without Government intervention. Harlow's proximity to London and Cambridge creates opportunities, but also present challenges through competing sub-regional and regional centres. 'Levelling up' Harlow to be positioned to better compete with these sub-regional and regional centres will ensure that the town centre retains expenditure through consumers and investors spend. This spend is currently lost to high-quality, vibrant, and diverse centres elsewhere.

To change the fortunes of the Town and its residents, an integrated approach to regeneration is being pursued, demonstrating the opportunity that Harlow now faces and can deliver. Harlow Council adopted a new Town Centre Masterplan which sets the blueprint for regeneration, of which the Cultural Quarter comprises a key component. Public sector investment will bring forward high-quality, coherent interventions that incentivise the quality of private sector developments.

Harlow has a strong legacy of Arts and Culture, however with a significant number of lost assets which were delivered by the third sector; it has resulted in fragmentation and declining levels of resident and visitor engagement and participation. There is currently no centralised coordination of arts and culture and at present, no vehicle to change this.

A fundamental aspect of this project is to change the current status quo, providing the infrastructure to establish an Arts and Cultural Quarter that is inclusive of existing and new arts as well as cultural and heritage assets; whilst expanding art and cultural provision.

This approach will help tackle the current hollowed-out community that exists. Good quality public space supports activity where people can come together, build social capital and community resilience. Pride in place builds pride in the community, and the incentive to build community activities and structures of benefit to current and future generations.

Delivering a quality-led destination is essential to retain and attract both businesses and the workforce needed for the success of our major public and private sector investments. The value of assets will rise significantly, kick starting and providing confidence to the market and private sector that Harlow is a destination, bringing with it high-quality developments for residential, health and economic growth.

**Please explain how you will deliver the outputs and confirm how results are likely to flow from the interventions. This should be demonstrated through a well-evidenced *Theory of Change*. Further guidance on producing a Theory of Change can be found within [HM Treasury's Magenta Book](#) (page 24, section 2.2.1) and [MHCLG's appraisal guidance](#). (Limit 500 words)**

Outputs associated with this project have been developed to support market failure, enable the impacts that Harlow Arts and Cultural Quarter is looking to support, and is deliverable by Harlow Council.

The council is already the majority landowner, with the purchase of the ex-Occasio House site being progressed and is the operator of the existing theatre; this puts the site at an advantage to be brought forward for redevelopment immediately, with the experience and

foundation to deliver a scheme that achieves the desired outcomes and impacts as described in the Theory of Change, which can be found at Appendix XX.

A detailed development brief is being created and once funding is confirmed, a construction partner will be procured to enable physical delivery of the outputs.

During construction, the Council will start to establish a Cultural Quarter Board whose role and responsibilities will be to manage the curation, operation and delivery of services, activities, and events. The Board will include membership from a diverse range of organisations, including arts, cultural and heritage organisations/venues; public and third sector organisations and education and training providers.

The Board, supported by the Council will establish a wider programme of inclusive, accessible, and affordable activities/events, utilising the new spaces (and infrastructure) created to significantly improve participation (which is currently evidenced to be low), generating vibrancy within the town centre and improving footfall, dwell-time and consumer spend. The project creates the foundation to springboard cultural development, widening resident participation and engagement, and supporting residents' quality of life through arts and cultural regeneration.

By creating a new, well-connected destination, the intervention contributes to a town centre that people will want to visit to engage with arts and cultural events as well as contributing to the local economy through a diverse offer of retail, leisure, hospitality from daytime through to evening. And, by providing a high-quality townscape and public realm, this will result in an improved perception of Harlow Town Centre, a place where residents feel a renewed and increased sense of civic pride in where they live.

Major investments are planned, representing a once in a generation opportunity for Harlow, but do not currently provide sufficient rationale for the private sector to have confidence to invest significantly in the town centre, displaying market failure. We need to kick start our journey towards a vibrant and thriving Town Centre. Public sector investment will visibly deliver Harlow's potential, providing the confidence and incentive to bring forward private sector investment, and capture greater sub-regional disposable income.

Through the provision of new, high-quality public spaces and facilities that support a diversified offer in the town centre, the incentive for people to visit, spend time and money will be created. By placing our creative assets at the centre of our plans we will support our existing, as well as new arts and creative economies, ensuring it can grow and engage with both visitors and residents alike, creating a truly distinctive town centre representing Harlow's DNA.

**For package bids, you should clearly explain how the component projects are aligned.**

N/A

**Applicants should also briefly set out how other public and private funding will be leveraged as part of the intervention. (Limit 500 words)**

There are several areas where Public and Private funding will be leveraged as part of the development of the Harlow Cultural Quarter.

Directly linked to the development will be the delivery of the residential units which form part of the boundary form of the Quarter.

These units will be directly funded by the Town Investment Fund which is a consortium of Harlow District Council, Essex County Council, Homes England and Housing Developer Places for People.

This blend of Public and Private funds is being leveraged to deliver this key aspect of the scheme to allow for all Levelling Up Funding to be concentrated on the Cultural Interventions and ancillary infrastructure that support it.

Homes England could also be a potential source of additional grant funding for the residential elements, contributing towards increased proliferation of Affordable Housing at the site.

S106 contributions from across the developments within Harlow may also contribute to the scheme through interventions directly associated to the Playhouse and Library provisions.

The Arts Council and National Lottery are already historical contributors to the Playhouse and the new Cultural Quarter will provide opportunities to seek further funding across the whole spectrum of cultural mediums for audience development and resident engagement to support outreach programmes and production.

The Cultural Quarter Board will also seek sponsorship from across local industry and business to contribute towards programming and educational pursuits.

One key opportunity to leverage Private Sector funding will be the catalytic nature of the Cultural Quarter alongside the other Towns Fund interventions, acting to motivate the wider investment and redevelopment within the Town Centre.

It is intended that the Council will work with the owners of the Harvey Centre to help them bring forward re-development plans, in line with the Town Centre Masterplan, to achieve long held ambitions to release the potential of that site, which will be directly supported by these proposals.

Harlow has suffered from widespread market failure driven primarily through depressed land values which give rise to negative viability for private sector developments.

This issue is exacerbated by the significant levels of urban decay and ageing building stock within the town centre.

That said, this depressed scenario provides opportunities where developers are willing to take to commercial risk, as the contribution of some of the key privately owned assets within the town can contribute to the wider regeneration and correction of that market failure. This in turn would support increases to unit values and rental yields to provide the economic return required by such investment.

HDC are aware of several key redevelopment schemes that have been developed to feasibility stage, which include residential, commercial, retail and hospitality schemes, but confidence levels have currently limited these aspirations moving through detailed design and delivery.

To that end, HDC are currently inaugurating a Harlow Landowners Forum with the intention of building developer confidence and communicate the ambitions and plans for the Public Sector investments which will catalyse and leverage the Private Sector investments.

#### 4.4 Alignment with the local and national context

See technical note Table 1 for further guidance.

**Explain how your bid aligns to and supports relevant local strategies (such as Local Plans, local economic strategies or Local Transport Plans) and local objectives for investment, improving infrastructure and levelling up. (Limit 500 words)**

Harlow is the second most deprived area in Essex, ranked 124<sup>th</sup> nationally with 2 of our neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived nationally. As a former new town, there are issues of a large proportion of infrastructure ageing at similar times and an economy and labour force still transitioning from its previous concentration within large scale manufacturing.

HDC's Regeneration and Economic Development Strategies have consistently highlighted the need for housing growth at scale alongside the importance of Town Centre regeneration. Creating and influencing inward investment alongside location decisions for key businesses is vital.

Our Local Plan adopted 2020 supports that position, delivering above objectively assessed housing need and HDC's support of HGGT further cements that position, to fundamentally achieve the scale of growth required to support the regeneration of the existing town and particularly Town Centre.

The HGGT Vision, developed through the Partnership Board, states that a key principle is to create a vibrant and resilient Town Centre for Harlow so that it can act on behalf of a significantly enlarged population. Stated desired outcomes include improvements to the physical environment and public realm, as well as an increase in the quality and standard of cultural proliferation and improved leisure and retail offer in the town.

Our proposals align with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy, in particular, Communities for the Future priority. This priority supports the successful development of both the HGGT and the relocation of UKHSA and also supports the revitalisation of Town Centres across the region.

Essex County Council's document Levelling up Essex (Appendix 18) highlights Harlow as a priority area, aiming to support the area to achieve better outcomes and close the gap on the Essex and national averages.

The Council's Corporate Strategy creates a vision to extend opportunity and prosperity to all. Positioning Harlow as a regional centre for arts and culture. The prosperity of the town will see residents developing the skills required to secure employment and be able to access good quality housing.

The Harlow Growth Board is overseeing a wide-ranging strategy to support Harlow's regeneration. This narrative is contained in our Town Investment Plan (TIP) application to Government. The Harlow Growth Board TIP Vision aspires to a 'thriving, enterprising and vibrant Town Centre'.

Harlow Council's Town Centre Masterplan Framework provides guidance to inform the future planning and design of Harlow town centre highlighting the importance of a strong cultural offer which is supported by residents and visitors to the Town Centre. It also notes the need for further amenity within the Town Centre.

The Council's Climate Change position statement adopted in March 2022 outlined one of its central objectives as being able to achieve significant modal shift away from car use. This project creates a pedestrianised environment as part of the transformation of the area.

**Explain how the bid aligns to and supports the UK Government policy objectives, legal and statutory commitments, such as delivering Net Zero carbon emissions and improving air quality. Bids for transport projects in particular should clearly explain their carbon benefits. (Limit 500 words)**

This bid makes a significant contribution to the Government's Levelling Up agenda. Although located in the East, Harlow residents have not benefitted from growing affluence and have also been disproportionately impacted by Covid 19 on top of entrenched levels of deprivation. Town Centre regeneration will enable the Town to seize the once in a generation opportunity of major public sector investment projects and their benefits, using these to catalyse long term regeneration and inclusive economic growth. Local procurement and skills training opportunities can be secured in the delivery of the projects themselves. Improving local residents' opportunities and prosperity will have further social and wellbeing benefits.

Our proposal will ensure that local residents and those in a wider area will see Harlow Town Centre as their destination of choice. This reduces the need for travel further afield and contribute to carbon emissions reduction. Harlow loses a large proportion of consumer spend to competing locations with a better offer. Improving the quality and diversity of activity within the Town Centre will achieve the capture of a much greater proportion of that spend. The Town Centre will be a destination easily reached by our sustainable transport corridor. Through the creation of new and improved walking, cycling and rapid bus transit routes helping create safer, greener and healthier ways to travel ensuring the HGGT strategic housing sites are embedded in a sustainable growth agenda. Our proposal dovetails with our Towns Fund supported project to redevelop the Bus Station and provides support for active and sustainable travel at the Cultural Quarter.

The Council published a Sustainability Position Statement in March 2022 committing to reaching net zero by 2040. HDC is currently developing a Climate Change Strategy which will detail how we work towards this target and this is due for adoption in late 2022.

The residential accommodation within the Cultural Quarter will be built to Passiv Haus plus standards saving money for residents against increasing living costs. The detailed design for the cultural buildings will develop in discussion with stakeholders but we anticipate the use of PV, grey water capture and other energy saving measures.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be used to ensure that the park area and public realm can flourish without the need for additional water and guard against the increasing risk of flooding.

The scheme deprioritises vehicles and emphasises the use of walking and cycling to work towards a net zero site.

The HGGT Sustainability checklist will guide the detailed design work and subsequent planning application. This document, which is now regarded as a national exemplar, supports new schemes to meet the Garden Town Goals of becoming net zero carbon by 2030 and to build strong and integrated communities across new and existing places. It aims to create landscape led design from the start, a clear focus on the orientation of buildings to take advantage of passive solar gain, air tight buildings that make use of

renewable technology. The BREEAM construction approach and evaluation will also be used.

**Where applicable explain how the bid complements / or aligns to and supports other investments from different funding streams. (100 words per fund)**

- **Towns Fund** - £23.7m award. The funding provides a new Sustainable Transport Interchange (STIc) and Hub alongside much needed high quality public realm creating a key link to the shopping areas. Our proposals for the STIc, a key gateway to the Town Centre, is objectively defined to meet the need to significantly grow use of public, sustainable and active travel modes, ensuring that the housing growth planned through the HGGT is sustainable. Key enabling infrastructure to connect HGGT sites to the north through the northern sustainable transport corridor to Harlow Town Centre has been secured through the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- The **Town Investment Fund** is a partnership which aims to provide development financing focussed on the Town Centre and supported by HDC, Essex County Council (ECC), Homes England and Places for People. The legal agreements are in development and the combined fund is expected to align c£50m investment where acceptable return can be delivered. £30m of this is already committed with an additional £20m expected to confirm in 2022.
- The Harlow Playhouse takes the opportunity to bid for various funding elements from both the **Arts Council** and **The National Lottery**, which are generally aimed at production, audience development and various cultural projects. The new Cultural Quarter will provide a platform for a significant increase in the number and scale of these applications.
- **S106** – As Harlow see further residential developments come forward as part of both the HGGT and the wider Local Plan allocations, there will be increased opportunity to establish S106 contributions for the Cultural Quarter across all mediums.
- The Council is currently preparing it's bid to the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** which will include the development of a town centre activity and events programme. The programme will act as a pilot and steppingstone for the development of a specific arts, cultural and heritage programme to be delivered across Harlow Arts and Cultural Quarter. It will support the delivery of events across the town centre whilst construction takes place, instilling momentum and an increase in engagement ready for the scheme to move from construction to delivery.

**Please explain how the bid aligns to and supports the Government's expectation that all local road projects will deliver or improve cycling and walking infrastructure and include bus priority measures (unless it can be shown that there is little or no need to do so). Cycling elements of proposals should follow the Government's cycling design guidance which sets out the standards required. (Limit 250 words)**

This bid establishes a new Arts and Cultural Quarter creating an opportunity to access the arts, heritage and cultural events alongside new job creation within creative industry as well as linked leisure and hospitality sectors.

The scheme removes car dominated public space through redesigned junction layouts and underpass upgrades allowing for significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. This is a key signal that Harlow and the HGGT will prioritise sustainable travel modes as part of their 60% modal shift target (as contained in the Garden Town Vision). The scheme includes

infrastructure to promote cycling and offers improved access to the adjacent cycleway network through both an improved underpass and at grade signalled facilities. Upgrades to footways and cycle ways in the vicinity are provided in line with the aspiration for a walking and cycling loop around the Town Centre. New enhanced wayfinding & lighting will create an improved legibility to improve the connections to the STIc from the Cultural Quarter. The scheme will not only improve access from across the town but also in residential areas to the west.

This bid is complemented by our Towns Fund project which creates upgraded bus stop facilities, a sustainable transport interchange and a cycle hub where cycles can be hired, maintained and stored securely. The new HGGT sustainable transport corridors will bring new residents into Harlow Town Centre (23,000 new homes bringing 50,000+ new residents) via sustainable travel modes, again supporting the need for a regenerated Town Centre and enhanced cultural offer.

**Please tick to confirm which of the following Levelling Up White Paper Missions (p.120-21) your project contributes to:**

- Living Standards
- Research and Development (R&D)
- Transport Infrastructure ✓
- Digital Connectivity ✓
- Education ✓
- Skills ✓
- Health ✓
- Wellbeing ✓
- Pride in Place ✓
- Housing ✓
- Crime ✓
- Local Leadership

**And write a short sentence to demonstrate how your bid contributes to the Mission(s).**

*Education* – The increased studio space due to the project will enable better links to local schools enhancing education and bringing English and drama lessons to life. Further use will link the Harlow Museum for historical/social curriculum activities.

*Skills* - Having adult community learning in the Cultural Quarter will enable larger numbers of residents to access skills training locally.

*Health and Wellbeing* – Sessions run in the new facilities will contribute to residents sense of wellbeing, this could be an art class, music lesson, dance, drama, literacy events etc.

*Crime* – Better use of outdoor space should drive down crime in the local area

*Pride of place* – this project will create a new sense of place with high quality facilities that attract our residents into the Town and feel proud of the area they live in.

*Transport* – The scheme will provide better wayfinding to the new Transport Interchange and cycle hub promoting the use of the Sustainable Transport Network.

*Digital Connectivity* – The Arts and Cultural Quarter will provide digital connectivity across the site enabling visitors to book tickets, order food and drinks or work remotely within areas that are bound to inspire.

## PART 5 VALUE FOR MONEY

### 5.1 Appropriateness of data sources and evidence

See technical note Annex B and Table 1 for further guidance.

All costs and benefits must be compliant or in line with [HMT's Green Book](#), [DfT Transport Analysis Guidance](#) and [MHCLG Appraisal Guidance](#).

**Please use up to date evidence to demonstrate the scale and significance of local problems and issues. (Limit 500 words)**

At present, the centre is underperforming and not satisfactorily serving local residents or businesses. Recent trends highlight:

#### Current Position

##### Demography & Housing

One of the major findings of the Census 2021 initial data release is that Harlow has one of the fastest growing populations in the country. The population grew from 81,944 in 2011 to 93,300 in 2021. A growth of 13.9%. This is expected to further increase as a result of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT).	Census Data Initial Release, 2021
The number of households on the housing waiting list for West Essex and East Hertfordshire in 2016 was 7,210.	SHMA, Harlow, 2016
The total need for affordable housing in Harlow between 2016 and 2033 is estimated at 3,098 dwellings, totalling 182 properties per annum. Housing need is predominantly around 2-3 bed homes, and 2+bedroom flats.	SHMA, Harlow, 2016

##### Public Perception

68% of residents believe that public realm and landscaping is an element in need of the greatest improvement in the town, followed by the levels of traffic congestion (59%), and the level of crime (47%).	Essex Residents Survey, 2021
47% of residents felt fairly unsafe or very unsafe going outside in their local area during the night	As above
29% of respondents believe that it is extremely difficult to become a homeowner in the area	As above

##### Economy and Employment

Harlow is the second most deprived district in Essex, ranked 104 <sup>th</sup> nationally with 2 neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived	IMD 2019 Full Report
Decline in footfall from 25,000 visits per day pre-Covid, to 17,500 visits per day (resultant annual footfall of c.6.4m). This drop of 30% is in line with the average year-on-year change in retail footfall in high streets across the United Kingdom.	Statista, UK Footfall, 2021

Claimant count rate for Apr 2021 was 8.3%, an increase from 6.5% in Apr 2020. The rate for the East of England was lower at 5.2% from 3.9% in 2021	ONS, 2021
As of Q4 2021, Harlow has the 3rd lowest proportion of 16-64 year olds who are economically active, at 77.9%, compared to the East average of 81%	JSNA, Harlow, 2021
Median gross weekly earnings are £548.50 considerably below the East England figure of £628.60 and the England figure of £613.30	JSNA, Harlow, 2022
Harlow has the second lowest level of gross disposable income, at £19k compared to the Essex average of £23k.	JSNA, Harlow, 2022
Vacancy rates considerably above the national average at c.21.4%, with the most successful retail area being out of the town centre.	Retail and Leisure Study, Harlow, 2016
Commercial rents have declined significantly in recent years, from c.£21per square foot in 2013 to c.£16 per square foot in 2015, a reduction of 24% in two years.	As above
<b>Health and Community</b>	
Harlow is the most dangerous major town in Essex in terms of crime rates and is among the top 20 most dangerous overall out of Essex's 315 towns, villages, and cities.	JSNA, Harlow, 2022
The overall crime rate in Harlow in 2021 was 117 crimes per 1,000 people, with the town centre, showing the highest crime rate, making up almost 50% of the area's total crime.	JSNA, Harlow, 2022
<b>Culture</b>	
Suffers from sustained lack of investment, poor public transport and vulnerability to crime on public transport use	Harlow District Council, 2022
Harlow is home to an exceptional and growing collection of over 100 public artworks and a community of people passionate about its sculptural heritage, wishing to see a consolidated cultural quarter in the town	Sculpture Town, 2022
<p>Dilapidation, crime, anti-social behaviour, and poor residential provision discourages usage and visits by the local community, resulting in a decline in footfall. A new cultural quarter would diversify the town centre offer, broadening the scope beyond an over-reliance on retailing, boosting additional footfall. This would boost economic prosperity, improve resident satisfaction, and provide employment opportunities and land value uplift.</p>	

**Bids should demonstrate the quality assurance of data analysis and evidence for explaining the scale and significance of local problems and issues. Please demonstrate how any data, surveys and evidence is robust, up to date and unbiased. (Limit 500 words)**

Analysis of the value for money and economic impact of the Playhouse Cultural Quarter needs to be appropriately measured, proportional, and credible, adhering to DLUHC and HM Treasury guidance. Deyton Bell and Capita have been onboarded to support Harlow's LUF application through providing expert advice in economic development and value for money calculations.

Several reputable data sources are utilised to estimate these economic benefits and establish the baseline discussed above. These have been referenced and are the most up to date sources of information available on record. Most data has been gathered from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Harlow as it directly relates to the target area and collates the most appropriate data to frame the current economic context.

Throughout the modelling of the economic case, national and local datasets have been used as inputs for the appraisal to ensure that methodology and techniques used remain robust. These national datasets provide district level insight for Harlow and the wider Essex region. This includes:

Dataset	Date	Coverage	Unbiased	Suitable for decision-making
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	Latest data 2021	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes
Retail and Leisure Study	Latest data 2016	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes, with caution due to data being over 5 years old
Essex Residents Survey	Latest data 2021	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes
Index of Multiple Deprivation	Latest data 2019	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes
Strategic Housing Management Assessment	Latest data 2016	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes, with caution due to data being over 5 years old
Census Data Initial Release	Latest data 2021	Harlow District: area of interest	Yes	Yes

**Please demonstrate that data and evidence chosen is appropriate to the area of influence of the interventions. (Limit 250 words)**

We have used a range of data to develop the project and undertake the modelling that this bid is based upon. Sources include:

- National data, including benchmarks set out in Green Book guidance,
- Unit Cost indicators established by Greater Manchester Combined Authority to establish baselines for our skills work,
- Homes England guidance on employment and construction jobs
- Visit Britain data to inform our proposal on visitor numbers.

We have also reviewed local data in relation to the Toddbrook ward of HDC, which covers the Town Centre to inform the interventions. Toddbrook ward is one of the most deprived in Harlow.

We have recognised the Town Centre’s role as the economic centre of the District, and have identified data which shows how the town centre has an influence over the wider district and the future Harlow Gilston Garden Town.

The data selected is in line with the Green Book appraisal guidance and the Levelling Up Fund Guidance. We have used the data to build our economic model and root our forecasted benefits in recognised data sources. We have used the ward level data to inform our forecasts on the future performance of town centre, both in economic terms and the benefits for our residents.

## 5.2 Effectiveness of proposal in addressing problems

**Please provide analysis and evidence to demonstrate how the proposal will address existing or anticipated future problems. Quantifiable impacts should usually be forecasted using a suitable model. (Limit 500 words)**

The proposed investment in the Playhouse Cultural Quarter will address several prevalent issues and result in a substantial number of quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefits to the town. These include:

Problem	Proposal	Expected Impact	Source
Changing Retail Patterns and declining footfall	Investment in the public realm and providing placemaking benefits, securing a cultural quarter for the town,	Anticipated to improve footfall and average spend in the area by at least 5%, preventing the ongoing stagnation and footfall decline experienced as a result of Covid-19.	Retail and Leisure Study, 2016 Theory of Change

Housing Need	Provision of 42 mixed tenure residential dwellings as part of the project	Affordable housing provision to help meet housing need and targets	SHMA, 2016
Poor quality public realm and lack of investment	Refurbishment of public realm, improving lighting, greening, and signage across the quarter	Increased feelings of safety, increased footfall and duration of stay/dwell time	Essex Residents Survey, 2021
High crime rates	Placemaking benefits to improve street condition, improved lighting, and wayfinding across the developable site	Improved feelings of safety and reduced crime rates, improving pride of place and reducing costs for associated police call-outs.	JSNA, Harlow, 2021
Low levels of economic activity, deprivation, low wage levels	Delivery of high-quality cultural quarter, providing workspace opportunities and exhibition space	Boost in economic activity for the cultural industry, providing business support and consolidating the sector offer within Harlow	Theory of Change IMD, 2019 JSNA, Harlow, 2021

The proposal addresses the issues facing Harlow Town Centre and can evidence value for money through the economic and financial appraisal. The proposal demonstrates why public funds need to be injected to begin the wider change the Town Centre requires.

The quantified benefits referenced in the table above have been calculated using an appropriate methodology as outlined in the HM Treasury Green Book guidance and based on best practice, advised by experts in business case development in the form of Deyton Bell and Capita.

**Please describe the robustness of the forecast assumptions, methodology and model outputs. Key factors to be covered include the quality of the analysis or model (in terms of its accuracy and functionality) (Limit 500 words)**

Due to the cultural focus of the proposed development, a large portion of the anticipated benefits are non-monetised but have, where possible, been quantified using appropriate proxy measures and unit cost values where relevant, adopting the DCMS' guidance on valuing culture and heritage capital projects.

Analysis of the value for money and economic impact of the proposed development needs to be appropriately measured, proportional, and credible, adhering to DLUHC and HM Treasury guidance.

The assumptions that were used for the quantification of the monetisable benefits are presented in the table below. These assumptions are the standard economic assumptions used for applications of this format.

Input	Value	Source
Price Base	2019/20	McBains Architects, Harlow District Council, to negate impact of Covid-19 pandemic
Appraisal start year (year 0)	2022/23	Appropriate appraisals start year, in line with project milestones
Study area	Sub-regional; Harlow and Essex	Distribution effects within the sub-region, with additionality factors applied at sub-regional rate
Real benefits	GDP deflator	As and when appropriate, economic benefits provided in a price base year other than 2019/20 will apply the GDP deflator to rebase to this year
Discounting	3.5%	HM Treasury Green Book Social Discount Rate

Direct and indirect benefits have been assessed to ensure the full impact of the development is understood.

Other due diligence measures and assurance of the economic outputs for the scheme include:

- Engagement with business owners and stakeholders to determine anticipated improvement levels and wider support
- Accurate case studies and proxy measures to quantify non-monetised benefits
- Robust forecasting model previously successful in award of Town's Deal, Future High Streets, and other government grant-funded schemes
- Additionality measures applied and justified
- Optimism bias accounted for
- Where assumptions based on anticipated outputs have been made, sensitivity tests have been conducted to determine the robustness of the value for money of the scheme.

As part of the economic appraisal, a Do-Nothing scenario has been identified for the intervention to determine the deadweight for the scheme – i.e., what would have happened anyway:

- **Preferred Option** – this would see c.£19.992m of LUF investment by 2024/25 in the cultural quarter, enhancing the cultural offer, improving residential provision, and enhancing public realm
- **No Investment Option ('Do Nothing')** – no investment goes ahead due to the lack of appropriate funding; even though HDC are funding the residential dwellings, without construction of the wider site, there is no possibility of building these homes on the site as at now.

Due to land ownership complexities and lack of private investor interest in public realm/merit goods schemes, a scheme of this nature could not go ahead without public sector support. Consequently, the 'No Investment Option' is taken as being no change from the current baseline.