



Letchworth  
Garden City  
Heritage Foundation

# SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY



# foreword

**Founded in 1903, Letchworth was the first planned garden city. Its designers sought to combine the best features of urban and rural living to offer residents a lifestyle that blended the richness and energy of the city with fresh air and open countryside.**

Today, Letchworth's founding principles feel more relevant than ever. Britain's cities, suburbs and towns are changing to reflect environmental, economic and

social realities that can no longer be ignored. The ways in which we live, and work are changing too, as we seek out places that offer essential resources, access to countryside and nature, convenient connections and a genuine sense of community.

Letchworth did it first, creating a blueprint for responsible development that resonates to this day. We are revitalising our position towards sustainable development and promoting the wellbeing of its people.

This strategy will improve the fabric of our town, boost residents' quality of life and enrich Letchworth's cultural offer, making it more attractive and generating more revenue to be spent for the good of the local community.



**Graham Fisher**  
Chief Executive





# Context

**In the face of profound global challenges, sustainability is our strategic priority. These challenges are supported by scientific evidence, showing significant changes on our planet.**

Climate change, with its rising temperatures and extreme weather, is harming nature, causing a rapid loss of biodiversity. This damage makes it harder for the planet to handle climate change, creating a vicious cycle. But it's not just the environment. Economic troubles, like rising prices, and global conflicts are also adding to the strain. These problems all worsen each other, making the overall situation much more dangerous than any one issue alone. We need to tackle all these interconnected crises to find real solutions.

All these challenges hit vulnerable communities the hardest, making life on our planet even less fair. Recognising the urgency of our situation, we understand that it is not just a moral duty but also a necessity for our collective survival and well-being.

**Our response to these challenges is within our Sustainability Strategy, which includes key elements:**

## REDUCING CARBON FOOTPRINT

We commit to minimising greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to cleaner energy sources.

## EFFICIENT RESOURCE USE

We aim to use electricity, gas, water, materials, our land and other resources more effectively. We will also focus on waste reduction from our activities.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We pledge to support the communities we engage with, promoting local development, enhancing resilience and sharing knowledge.

## ETHICAL PRACTICES

We commit to equitable treatment of employees, suppliers, and communities across all our operations.

# committed

Our Sustainability Strategy represents a serious and pragmatic approach, more than just a plan. It's a commitment to addressing the pressing challenges of our time.

With a deep understanding of the global context, we embark on a journey to make a significant difference and secure a brighter future for all.

This strategy focuses on our own activities. However, we have a key responsibility to use our influence to support others. Therefore you are invited to be a part of this ongoing journey toward sustainability.

# Sustainability at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

**Letchworth's story starts with an ordinary man, Ebenezer Howard, who founded the Garden City Movement. The aim was for social reform through self-sufficient garden cities.**

We are quickly approaching the 125-year celebration of this vision, and we have a [five-year strategy](#) in place that aims to meet the basic needs for the Foundation to succeed in the future.

The Foundation must think far into the future and must act now to avoid foreseeable problems and minimise the risk of issues we can't plan for.

In the next 10 years, 4 of the top 5 global risks from the World Economic Forum are environmental challenges. These are: failing to mitigate and adapt to climate change, the impact of extreme weather events as well as ecosystem collapse.

*Sir Ebenezer Howard founded the Garden City movement which led to the creation of Letchworth Garden City and influenced urban planning throughout the world.*



The planet on which we live and the elements of nature, are extremely fugitive and prone to decay...

**Ebenezer Howard**



The Sustainability Strategy aids the delivery of our Sustainability Policy (available on our website)

The policy promotes action where we have authority and to use our unique position in the region to influence others. While offering residents greater financial and health security.

## THE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IS FORMED OF

**A Framework** – which has three areas: Our People, Our Planet, and Our Purpose (see page 9)

**Nine overall goals** – three for each area of the framework (see page 10)

**Actions across three time horizons** – now, next and future (see page 11)

The Sustainability Strategy has been introduced to all areas of the Foundation. Success against the strategy will be measured at least annually, using objectives and targets.

Emerging strategies support the delivery of the Sustainability Strategy framework and goals. We are developing an action plan that outlines the budget requirements necessary to achieve our objectives. These financial considerations will directly impact our ability to meet both immediate and long-term goals. While we are committed to delivering as much as possible, we recognise that resource limitations may mean we are unable to achieve everything we set out to do.

inspiration





## More leadership and action wanted

59% of the public say that if businesses do not act now to combat climate change then they are failing their employees and customers.

*Ipsos*

## We must manage our food system better

23% of total UK food system emissions are linked to the production and distribution of food that becomes waste.

*WRAP*



## Improving homes is part of the solution



More than 50% of homes in Letchworth have EPC ratings of D or below. Energy efficiency measures to improve these dwellings to EPC C could save £2.5m and nearly 5000 tonnes of CO2e per year.

*Savills & EPC database*



## Our children want climate action

75% [of children] want the government to take stronger action on the climate and inequality crisis.

*Save the Children*

## Fuel poverty kills

10% of excess winter deaths are directly attributable to fuel poverty and 21.5% are attributable to cold homes.

*End Fuel Poverty & UCL*



## Being outside leads to better health and pro-environmental activities

Being more connected to nature is linked to people being more likely to report being in good, or very good, health and have pro-environmental behaviours.

*Ons related study & Mental Health UK*



## Restoring nature will support prosperity

Damage to the natural environment is having a bigger impact on the UK economy than the financial and COVID crises.

*Oxford University*



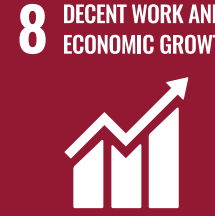
# setting the scene

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## ALIGNMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the global call to action. A framework of 17 measures.

The Foundation undertook a piece of work identifying the goals which we believe we have the largest influence on. These are 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 13 (Climate action) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals). However, our work contributes to nearly all of the SDGs in some form.



### Goal 8

Promote long term, inclusive and sustained economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.



### Goal 11

Make places inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Safeguard cultural and natural heritage, providing accessible green and public spaces.



### Goal 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; increase resilience, adaptive capability, and capacity.



### Goal 17

Encourage and promote effective partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

# action



# What has been achieved

**This strategy aims to align and increase the pace of the activities of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.**

The history of Letchworth is rooted in connecting people with the environment to improve their lives, at the same time recognising the limited resources our planet has. We have therefore acted to support our community and protect the environment well before this strategy. Some highlights include:

## EVOLVING PRINCIPLES

- Developed and **published guidelines** for homeowners to protect their homes and improve energy efficiency aligned with national heritage preservation guidance.
- Retaining principles to protect nature in the garden city, including tree and hedgerow maintenance and encouraging the retention of front gardens to protect biodiversity, reduce flood risk and the impacts of heat waves.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



- Participating as an active project partner in the government funded project, **ResilientTogether**, to protect and enhance the Pix brook for current and future generations. Including community engagement activities, like a nature trail, educational water play
- Re-establishing the Arbor Day celebration within Letchworth, with the aim to spread awareness and interest in nature within schoolchildren of the Garden City.
- Throughout 2021, the Letchworth Culture Committee created a **Culture Strategy** for Letchworth. Released in 2022 it presented a vision that by 2026, Letchworth will be a thriving arts, culture and heritage centre, attracting audiences from around the country and the world, providing opportunities for all to engage and achieving high levels of community participation for our residents.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT



- We have developed a long standing relationship with Citizens Advice North Herts, and in 2024 they received over £100,000 to support residents in Letchworth to reduce debt and maximise income.
- Letchworth Schools Partnership received £90,000 in 2024 for family support teams in schools.
- We are working closely with the Letchworth Garden Shed team, through initial funding, which was £28,568 in 2024. This assisted with continued operations from their high street unit, which opened in 2023.
- Smaller projects and groups received grant funding of a further £140k in 2024 supporting other Garden City organisations.



## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Our investment strategy with [CCLA](#) and [Cazenove](#) has Environment, Social and Governance rated funds.
- Supported by our energy broker, we have transitioned our electricity supplies to a genuinely renewable tariff from Ecotricity.



## LAND AND PROPERTY

- We have supplemented existing orchards with additional planting and we are working with volunteer groups to improve the management of our orchards, we have reverted land from arable to grassland and flower meadows. In addition, protection and enhancement of Willian and Norton Ponds, including supporting protected and native species.
- Commercial farming takes place across much of our estate. The farm is one of the biggest in the UK to have adopted Natural England's HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) scheme. The farm business is a member of the LEAF Marque standard, which encourages sustainable food production.
- Development of the £1m funded Garden City Greenway, and improvements and creation of leisure spots along the route.
- Reviewed and improved our residential and industrial rental properties to comply with government energy performance requirements.



## GOVERNANCE

- We have Governors and Trustees with specific responsibilities that cover the themes that have informed this strategy. Including Preservation of buildings, environment and social welfare and the relief of poverty.
- Formed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) allies' group, to embed EDI across our funder activity, including policy development, training and communication.
- Joined the [Funder Commitment on Climate Change](#), a holistic, high-level framework supporting funders to play their part in tackling the causes and impacts of climate change.
- Appointed full-time Sustainability and Nature and Wellbeing Strategic Leads, to drive this agenda on behalf of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and support existing staff working across social themes.





# Where we want to be

## Our Planet

We are the largest landlord in the Garden City. Most of our assets are office, retail, industrial and residential spaces, we also have listed investments. We have responsibilities for the majority of the 5,500 acre Garden City estate.

Therefore our impact on the environment and reliance on our planet's resources is significant. Our strategy puts action in place so that we can all continue to benefit from the best of town and country.



Delivering positive environmental and social results will be achieved by checking that governance across all areas of the foundation supports the right decisions.

We will focus on the foundation's resilience so we can continue to support cultural, architectural and natural heritage.

## Our Purpose



We are led by, supported by and serve people in Letchworth Garden City, and have an influence that spans multiple stakeholders.

Positioned to deliver culture, leisure and education, we will connect with others to improve health, wellbeing and prosperity through our activities.

## Our People



# Sustainability Strategy Goals








# Sustainability Strategy Objectives

# our planet

 **NOW**  
(2024 – 2028)

 **NEXT**  
(2029 – 2040)

 **FUTURE**  
FOUNDATION AMBITION

<p>2025</p> <p>All new residential property lettings to have an EPC of C or better</p>	<p>2026</p> <p>Confirmed 100% zero carbon electricity</p>	<p>2030</p> <p>Net zero carbon for Scope 1 and 2</p> <p>All commercial properties to achieve EPC B (1 April 2030)</p>	<p>2040</p> <p>Net zero carbon for all carbon emission scopes</p>	<p> <b>Net zero carbon</b></p>
<p>Establish network of volunteers focused on nature</p>	<p>Green Asset and Rural Asset Strategies in place</p>	<p>Clear nature conservation plans developed across green assets</p>	<p>Restoration of biodiversity evidenced, and secured for the future</p>	<p> <b>Restore nature</b></p>
<p>Segregated food and dry mixed recyclable waste collections</p>		<p>Resource efficiency measures included in core foundation processes</p>	<p>Zero avoidable waste from our activities</p>	<p> <b>Resource efficiency</b></p>



# Sustainability Strategy Objectives

# our people

 **NOW**  
(2024 – 2028)

 **NEXT**  
(2029 – 2040)

 **FUTURE**  
FOUNDATION AMBITION

2025

All cultural and artistic programmes to include environmental or social themes

2026

Effective appraisals incorporating development planning for all contracted staff

2028

Social investment to reach £0.50 in every £1.00

2035

Grants budget of £1.5m

2040

Our audience reach measurement shows Letchworth is recognised as a national destination for culture, leisure and learning



Increase provision of diverse cultural, leisure and learning opportunities

Staff volunteering – 100 hours

Stakeholder management tool (CRM style) in use by all Foundation teams

We will have school integrated support programs and development opportunities. Covering food, basic household items, post 16 skills and financial resilience

All areas of the foundation have documented stakeholder maps determining core outcomes



Working together with key stakeholders to achieve our strategy objectives

Promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion through all activities

Declaration of 5 nature reserves

Impactful volunteering programme that supports health and wellbeing

1200 homes delivered on land we owned, >35% affordable homes



Supporting health, wellbeing and prosperity through our activities

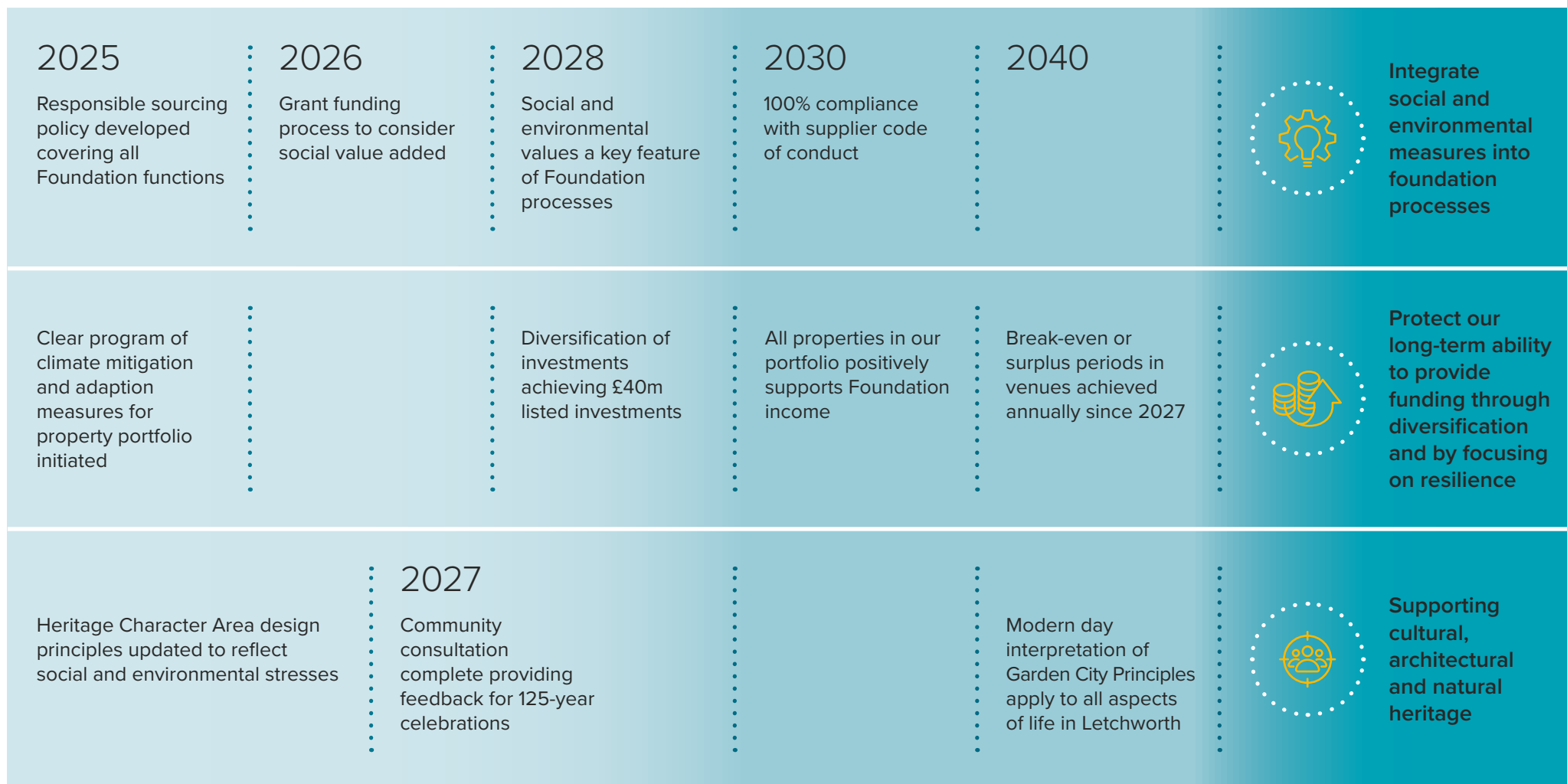
# Sustainability Strategy Objectives

# our purpose

 **NOW**  
(2024 – 2028)

 **NEXT**  
(2029 – 2040)

 **FUTURE**  
FOUNDATION AMBITION





# Glossary

Worldfavour possibly have the most up-to-date list of Sustainability Buzzwords. There are terms in this strategy document that are not redefined here. Check out their guide [here](#).

<b>Adapt (to climate change)</b>	Changes that are responding to a changing climate. For example, someone might install solar reflecting film for their windows, so their house doesn't overheat so badly in summer.
<b>Climate Change</b>	The long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Resulting in more rain, more drought, more heat, more cold, which has not been experienced before in such a way.
<b>Ecosystem</b>	The interaction of organisms (like plants, animals and fungi) within a certain environment.
<b>Garden city movement</b>	The garden city movement started in 1898. It creates a plan for an area that promotes small communities surrounding a city separated with spaces for nature. Garden Cities plan to balance the needs of residents, industry, and agriculture.
<b>Global Warming</b>	When the average temperature across our whole planet increases, which leads to climate change.
<b>Key performance indicator (KPI) leading &amp; lagging</b>	A measure of success. A leading KPI promotes improvement and lagging KPI measures something that happened. For example, when training for a marathon, a leading indicator might be number of training sessions per week. A lagging KPI would be the time you achieved on race day.
<b>Mitigate (climate change)</b>	Reducing the amount of harm we are doing that causes climate change. For example, someone might start doing a weekly meal planner, so they produce less food waste.
<b>Self-sufficient</b>	Being able to satisfy your own basic needs without help from others. Often linked to the production of food.
<b>Social reform</b>	The idea of creating a society that works in favour of a certain community's needs. For example, the women's rights movement, through Women's suffrage.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Someone with an interest. For the Foundation, this is quite a long list of interested people or organisations including: Trustees, governors, staff & volunteers, charities, local community groups, artists, residents, visitors, tenants (commercial and residential), business owners and their staff, local authorities, suppliers and contractors.
<b>Sustainability (strategy)</b>	More than just the dictionary definition "the ability to be maintained at a certain rate", a Sustainability Strategy sets out how an organisation aims to survive, balancing social, environmental and economic needs.
<b>World Economic Forum</b>	The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.





# Letchworth Garden City

Heritage Foundation

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