

7<sup>th</sup> October 2022

To: Town Mayor and all Members of the Partnership Committee

Town Councillors: **D Jones, T McMahon, C Slough and K Wattingham**

CBC Councillors **A Ryan, Y Farrell, S Goodchild and P Hamill**

CBC Officers **Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager**

Copies, for information, to:

- Cllr Tracey Stock, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing, Communities and Leisure, CBC
- all Houghton Regis Town Councillors

## NOTICE OF MEETING

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Partnership Committee** to be held on Tuesday **18<sup>th</sup> October 2022** commencing at **7.00pm hours** at the Council Offices, Peel Street.

Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting may do so in person or remotely through the meeting link below.

To attend remotely through Teams please follow this link: [MEETING LINK](#)

Please follow this guidance if attending the meeting remotely [LINK](#)



**Clare Evans**  
**Town Clerk**

<b><i>THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED *</i></b>
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## AGENDA

### 1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Members are invited to elect a Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2022/23 in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at pages 12 – 14.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this can be a member from either authority.

### 2. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

*\*Phones and other equipment may be used to film, audio record, tweet or blog from this meeting by an individual Council member or a member of the public. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming unless the meeting resolves to go into exempt session.*

*The use of images or recordings arising from this is not under the Council's control.*

**3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC** (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)

To receive questions and statements from members of the public in respect of any item of business included in the agenda, as provided for in Standing Order No.s 1(f) and 1(h).

**4. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 26-37 and Schedule 4) and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare any interests which are not currently entered in the member's register of interests or if he/she has not notified the Monitoring Officer of any such interest.

Members are invited to submit any requests for Dispensations for consideration.

**5. MINUTES**

*Pages 5 - 11*

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

**Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**

**6. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Members are invited to elect a Vice Chairman for Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2022/23 in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached at pages 12 - 14.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference this should be a member from the other authority to the Chairman.

**7. CONFIRMATION OF THE SECRETARIAT**

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Committee are required to confirm the secretariat for the Partnership Committee for 2022/23.

**8. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION**

The Terms of Reference require the list of Co-opted Members to be reviewed annually, by the Town Joint Committee.

Members have also received applications for co-option from:

- David Gibbons - a co-opted member during 2021/2022
- Jo Anderson – long term resident of Houghton Regis
- Carole Regan – long term resident of Houghton Regis

Members are invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee state:

## **Co-option**

To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

**Recommendation:**            **To confirm the following co-opted members of the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee for 2022-23:**

- **David Gibbons**
- **Jo Anderson**
- **Carole Regan**

## **9. COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

*Pages 12 - 14*

Members will find attached the Terms of Reference which relates to this committee.

*This report is provided for information.*

## **10. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

*Pages 15 - 16*

Members are invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan.

## **11. CBC UPDATE REPORT**

*Pages 17 - 35*

The CBC update report is attached for information. It is highlighted to Members that included within the report is an update on the Bidwell Quarry / Houghton Regis Chalk Pit.

## **12. IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING IN HOUGHTON REGIS: TIME 2 CONNECT**

Jemma Mclean, Community Engagement Manager, and Bex McBrearty, Community Connections Advisor of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) will attend the meeting to update members and respond to any queries or comments on this project.

## **13. HOUSING AND ENGAGEMENT**

A verbal update will be provided by James Yeomans, Head of Housing Property, CBC covering the progress with new facilities at All Saints View and The Brook and will provide an update on Windsor Drive.

**14. TITHE FARM SPORTS PROVISION UPDATE**

*Pages 36 - 67*

Members will find attached the agenda report as presented to the HRTC Environment & Leisure Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> June and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**15. HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN**

*Pages 68 - 124*

To enable members to consider the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan.

It is hoped that Beverley Gaynor, Interim Head of Place Delivery, CBC will be in attendance.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. For the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee to endorse the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan**
- 2. To request that CBC review and update the 2008 Town Centre Masterplan**

**16. PUBLIC REALM - CBC / HRTC JOINT PROJECT UPDATE**

A verbal update will be provided by Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager, CBC and Clare Evans, Town Clerk, HRTC, on the project to date.

**17. ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members have been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee are able to use this process to forward items for CBC's attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

As such members are requested to identify and confirm if there are any requested items for CBC's attention. This item is suggested:

1. Dunstable Market Charter (pages 125 - 131) – the attached report outlines the implications for Houghton Regis (and surrounding parishes) when holding events arising from the Dunstable Market Charter. The Town Council would request the support of CBC in confirming the validity of the Dunstable Market Charter, clarification as to what is defined by 'market' as it was considered that this would not apply to the stalls held at Houghton Regis events and request a copy of the Charter.

**Recommendation:**

**To request that the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair take the following matters forward:**

- 1. Dunstable Market Charter**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP  
COMMITTEE  
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET  
ON 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

Present:    Town Cllrs:    D Jones (Chair), T McMahon, K Wattingham, M Kennedy  
              CBC Cllrs:    Cllr Hamill (Vice-Chair), Y Farrell, S Goodchild  
              Co-opted    D Gibbons  
              member:

CBC                    S Hughes, Community Engagement Manager  
Officers:  
HRTC                C Evans, Town Clerk  
Officers:            L Senior, Head of Democratic Services

Also in attendance:    HRTC Cllr E Cooper  
                              CBC Cllr T Stock, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing, Communities  
                              and Leisure  
                              G Croxford, Community Engagement Manager, BRCC  
                              B McBrearty, Community Connections Advisor, BRCC  
                              I Berry, Assistant Director Assets, CBC  
                              J Dickinson, Head of Leisure, CBC  
                              Representative, Land Improvement Holdings

Apologies:    CBC Cllr            A Ryan  
                              J Yeomans, Head of Housing Property, Housing Services, CBC

Members of the public:    5

**945    APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received from CBC Cllr A Ryan and J Yeomans, Head of Housing Property, Housing Service, CBC.

**946    QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

An update was requested on where Central Bedfordshire Council was with the land assessments and investigations on Windsor Drive.

Representatives of CBC were asked:

- What impact had there been on the recent Decorum Council temporary halt on any Development in the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation Zone of Influence upon CBC planning applications?
- What were the timescales to have the new strategy in place?
- What impact would this have on the CBC planning and timescales for Windsor Drive?

A member of the Recycled Teenagers Group, raised concerns over the equipment that had been in storage at the centre, which was now unavailable to the group. A survey had been completed and alternative venues had been offered, however, these were deemed unsuitable.

**947 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Cllr McMahon declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as a former member of Craft and Coffee who had equipment stored in the library.

Cllr Wattingham declared an interest in the Memorial Hall as this had been mentioned as one of the unsuitable venues suggested for the Recycled Teenagers.

Cllr Farrell declared an interest in the Memorial Hall as this had been mentioned as one of the unsuitable venues suggested for the Recycled Teenagers.

**948 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2022 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**949 IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLBEING IN HOUGHTON REGIS: TIME 2 CONNECT**

Gina Croxford, Community Engagement Manager, and Bex McBrearty, Community Connections Advisor of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) were in attendance at the meeting to update members and respond to any queries or comments on this project.

Members were advised that Time 2 Connect continued to grow in Houghton Regis, it was open 5 days per week in the Cedar Room in Houghton Hall Park.

The weekly Café Connect was run on Tuesday afternoons enabling people to meet in a relaxed environment. A live sing-a-long session had been offered, with the intention of offering further sessions.

Members were advised a new directory of local services had been created for the wider community which could be viewed on the Time2Connect website:

<https://time2connect.org.uk/>

Members were advised that funding was due to end in 2023, however, they were confident that the budget would allow a continuation for a further few months.

Members expressed their preference for this service to continue for as long as possible.

**950 LINMERE – THE FARMSTEAD**

A representative from Land Improvement Holdings was in attendance at the meeting and advised members that the Farmstead was open, the hall was operational and the one of the units had been let out to a local business, with confirmed bookings for other local groups.

It was queried why the planned footpath, leading from the old part of the town to the new part, had not materialised. It was advised that this would be looked into and fed back.

## **951 HOUSING AND ENGAGEMENT**

Members were advised there were no updates on site investigations on Windsor Drive, however, information would be sought and fed back.

Members were advised of the following:

the Red House site had been decommissioned;

the Brook was almost complete with final snagging to be completed;

Ward member visits were being arranged to The Brook, members acknowledged previous arrangements for visits had been made and subsequently cancelled due to covid site safety issues.

Members requested information on the retail outlets planned for All Saints View.

Members were advised that the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of All Saints View would affect the residents of Clarkes Way. The Town Council would be advised of the timings of the new phase of the development.

It was requested that feasibility be looked at regarding the pavement barriers during phase 2 of the development, as the current placement had adversely affected wheelchair users by forcing the use of an alternative, much further, route. A secondary barrier was suggested to create a protected walkway.

## **952 CBC UPDATE REPORT**

Members received the CBC update report for information. The following points were highlighted:

Community Safety

Safer Communities and Partnerships Team

The Safer Neighbourhood Team had held various community events and Officers had conducted a walkabout around Parkside.

An action day had been held with high visibility patrols around the area.

Parking Enforcement

486 visits were conducted between 15<sup>th</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 which resulted in 15 PCN's issued.

Leisure, Libraries and Countryside

The Have Your Say consultation and the statutory Planning consultation had been combined into a Statement of Community Involvement which also provided a response to the consultation comments.

2<sup>nd</sup> May a submission would be made to Planning at CBC.

May - 10<sup>th</sup> June: 2<sup>nd</sup> statutory Planning consultation

10<sup>th</sup> June DMC papers published

#### Chalk Pit

Work continued around the management plan and to resolve ongoing issues regarding the license.

#### Houghton Hall Park

A large number of events for families and individuals had been planned

Work on the Parks for People project had been completed with a final evaluation report pending.

#### Waste Collections

Garden waste collections resumed on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

New dog bins had been installed at Park Road North and Parkside Drive

#### Tree Planting Project

This financial year the Tree Planting Project had supported over 30 projects, 17,000 trees, and over a 1km of hedgerow

#### ECO Schools

The Sustainability Team worked with schools across the area, including Thornhill Primary School, to support the Eco-Schools Green Flag award process.

### **953 BEDFORD SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Iain Berry, Assistant Director Assets was in attendance at the meeting to provide an update on the consultation results on the future use of Bedford Square Community Centre.

Members were advised of the consideration of the executive report on 8<sup>th</sup> February. It was acknowledged that residents and users of Bedford Square were unhappy with the service received and inability to book rooms, and feedback was received that residents had felt the community use of the centre was being eradicated.

It was confirmed to members that a commitment had been made to meet with Houghton Regis Town Council and the college to engage and discuss feedback.

Concerns were raised that a CBC Scrutiny Committee's decision had been ignored resulting in the loss of community use of the Bedford Square Community Centre.

Members were reminded that at the Annual Towns meeting, it had been requested that Houghton Regis Town Council submit an official complaint through Central Bedfordshire Council's complaints procedures regarding the handling of the community centre, and if necessary, requested this be escalated to the Ombudsman.

Members requested that Central Bedfordshire Council gave consideration to reversing the decision of use of Bedford Square Community Centre.



**954 TITHE FARM SPORTS PROVISION UPDATE**

Members received the agenda report as presented to the HRTC Environment & Leisure Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

Members were advised:

*Planning*

Planning permission has been secured.

*Pavilion tender*

The pavilion tender process has been concluded and a contractor had been appointed.

*Project funding*

CBC have advised that a substantial amount of additional s106 funding would be made available to this project, increasing this provision from £223,020 to £485,311.

**955 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE TOWN PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Members of the Town Partnership Committee provided a verbal report on matters of relevance to Houghton Regis arising in particular from the Committee/s on which they serve.

Cllr Hamill advised members that he worked with CBC Cllrs and had been looking at parking schemes, Tithe Farm Road was due to be resurfaced and Drury Lane was to be resurfaced with new drainage, dates were not confirmed.

Co-opted member Mr Gibbons updated members that there had been replacement lighting agreed for under the canopies in Bedford Square.

Cllr Goodchild advised members that the Corporate Parenting Panel met on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022, regarding Looked After Children, they received an update on Childrens' Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Health Passport. After a visit from Mark Riddell MBE to Central Bedfordshire Council, a suggested approach was to become a champions model, Cllr Goodchild has offered her time to support this.

A further meeting was held in April, at which the main point of focus was supporting young people in education.

Cllr Goodchild further advised members the Social Care Health and Housing met in February. The main points of discussion were the NHS vaccination programme, Primary care and proposals for an integrated care system.

Cllr Farrell acknowledged the positive work of the Community Safety Team who had been working with partners tackling crimes in the town and highlighted the encouraging impact this had had in the area.

Cllr McMahon requested that it be considered that the Town Council members work collaboratively with Central Bedfordshire Council members and share information and feedback from residents, enabling the deliverance of accurate information to residents.

**956 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan.

Members expressed disappointment in the lack of attention to Houghton Regis in comparison to Dunstable regarding funding for road surfaces and pot-holes, it was suggested that there seemed to be a financial focus on certain towns.

Members were directed to the Highways Area Teams to address issues and receive feedback.

It was requested that Central Bedfordshire Council give consideration to providing updates on school places as to date the new school building in Bidwell West had yet to start.

## **957 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION**

Members were reminded of the possibility of seeking to co-opt local stakeholders onto the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee. In this regard the Terms of Reference for the Committee state:

### **Co-option**

1. To support engagement with local stakeholders the Town Joint Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Town Joint Committee. Decision making around removals can either be taken by the whole Town Joint committee or by joint agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair, depending on each Town Joint Committee's preference.

The list of Co-opted Members should be reviewed annually, by the Town Joint Committee.

For 2021/22 Mr David Gibbons had been a co-opted member of the committee.

Members were advised that a review of co-opted members would take place at the next Town Partnership Committee meeting.

## **958 ITEMS REQUESTING ATTENTION BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

Members had been advised of the CBC process to determine further consideration, at CBC committee level, of items and issues.

Members of this committee were able to use this process to forward items for CBC's attention via the CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair.

As such members were requested to identify and confirm if there are any requested items for CBC's attention.

It was confirmed that this item would remain on future Town Partnership Committee agendas.

It was clarified that it would be the Ward member, in the role of either Chair or Vice-Chair of this committee, to feed items through to CBC.

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.00pm**

**Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day of July 2022**

**Chairman**

DRAFT

## Houghton Regis Town Partnership Committee <sup>1</sup>

### Purpose

1. To influence decisions and help shape initiatives and their delivery for the benefit of the whole town taking into account the needs of the town, customers, employees, residents, visitors, traders, property owners and developers.
2. To develop and encourage public participation and engagement and take into consideration the resident voice in the work of the Committee

### Objectives

1. Help improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural vitality of the town
2. Ensure a partnership and collaborative approach to achieve the delivery of town regeneration, including influencing Section 106 funding received for town improvements and community facilities.
3. Opportunities to delegate funding decisions to the Committees should be explored, such as Section 106 received to spend on community facilities.
4. The Committee will make decisions on any joint funding allocated to it.
5. Influence and help shape strategies / plans that impact on the future viability of the town.
6. Provide a forum for briefing Members of the Joint Committee on all key issues affecting the town, at the discretion of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
7. Make recommendations on strategically significant projects to the relevant Council's decision-making committees, including Committees of the Town Council.
8. Develop and maintain joint branding of communication, agendas and minutes.
9. To enable communities to discuss services and influence decisions at the local level as to how these services are delivered
10. To provide a forum for two-way communication about public service delivery and the implementation and effectiveness of policies affecting the town.
11. Promote resilience by encouraging communities to do more for themselves and champion local solutions.
12. Consider the ways in which proposals and initiatives can help to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

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<sup>1</sup> These were considered by the Partnership Committee at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April. The Terms of reference remain to be formally approved by Central Bedfordshire Council.

## **Membership**

1. Four Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and four Councillors from Biggleswade Town Council (Biggleswade Joint Committee).
2. Four Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and four Councillors from Houghton Regis Town Council (Houghton Regis Partnership Committee).
3. Five Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and five Councillors from Leighton-Linslade Town Council (Leighton-Linslade Partnership Committee).
4. Five Councillors from Central Bedfordshire Council and five Councillors from Dunstable Town Council (Dunstable Joint Committee).

*Who must be elected representatives of the wards.*

5. Two substitutes from each Council will be permitted to attend meetings as full Committee representatives. A Councillor who sits on both CBC and the Town Council can substitute. Central Bedfordshire Council Councillors shall not substitute a Town Councillor on the Committee and vice versa.
6. Substitutes for Central Bedfordshire Council Members on the Joint Committee must be a ward councillor in the town in the first instance or if not available a substitute must be an Executive Member. Substitutes for the Town Council Members of the Joint Committee will be a ward town councillor
7. Members are appointed annually.
8. All Members of the Committee should have the interests of the town as a priority, not their own wards.

## **Meetings and Quorum**

1. At least 3 Members from each Council must be in attendance for the meeting to be quorate.
2. Meetings will be held a minimum of once per year and up to 4 per year and take place at venues in the area
3. The Committee may also organise extra ordinary meetings at the discretion of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
4. In addition to the Committee meetings, the Committee can organise other forms of engagement to take place such as themed discussions / task and finish groups and community conferences, including joint meetings or events with other Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire.
5. All meetings will be open to the public unless exempt items are discussed

## **Chairman and Vice Chairman**

1. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be appointed from and by the Joint Committee's core membership; each Council must be represented in either role.
2. The appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman will hold their post for a period of one year, after which they may stand for re-election.

3. The Vice Chairman will preside in the absence of the Chairman. If neither is present, the Committee members in attendance will appoint a Chairman from amongst them for the duration of that meeting.
4. The Chairman and Vice Chairman will be responsible for the content of the Committee agendas and will allow committee members and other stakeholders to submit agenda topics which will be included unless the proposed agenda item is not relevant to the Purpose and/or Objectives of the Joint Committee.

### **Secretariat**

1. Either Council can administer the Joint Committee, according to their own Standing Orders. The Committee will decide annually which Council is to administer the Committee.
2. Agendas, minutes and press releases will be issued under joint branding.
3. The secretariat will prepare, monitor and keep up to date an annual work plan to set the broad direction and priorities for the Committee.

### **Decision making arrangements**

1. Only members of the Committee can vote. Co-opted Members have no voting rights.
2. The Committee will not have any decision-making powers regarding planning applications and will not seek to duplicate or hinder the work of Central Bedfordshire Council as the Local Planning Authority.
3. The Committee will reach decisions by a simple majority. The Chairman will have the casting vote in the case of a tie.

### **Co-option**

1. To support engagement with local stakeholders the Committee can co-opt members from local representative groups, as appropriate up to a maximum of 15. Each co-opted Member will be able to engage fully in all discussions but will not have any voting rights. Co-opted members can be removed from the Committee by joint agreement of the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
2. The list of Co-opted Members should be reviewed annually.

### **Governance**

1. The Minutes and action log for the Joint Committee will be presented to Central Bedfordshire Council. The detail of where this will be presented will be determined by Central Bedfordshire Council and reported back to the Joint Committee.



**HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE –  
WORK PLAN 2022/23**

Meeting Date	Regular Updates	Work Plan 2022/23	Reports already received / completed
19 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	CANCELLED	<p>The following suggestions are put forward, the timings of these reports / presentations will be confirmed once the content of the work plan has been agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving Health &amp; Wellbeing In Houghton Regis</li> <li>• Place Delivery</li> <li>• Community Buildings in Houghton Regis (inc. HRN 2 Community Building, Bedford Square Community Centre)</li> <li>• Tithe Farm Sports Provision</li> <li>• Housing And Engagement</li> <li>• Chalk Pit / Quarry</li> <li>• Kingsland / HR Leisure Centre</li> </ul>	
18 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Election of Chair Election of Vice Chair Partnership Committee Co-Option approval Confirmation Of The Secretariat Committee Functions & Terms Of Reference CBC Update report Work Plan Items Requesting Attention By CBC		
24 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	CBC Update report Work Plan Items Requesting Attention By CBC Proposed Dates For Meetings for following year		



<b>25<sup>th</sup> April 2022</b>	CBC Update report Work Plan Partnership Committee Co- Option consideration Items Requesting Attention By CBC		



**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATE**  
**18<sup>th</sup> October**

**Purpose of report: For information**

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## 1. COMMUNITY SAFETY

### CCTV REPORTS

August – 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> August

Date	Time	Location	Type of Crime	Arrests
10/08/22	09:24	Bedford Square	Concern for safety	0
14/08/22	12:59	Bedford Square	Breach of Community Behaviour order	0
18/08/22	12:49	Bedford Square	Shoplifting	0
19/08/22	19:23	Bedford Square	Drugs	0

September – 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> September

Date	Time	Location	Type of Crime	Arrests
07/09/22	12:35	Bedford Square	Intelligence	0
08/09/22	14:14	Westbury close	Intelligence	0
09/09/22	09:27	Westbury close	Intelligence	0
11/09/22	13:36	Bedford Square	Shoplifting	0
15/09/22	17:33	Bedford Square	Shoplifting	0
18/09/22	12:21	High street	Road traffic collision	0
19/09/22	12:08	Bedford square	Assault	0
21/09/22	00:21	Bedford Square	Missing person	0
30/09/22	15:58	Bedford Square	Anti-social behaviour	0

### 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

During this period there were 48 cases open to the Safer Neighbourhood Team:

- Fly Tipping – 20
- Nuisance Neighbours – 1
- Pollution Noise – 22
- Pollution Odour – 5

1 x Fixed Penalty Notices served for Householder Duty of Care

1 x Prosecutions in progress for Fly Tipping

**SAFER COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS TEAM**

Safer Communities Engagement Officer opened a problem-solving case regarding concerns around a property in Bidwell West area.

Safer Communities Engagement Officers and Safer Neighbourhood Officers completed a letter drop in Trident Drive, following reports of increase in flytips. Residents were provided information on where to report fly tips and their responsibilities around disposing of their waste.

During Anti-Social Behaviour Week 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, various patrols were carried out in the Houghton Regis area.

Safer Communities Engagement Officer worked with Thomas Whitehead School due to concerns there were rough sleepers accessing their grounds.

Police, CBC Housing, CBC Community Safety Team carried out resident engagement door knocks in Westminster Gardens.

Resident engagement door knocks in Bidwell West, carried out by Safer Communities Engagement Officer and Bidwell West Community Worker.

Safer Communities Engagement Officer met with colleague from Houghton Regis Town Council and colleagues from Houghton Hall Park to look at partnership working opportunities.

Weapon sweeps carried out around Academy of Central Bedfordshire.

Safer Communities Engagement Officers have conducted various patrols around Bedford Square due to reports of anti-social behaviour.

**2. HIGHWAYS**

**PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

From 1st June 2022 – end of September 2022, 50 Penalty Charge Notices were issued in Houghton Regis and 408 visits were made by the Civil Enforcement Officers.

**FIX MY STREET**

Reports From 1<sup>st</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

	Request Parking Restrictions	Road markings and lining	Signs	Grand Total
Action scheduled	0	0	1	1
Closed	0	1	0	1
Confirmed	2	0	4	6

Internal referral	0	1	9	10
Not responsible	0	1	0	1
Unable to fix	1	1	2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>

### ROAD SCHEME PROPOSALS

There has been one proposal in Houghton Regis – Plaiters Way, Disabled Parking Bay.

**To introduce Parking for Disabled badge holders only on the following length of road in Houghton Regis:-**

1. Plaiters Way, north side, from a point in line with the common property boundary between No. 70/71 and No. 72 Plaiters Way and extending in a north-easterly direction for a width of 2.2 metres and in a south-easterly direction for a length of 6 metres.

**To remove existing Parking for Disabled badge holders only on the following length of road in Houghton Regis:-**

1. Plaiters Way, north side, from a point at the end of the road in line with the common property boundary between No. 73 and No. 74 Plaiters Way and extending in a north-easterly direction covering an area approximately 7m in length and 2.4 metres in width.

[Road schemes - public notices - Houghton Regis, Plaiters Way: Disabled parking bay | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

## 3. LEISURE, LIBRARIES & COUNTRYSIDE

### HOUGHTON REGIS LEISURE CENTRE

Lower usage from last quarter, this taking into consideration the summer holidays and the pool closure in September due to the gas issues on the Kingsland Campus.

<b>Pre covid monthly average based on 2019 usage:</b>	18,847
<b>July 22:</b>	15,612
<b>Aug 22:</b>	14,563
<b>Sept 22</b>	12,687

The Aqua Ed programme remains strong being at the highest numbers the site has had with continued growth envisaged for the next quarter.

<b>01.03.20</b>	<b>AquaEd swimmers on the programme</b>	833
<b>01.12.20</b>	<b>Post lockdown 2020 swimmers</b>	669
<b>31.05.21</b>	<b>Post re-opening</b>	745
<b>01.10.22</b>	<b>AquaEd swimmers on the programme. Highest ever achieved</b>	999

Fitness membership is still recovering to pre-Covid numbers:

<b>01.03.20</b>	<b>Total fitness members</b>	1784
<b>01.12.20</b>	<b>Post lockdown 2020</b>	1134
<b>21.06.21</b>	<b>Post re-opening</b>	1250
<b>01.10.22</b>	<b>Latest figures</b>	1421

Membership numbers are still rising and going in the right direction.

The no joining fee has boosted sales in September, helping increase in fitness members.

The site offered a range of activities through their normally programming and have introduced SEND swim session to the programme for a regular fixture. This takes place on a Wednesday throughout the holiday timetable.

The site sales team have been out and about within the community to improve awareness of the centre's existence by delivering leaflets & attending community events. They continue to make positive links with the sales teams at the new home sites in the area to ensure that residents new to the area are made aware of the centre as soon as they arrive in Houghton Regis. The site attended the carnival in July, it was a great opportunity to celebrate the community and tell others what health benefits we can provide for them, here at the centre. No social media and outreach completed during the period of the Queen's passing.

### COMMUNITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

#### ACTIVE LIFESTYLES REFERRAL SCHEME

Our referral programme is continuing to run throughout Central Bedfordshire supporting residents at risk or with long term health conditions. For more information, please visit [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/active-lifestyles](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/active-lifestyles). We work in partnership with a number of organisations, to provide the residents with opportunities to promote physical and mental wellbeing.

#### FALLS PREVENTION – STRENGTH & BALANCE REFERRAL PROGRAMME

Falls Prevention Strength & Balance referral programme is now running at all leisure facilities. The course is a free 12 week referral programme designed to help improve strength and balance for people over 65 who are at risk of falling or have already had any falls. We have also started an online 6 week Falls pilot which is in place to offer a similar programme for those people who are unable to attend the programme at the Leisure Centre for any reason. Both programmes are proving successful. For more information please email: [activityforhealth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:activityforhealth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### HEALTH & WELLBEING KIOSKS

The health and wellbeing kiosks have been installed across all 6 of our leisure centres and are accessible to the public. You do not have to be a member to use the kiosk. The health and wellbeing kiosks are free to use. For more information, please visit [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/health-kiosks](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/health-kiosks) The health kiosks offer a secure and medically approved body analysis and use personal profiles with specific links to commissioned services in Central Bedfordshire including mental health support, weight management, physical activity and stop smoking services. Clinically validated, the kiosks them to self-monitor and continue to improve their healthy lifestyle choices.



### ONLINE ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

We are continuing to provide our online classes as the feedback of these have been great during the pandemic and people wanted them to continue. We are always adding classes to our YouTube library.



[www.facebook.com/GetActiveWith/](https://www.facebook.com/GetActiveWith/)



[Central Bedfordshire Active Lifestyles You Tube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

**Facebook Live Classes**  
Free exercise sessions delivered remotely via Facebook Live. The following sessions will take place on a weekly basis.  
This schedule will change every 10 weeks where we will bring you a change of activities and instructors.  
**These classes will start from Monday 15th August 2022**  
Monday 6pm (45 minute class) with Vinnie  
**HIIT**  
All levels as options will be given for exercises during the session.  
Tuesday @ 2pm (45 minute class) with Ella  
**Barre Pilates**  
A fusion of ballet & pilates. In this class you will streamline, firm, tighten & tone without adding bulk, creating balance, body awareness & flexibility.  
Friday @ 8.15am (20 minute class) with Trudy  
**Low impact workout**  
Wake up and shine low impact workout  
A great place to live and work.  
Find us online [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) [www.facebook.com/GetActiveWith/](https://www.facebook.com/GetActiveWith/) [www.youtube.com/channel/UC...](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

### ONLINE DAY ACTIVITIES

Central Bedfordshire Council offer an online schedule of weekday activities for residents of Central Bedfordshire to enjoy Monday to Friday every week. Activities include things like cookery, gardening, arts & crafts, informative talks, and fun gameshows.

As part of this programme, the Active Lifestyle Team offer a number of sessions to get active. Activities include seated exercise, dance and full body workouts, there is something for everyone

For more information or to add your name to the Newsletter so you receive emails detailing the activities taking place, please phone 0300 300 6588 | 0300 300 6710 or email [ODA@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ODA@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

All activities comply with current COVID guidelines. Activities include Buggy fitness, walking football, outdoor bootcamps. Most of the activities are FREE. Residents must book on via our booking page.

[www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles](http://www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles)

**#GetActiveWith Outdoor Programme**  
Mondays - Outdoor Circuits  
Biggleswade  
Eagle Farm Road Park, SG18 8JD  
7pm - 8pm  
Mondays - Outdoor Bootcamp  
Houghton Regis  
Moore Crescent Green Space, LU5 5GZ  
7.30pm - 8.30pm  
Wednesdays - Outdoor Bootcamps  
Leighton Buzzard  
Appenine Way Green Space, LU7 3KE  
6pm - 7pm  
Wednesday - Outdoor Bootcamp  
Arlesey  
Arlesey Recreation Ground  
7 - 8pm  
Saturdays - Outdoor Bootcamps  
Amptill Great Park - 10am - 11am  
(Meet next to the cafe hub)  
Booking is essential for these classes as spaces are limited. These classes are FREE.  
[www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles](http://www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles)  
A great place to live and work.  
Find us online [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) @greatwith @lifestyleid

**Outdoor Walking Football**  
Every Tuesday 2-3pm  
Upper Caldecote Multi Use Games Area  
The Pastures, SG18 9BQ  
Every Wednesday 1pm - 2pm  
Beals FA, Skimpot Road, Dunstable, LU5 4JU  
Every Thursday 6-7pm  
Bryants Lane Sports & Recreation Ground,  
Heath & Reach, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9LD.  
ALL SESSIONS MUST BE PRE BOOKED.  
To book any of the above sessions please visit the following:  
[www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles](http://www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles)  
Fittwick Leisure Centre, MK45 1TH  
Every Tuesday & Thursday 1.30-3pm  
£3.10 per session  
To book the Fittwick Leisure Centre session please contact the centre direct on:  
01525 493131  
A great place to live and work.  
Find us online [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) @greatwith @lifestyleid

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES – ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

Are you working with any families that could benefit from advice and support to make healthier lifestyle choices?

Do you work with children and families?

Do you have the tools and support to enable families to be more active?

Are you passionate about creating opportunities for children to get the best start in life?

Then why not join our new network...

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 16th November 2022,  
10.00 - 11.00 via teams and will then run every other month (third Wednesday of that month)

If you would like more information or to register your interest, please email:

[active.families@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:active.families@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

For more information on the network or programmes being developed, please contact the Children & Families Active Lifestyles Coordinator on: 0300 300 8640 or email:

[active.families@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:active.families@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## HOUGHTON HALL PARK

It was a very busy summer of community events at the park, with the annual Dog Festival also taking place in September. The events programme continues to grow in popularity and allows the team to provide a diverse range of activities for both new and existing visitors. The Community Park Ranger has delivered ranger led activities such as pond dipping which provide different opportunities for child engagement with the natural world and their local habitats.

The hot weather in the summer months presented some challenges in the practical management of the park including the open grassland as well as the kitchen and formal gardens. Managing the watering of produce became more challenging and there were concerns about fire risks in the meadow areas of the park and woodlands.

The team are currently working towards Autumn activities (including Halloween) and Christmas. We are planning some changes to the children's play equipment on site which will begin with some repairs to the climbing logs in October.

#### **HOUGHTON REGIS LIBRARY**

The Summer has been incredibly busy in Houghton Regis Library. The Summer Reading challenge saw the biggest attendance in CBC since 2014, and there has been a fantastic appreciation for the service since opening without restrictions.

We recruited 12 young volunteers to help in the Summer for the Challenge, and a small number of these have since shown interest in continuing to work with us in Future Half-terms and Holidays.

Our meeting room is almost fully booked up until the end of the January 2022, we're now hosting a variety of private meetings, sign-up courses with NOAH, and some of our own events.

Plans for activities in the October Half-term are in place and will announced through social media and leaflets ahead in advance of the school break, and plans for festive activities are currently being worked on.

We are currently in the process of recruiting for a new member of staff for the mornings, the advert is closed and we shall be interviewing for the position on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **BIDWELL QUARRY/HOUGHTON REGIS CHALKPIT**

Representatives from CBC and the consortium that own Houghton Regis Chalk Pit (AK Bidwell Quarry) met in September to discuss access and future management arrangements. This included the need for a Lease or Licence from the owners before the Wildlife Trust who previously managed the site can be granted access. Until then the Council has no legal basis on which to allow a third party to manage the former quarry.

Discussions on the terms for a lease or licence are ongoing but in the interim the Wildlife Trust have agreed to review and update the previous management plan. This includes securing external support with the aim this will be in place by December. Once completed, it is intended that the new management plan will form the basis for the work needed to improve the site over the next few years.

## **4. BUSINESS, INVESTMENT, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS**

#### **BUSINESS, INVESTMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

For the period 1st June – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022, there were 42 new property enquiries across Central Bedfordshire, 7 of which were interested in Houghton Regis/Dunstable – please see table below. There are an additional 16 enquiries who stated an interest in the M1 Corridor.



Since 1st April enquiries from all sources have dropped significantly (56 enquiries for same period last year). This is a trend that is shared by all areas in Central Bedfordshire and neighbouring counties. Overseas enquiries from Department for International Trade have also dropped in numbers and we can only guess that this is a response to the current economic uncertainties that many businesses find themselves in globally.

Date taken	Enquiry Ref	Requirement Max Size	Unit Type	Reason	Status	Originating Location
05-Jul-22	1761	600	Sq Ft Industrial	My business is relocating	Live - Active	Dunstable
07-Jul-22	1764	4000	Sq Ft Industrial	Expansion	Live - Active	Bedford
20-Jul-22	1777	124000	Sq Ft Industrial	I am based abroad and need a UK site	Closed - No suitable properties available	Overseas
19-Aug-22	1812	2500	Sq Ft Industrial	Business start up	Live - Active	Luton
12-Sep-22	1828	80000	Sq Ft Industrial	Expansion	Live - Active	Husborne Crawley
15-Sep-22	1835	1000	Sq Ft Retail	Expansion	Live - Active	Dunstable
20-Sep-22	1842	600	Sq Ft Industrial	Expansion	Live - Active	Dunstable

### BEDFORDSHIRE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ACADEMY

Following an independent review of our services, the Bedfordshire Employment and Skills Service (BESS) and the Council's Academy, have merged to form one team called the Bedfordshire Employment and Skills Academy, or BESA. This is how we will be referred to in all communications and advertising.

Our in-house delivery is offered as a rolling programme throughout the year, ensuring that those wishing to upskill with a qualification or apprenticeship can join the programme in a flexible manner. This delivery method applies to our full qualification and apprenticeship suite, which we offer in various sectors, including Early Years, Supporting Teaching and Learning, Residential, Business Administration and Customer Service.

A range of funding is available to support qualification costs, including the Government's Level 3 'Free Courses for Jobs' initiative. Residents are eligible for full funding if:

- they are aged 19 and above
- they do not already hold a Level 3 Qualification or
- they hold a Level 3 Qualification but earn below the National Living Wage (£18,525 per year) or
- they have a Level 3 Qualification but are unemployed.
-

Our most popular Level 3 qualification during the academic year of 2021-2022 was the Level 3 Diploma for the Early Years Workforce.

We continue to support those who would like a Teaching Assistant or Early Years role with our popular introductory level courses. The courses combine key learning in a classroom environment alongside a suitable placement to enhance knowledge and skills in the sector, with options to progress on to the next stage.

Our National Careers Service team continue to support residents find employment or enter learning with free 1:1 or group sessions for those aged 19 years and over. The appointment is tailored to the customer needs, and can support with CV writing, job applications, career change, job searching, interview techniques and course matching. Appointments can be undertaken virtually or face to face in a suitable location, including our Kingsland hub in Houghton Regis or at Dunstable Library. The National Careers Service also provide workshops that focus on a combination of skills to support with getting into work and these are held across the county.

We also deliver maths and English Functional Skills. The sessions are delivered flexibly; both virtually and face to face to suit learner needs. The qualifications have proven to be a popular method to support residents achieve maths and English qualifications. Other flexible short courses are also available across the county, including our new courses; helping children read, and helping children with maths.

We are excited to be offering the new Multiply initiative, which has been introduced by the government to improve numeracy skills across the country. We are pleased to be working in partnership with local children's centres and employers to deliver these courses and can confirm courses are planned to run across Houghton Regis throughout the year. The workshops not only focus on improving numeracy skills, but link to important themes such as money management, cooking on a budget and shopping on a budget, as well as one of our favourites – chocolate maths!

If residents require any further information or help to understand the best course for them, we can be contacted on [academy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:academy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) or 0300 300 8131

A full list of all the workshops and courses delivered by both our in-house team and partner training providers, with information and how to enrol can be seen by looking at our [upcoming course list](#).

An overview of the workshops and courses available can be seen by looking at our [curriculum map](#).

If residents would like someone to help them get started on the right course they can [contact us](#) with their details. They should use the comments box in the online form to let the BESS team know what learning they are interested in. An adviser or the relevant training provider will then get in touch to help them get started.

### Town Centre vacancy rates in Central Bedfordshire August 2021 - August 2022

	August 2021	November 2021	February 2022	May 2022	August 2022
Town	% Vacant	% Vacant	% Vacant	% Vacant	% Vacant
Amphill	2.2	2.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Arlesey	12.5	12.5	12.5	18.8	25.0
Biggleswade	9.5	9.5	10.8	11.5	10.2
Dunstable	10.7	12.0	12.3	14.0	14.0
Flitwick	4.3	4.5	2.3	4.5	4.5

<b>Houghton Regis</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>
Leighton Buzzard	4.4	4.8	4.4	4.8	6.5
Potton	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
Sandy	7.6	7.4	9.0	9.0	10.4
Shefford	2.4	2.4	0.0	2.3	2.3
Stotfold	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

In August 2021 the vacancy rate for all units within towns surveyed was 6.7%, there were a total of 965 units of which 65 were vacant. One year later, in August 2022 the vacancy rate rose to 8.7% with a total of 969 Units and 84 vacancies. Since August 2021 increases in vacant units can be seen in Arlesey, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Potton and Sandy. The rest remain relatively stable.

## 5. YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES

### Data from July:

#### 1) UPDATE ON NEETS WITHIN THE WIDER CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE AREA

The figures presented below are those reported to NCCIS / DfE at the end of May 2022.

HEADLINE FIGURES FOR THE WHOLE CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE AREA (30 NOVEMBER 2020)			
Cohort	Total number of young people	Positive destinations (EET)	NEET destinations
16-year-olds/ Year 12	3105	3027	55
17year olds / Year 13	3043	3857	99
<b>Combined cohort</b>	<b>6148</b>	<b>5884 (95.7%)</b>	<b>154 (2.5%)</b>

#### 2) OVERVIEW OF THE HOUGHTON REGIS AREA COMPARED TO OTHER LOCAL AREAS

The figures presented below are based on the data stored within the Youth Support Service's CCIS database for young people as of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

	Dunstable		Houghton Regis		Leighton Buzzard	
<b>Total YPs in area</b>	823		512		934	
<b>EET</b>	778	(94.5%)	491	(95.9%)	895	(95.8%)
<b>NEET</b>	31	(3.8%)	16	(3.1%)	32	(3.4%)
<b>Unknown/Refused</b>	14	(1.7%)	5	(1.0%)	7	(0.7%)

### 3) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEET GROUP IN THE HOUGHTON REGIS AREA

#### a. Summary of the individual Houghton Regis Wards

Ward	Total number of YPs in the Year 12-13 cohort	Total number of YPs recorded as NEET	% of NEET within Ward
Tithe Farm	132	4	3.0%
Houghton Hall	240	6	2.5%
Parkside	140	6	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3.1%</b>

#### b. Summary of the Houghton Regis NEET cohort by age, time and gender

Actual Age (Year 12 & 13)		Length of time NEET		Gender	
16 years old	1	Less than 3 months	5	Male	12
17 years old	8	3-6 months	5	Female	4
18 years old	7	6+ months	6	Other/Refused	0

#### c. Summary status of the Houghton Regis NEET cohort

Status		
Seeking Employment or Training	12	(75.0%)
Unable to work due to 'Personal Circumstances'	4	(25.0%)

Where NEET young people can't be supported virtually, the Youth Support Service will offer guidance interviews from Grove Corner, in line with Public Health England and Government Guidelines.

## 6. SCHOOLS

### SCHOOL ORGANISATION

#### Houstone Secondary School

Construction continues on the new Houstone Secondary School ready for a 2022/23 academic year completion.

The school was scheduled to open in September 2022, but this completion date was not possible due to the discovery of Roman remains. However, alternative arrangements have been made for children attending Houstone School from September at a nearby site whilst the necessary building works on the new school site are completed. Houstone School are now educating these children temporarily in the vacant University Technical College (UTC) building, also on the Kingsland Campus. The UTC has been refurbished to accommodate classes from September until spring 2023 when the new site for Houstone School is expected to be ready.

Houghton Regis Leisure Centre and Houstone School have an agreement in principle for the use of the sports centre which has been in use since September 2022. Houstone School is planning its school timetable and arranging the times to maximise the use of the centre.

For more information on Houstone School go to:

[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/9/schools/818/new\\_secondary\\_school\\_in\\_houghton\\_regis](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/9/schools/818/new_secondary_school_in_houghton_regis)

Officers continue to meet regularly with staff from Advantage Schools Trust, the multi academy trust chosen to run the new secondary school to be built on the Kingsland Campus.

### **Expansion to Thornhill Primary School**

The expansion of Thornhill Primary School is now complete. The new block, built as part of Central Bedfordshire Council's New School Places Programme, will allow the school to increase its capacity from 210 pupils to 630. This will mean Thornhill Primary can meet the future demand for new school places forecast with the emerging housing growth of Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 (the Linmere Development). The teaching block accommodates junior school year groups 2 to 6 up to a capacity of 450 pupils, while the old school building accommodates infant school year groups from nursery to year 1, with a total capacity of 180 pupils. There is also a nursery for 2–4-year-olds on this site.

The new teaching block for the school is the first in Central Bedfordshire that has been built to the highest sustainable standards using Passivhaus criteria to deliver a super energy-efficient building.

Designed by ECD Architects and built by Ashe Construction, you will be able to see and walk through the teaching block which is arranged around a central playground, overlooked by circulation spaces and a new access deck. A deck wraps the entire two-storey section of the building, providing valuable breakout space for smaller group learning, connecting teaching with the outside and the surrounding context.

At the heart of the school is a double height entrance atrium and split-level library, adjacent to the new sports/ dining hall, centralising the facilities, and promoting active learning within a centralised hub.

### **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

The Transfer rounds for September 2023, opened on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2022.

Parents are invited to apply for a school place for September 2023/24 academic year.

We encourage applicants to apply online and we are in the process of reminding parents who have not applied to remember to do so by the deadlines below:

<b>Transfer Round</b>	<b>Closing Date</b>
Starting School (Reception)	15 January 2023
Transfer to Middle School	15 January 2023
Transfer to Upper School	31 October 2022
Transfer to Secondary School	31 October 2022

We also are working with schools to ensure they remind parents as well.

### **Term time Calendar 2023/24**

Following the consultation in July of this year, the term timetable has been agreed and issued for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

50 schools were represented in the feedback that was given. We appreciate their comments and views.

It was decided that term start, and finish dates would be indicated, leaving schools to decide where training/ inset days would take place.

The term time calendar can be found on the CBC website.

## 7. PUBLIC HEALTH

### COVID 19 RESPONSE

Public Health are still supporting the vaccination programme and contacting residents to remind them of the need to get a vaccination when due.

It is important to get a COVID Booster when you are due to have one.

**Vaccination information** including FAQ's and where you can get a vaccine, or a Booster is available [here](#)

### STOP SMOKING

Public Health commissions Primary Care to deliver Level 2 Stop Smoking Support. The delivery of these Stop Smoking Services through GP Surgeries continues,

Titan Primary Care Network (PCN) which covers Houghton Regis, is made up of 3 Practices; Houghton Regis Medical Centre, Toddington Medical Centre and Wheatfield Surgery. The latest data (Q1 2022/23) shows that there have been 7 validated smoking quits in Titan, which is on target for these practices.

At CBC the specialist Level 3 Stop Smoking Service delivers flexible support options, including telephone support, plus an app.

The Service is offering face-to-face delivery for those clients who need it. Extended treatment programmes are available to some residents who would benefit most from them, for example those with a Mental Health diagnosis or COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder). The Smokefree Baby and Me programme is also available for pregnant smokers.

Call one of our advisors free on: 0800 013 0553

Email: [stop.smoking@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:stop.smoking@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Web: <http://www.smokefreebedfordshire.org/>

### NHS HEALTH CHECKS

The NHS Health Check is a national risk assessment and management programme for those aged 40 to 74 living in England, who do not have an existing vascular disease, and who are not currently being treated for certain risk factors.

It is aimed at preventing heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease and raising awareness of dementia for those aged 65-74 and includes an alcohol risk assessment. Everyone receiving an NHS Health Check will have a risk assessment which will look at individual risk factors as well as their risk of having, or developing, vascular disease in the next ten years. An NHS Health Check should be offered every five years.

GP practices continue to be the sole provider of the NHS Health Check programme; however, performance varies. As patients are entitled to one Health Check every five years, Practices have a target to invite 20% of their eligible population each year.

Combined for Chiltern Vale, the GP Practices were under target for Health Checks delivered at the end of the latest reporting period, April to August 2022. 492 Health Checks were delivered against a target of 510 for the period (so 96.5% of annual target to date). Overall, they invited 609 patients for a Health Check (target 782) so are performing at 31.2% for that indicator.

The 3 local Titan Practices are performing as follows:

- Houghton Regis Medical Centre is performing very well at 98.6% for Health Checks delivered (68 against a target of 69) but only 20.5% offered (54 out of 264 target).
- Toddington Medical Centre is performing at 77.6% for Health Checks delivered (38 against a target of 49) and 21.1% for offered (39 out of 185 target).
- Wheatfield Surgery delivered only 28 Health Checks from a target of 75 for the period (37.3%) and offered 55 (from a target of 286) at a rate of 19.2% during this reporting period.

The overall quality measure for all these 3 practices in relation to Health Checks is over 87.6% so at 'red' with significant room for improvement in quality.

The legacy of COVID continues to present not only significant health implications for our population, and has highlighted inequalities experienced by our residents, possibly exacerbated by the disruption to the delivery of services in Primary Care. We will continue to work with Practices to identify how we can support them to deliver Stop Smoking and Health Check services to their patients, as well as working with them to understand and reduce health inequalities for local residents.

### **TIME2CONNECT**

Time2connect, continues to engage with local residents and stakeholders, connecting them to assets in the area and supporting with information relating to a number of community issues.

### 8. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Waste Management		
Waste Collections	Litter Bins	All Saints View
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bin deliveries are in demand, but the contractor is maintaining deliveries within 10 working days to new build properties, some communal residences have completed and waste collections commencing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewal of the litter bin in Bromley Gardens.</li> <li>Installed a new litter bin in Tithe Farm Road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installed a new dog bin in Wheatfield Road.</li> </ul>

Environmental Management		
Fly Tips and Street Cleansing	Grounds Maintenance	Abandoned Vehicles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearance of fly tipping in the area continues.</li> <li>Bedford Square – continue to work with Contractors to ensure a good standard in the Town Centre.</li> <li>Deep cleansing/maintenance undertaken in Bloomsbury Gardens.</li> <li>Supported Groundwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular grass cutting maintained and weed spraying / shrub maintenance has continued.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 reports of abandoned vehicles received by Environmental Services between 4<sup>th</sup> August – 6<sup>th</sup> October.</li> </ul>

#### Dog Patrols (June – Sept 2022)

Location	Notes
1. Bedford Road	New location in August 2022
2. Camp Drive	
3. Leafields	
4. Drury Lane	
5. Hillborough Crescent	
6. Houghton Hall Car Park	
7. Redhouse Court	At Least twice a month
8. Tudor Drive	
9. Watling Place	



### 9. SUSTAINABILITY



### ECO SCHOOLS

Last academic year the Sustainability Team created a new monthly Eco-Schools forum. Speakers include Anglian Water, BCN Wildlife Trust, the Forest of Marston Vale, the Fairtrade Foundation, Surfers Against Sewage and other local groups. The Sustainability Team worked with schools in Houghton Regis, including Thornhill Primary School who received their Eco-Schools Green Flag award in July.

The team can offer support to all schools in Central Bedfordshire this academic year for the Eco-Schools award programme. For more information email [BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

### ACTIVE TRAVEL IN SCHOOLS

We have worked with a number of schools in Houghton Regis on their Travel Plans as well as the sustainable travel platform [Modeshift STARS](#). Bikeability training continues to be offered to all schools and we facilitate extra 'learn to ride' sessions when possible. We are able to offer some schools a Dr Bike session to ensure pupils' bikes are in a safe condition to use. We worked with Bedfordshire Community Rail Partnership and British Transport Police during 'try a train day' with Chiltern School, where pupils learnt to navigate routes and trains safely.

Cycle to School Week will take part at the beginning of October and we hope that all schools will participate in this event.

The Santa Challenge will be offered to schools in December, encouraging even more pupils, parents and staff to walk, scoot or cycle to school.

Our joint-authority bike recycling project continues to be successful, and residents are able to donate bikes at the Luton site. For more information on the bike recycling scheme please email [safercycling@luton.gov.uk](mailto:safercycling@luton.gov.uk).

### HOUSING – SOLAR PROJECT

Domestic installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels has commenced under the Solar Together bulk-purchasing scheme and is expected to be completed by the end of January 2023. There has been much higher interest than anticipated, and we are working with iChoos'r, the company behind the Solar Together scheme to run a second round in summer 2023. For more information email

[BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### TREE PLANTING PROJECT

The 2022/2023 winter tree planting season is here, and the Council are encouraging all Town and Parish Councils, community groups and schools to apply for a Tree Planting Grant, to plant trees and hedgerows this planting season. The scheme is currently open to new applicants with the anticipation that all successful applicants can begin planting from this October, up until the end of March 2023.

In addition to the Tree Planting Grant, this planting season the council would also like to encourage schools, community groups and organisations in the area to host their own 'Tree Giveaway' event. Following on from a successful pilot giveaway during the last planting season, the Council's Trees Project has received funding from the Forestry Commission and Defra, offering wider access to trees for different groups in Central Bedfordshire and encouraging people to host their events this year. Trees and a toolkit for the trees

will be provided free of charge. Communities can express interest in hosting an event, using the link available here: <https://forms.office.com/r/tXCXt3nbcn>

The Tree Planting Grant and Tree Giveaway events can be used to support the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. Following the wishes of its Patron, His Majesty The King, The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative, created to mark the Platinum Jubilee, will be extended to the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees in memory of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Central Bedfordshire Council requests that all successful grant applicants and those who receive a tree from the CBC Tree Giveaway Scheme, plot their trees on the Queen's Green Canopy website:

[www.queensgreencanopy.org](http://www.queensgreencanopy.org) For further information and guidance visit

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/tree-planting](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/tree-planting) or email [BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:BeGreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### **SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS**

The Council is working with the Green Business Network (GBN) to deliver an enhanced business support programme of seminars, events and most recently the SME Sustainability Award. GBN is a membership organisation and a charity, which helps businesses reduce their impact on the environment. For further information and register for free support and events visit

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/58/business/52/business\\_networking/6](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/58/business/52/business_networking/6)

### **ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING**

CBC are working with BP Pulse on the rollout of electric vehicle charge points and the first phase of installations will see charging provision for 8 vehicles deployed at Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Car Park. Installations are due to begin in November 2022 and will see 4 dual socket charge points installed over 8 parking bays. These are specifically for residential use where local residents within a 5-10 minute walk do not have dedicated off-street parking and thus cannot easily or safely charge their vehicle at home, and may not feel comfortable to switch to an electric vehicle. This provision will cater for current and future demand and the units will be 7kW fast chargers which will take approx. 6-8 hours to charge, depending on the vehicle and the amount of charge left in the battery prior to a charging session. CBC are also looking at other potential sites in the town for additional chargers for both residential use and for the development of rapid chargers on the public network.

## **10. TRANSFORMATION**

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### **HOUGHTON REGIS TOGETHER GROUP**

The Houghton Regis Together group meets every 6-8 weeks made up of colleagues across the organisation as well as public health and voluntary service partners who cover Houghton Regis.

The group comes together to discuss community engagement and community intelligence from working in and around Houghton Regis. This can include discussion around key projects and initiatives within the town, as well as supporting vulnerable residents and improving community safety.

### COMMUNITY ASSET GRANT SCHEME

After another competitive bidding round, we have reviewed and scored 46 applications, totalling over £700,000. The applications go through the process of being scored by two officers from across the organisation to obtain an average score. Applications had to score over 50 to meet our minimum threshold, 26 were shortlisted. Of those 26 applications, those with the highest score in each ward were further shortlisted to create a short list of 19 applications (totalling £322, 360.9). Of those 19 applications, 12 applications were selected as they were the highest scoring bids from the shortlist and could be funded from the £200,000 available. The lowest scoring bid in this batch cannot be fully funded and thus will be part funded with the remaining funds.

The New Life Church, Houghton Hall was one of the successful applicants within the winning 12 bids. Their project has been selected for funding, to allow them to reconfigure and refurbish their hall, which allows them to continue to provide great community services such as the foodbank and the tumbles! Stay and play group. We are glad we could fund so many great projects.

### TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTERS

The town and parish council bulletin goes out on a monthly basis and provides updates on relevant news, up-coming meetings, consultations and partner newsletters. The latest bulletin can be viewed [here](#) and all previous newsletters can be viewed [here](#).

### VOLUNTEERING NEWSLETTER

View the latest edition of the [volunteering newsletter](#). The newsletter goes out to over 1,000 volunteers in Central Bedfordshire.

### TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL TOPIC SESSIONS

The first session took place in 21 November, this focused on COP26 & The Sustainability Plan: [View the feedback/Q&A](#), [View the recording](#) and [View the presentation](#)

The second session took place on 21 December, focusing on The Design Guide: [View the feedback/Q&A](#), [View the recording](#) and [View the presentation](#).

The third session took place on 12 January, focusing on the Queen's Green Canopy and Tree Planting: [View the feedback/Q&A](#), [View the recording](#), [View the presentation](#) and [sustainability funding opportunities](#).

The fourth session took place on 26 January, focusing on the strategic plan: [View the slides](#) and [recording](#).

The fifth session took place on 30 March, focusing on digital accessibility: View the [slides](#) and the [recording](#).

The sixth session took place on 25 May, focusing on First homes and Planning Policy updates: [View the recording](#) and [View the presentation](#).

The seventh session took place in July and focussed on the Leisure Facilities survey

The eighth session will be taking place on 24<sup>th</sup> October, focusing on Tree Planting.

### CONSULTATIONS

Details of current and upcoming consultation activity undertaken by the Council are provided by the Community Intelligence Team. For more information about this update please contact Clare Harding, tel: 0300 300 6109 (ext. 76109).

#### Current consultations and surveys

Subject	Description	Start	End	Lead officer(s)
School Funding Formula for 2023/24	Consultation directly with schools regarding the proposed funding formula for academic year 2023-24	3 Oct 2022	21 Oct 2022	Peter Fraser 0300 300 6740
Arlesey Community Governance Review Stage 2	Stage 2 of the Arlesey Community Governance Review, on the proposal to reduce the number of town councillors from 12 to 7	5 Sept 2022	30 Oct 2022	Brian Dunleavy 0300 300 4049
Council Tax Support Scheme	Consultation on proposed changes to the council tax support scheme	21 Sept 2022	1 Nov 2022	Gary Muskett 0300 300 4097
Short Breaks	Consultation on a new approach to social, leisure and play (non-residential) short break activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)	1 Sep 2022	10 Nov 2022	Charlotte Hodgson 0300 300 6432

#### Upcoming consultations and surveys

Subject	Description	Start	End	Lead officer(s)
Schools for the Future – Cranfield cluster	Proposals for schools in the cluster area and asking for comments regarding Shelton Lower School	31 Oct 2022	12 Dec 2022	Sue Archer 0300 300 6079
Schools for the Future – Biggleswade cluster statutory notice	Statutory notice on proposals for schools in the Biggleswade cluster that are maintained by CBC.	31 Oct 2022	7 Dec 2022	Sue Archer 0300 300 6079

**11. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Time</b>
19 October 2022	Health and Wellbeing Board	02:00 PM
20 October 2022	General Purposes Committee	10:00 AM
26 October 2022	Development Management Committee	10:00 AM
27 October 2022	Corporate Parenting Panel	02:00 PM
31 October 2022	Audit Committee	10:00 AM
01 November 2022	Children’s Services OSC	10:00 AM
03 November 2022	Corporate Resources OSC	10:00 AM
07 November 2022	Social Care, Health and Housing OSC	10:00 AM
10 November 2022	Sustainable Communities OSC	11:00 AM
23 November 2022	Development Management Committee	10:00 AM
24 November 2022	Council	06:30 PM
29 November 2022	Traffic Management Meeting	10:00 AM

**KEY:**

- CPP – Corporate Parenting Panel
- CR OSC – Corporate Resources OSC
- CS OSC – Children’s Services OSC
- DMC - Development Management Committee
- HWB – Health & Wellbeing Board
- SCHH OSC – Social Care, Health & Housing OSC
- SC OSC – Sustainable Communities OSC

[Calendar of meetings and forward plan | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)



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**ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 11**

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>13<sup>TH</sup> June 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE</b>
<b>Purpose of the Report:</b>	<b>To update members on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Clare Evans, Town Clerk</b>

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**1. RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. To approve the inclusion of works to the existing pavilion to convert its use into an internal and external grounds store area;**
- 2. To note the project funding information and specifically the impact this has on the reduced borrowing requirement from the PWLB.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

This project comprises an all-weather pitch, new changing rooms and car parking on Tithe Farm recreation ground. The project is being developed and progressed in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and the Beds Football Association (Beds FA). Funding for the project is likely to come from the Town Council, CBC and the Football Foundation (FF).

The council has appointed a Bid Consultant and a Design Architect to support the project development.

**3. PROJECT SUMMARY**

Members are advised of the following:

*Land Registry*

An application to register the land was made to the Land Registry (October 2020). There were a number of legal complications dating back to the original transfer. Ultimately it was decided to apply to the Land Registry for a 'Good Lease', this is hopefully a simpler process. This application has been made. A 'good lease' once secured will satisfy the Football Foundation requirements.

### *Planning*

The planning application was submitted to CBC late August and has been approved. Planning conditions are currently being discharged.

### *Pitch tenders*

Members were previously advised that the contract has been awarded to Field Turf. The contract price is £761,334.12

The pitch tender included the car park extension and refurbishment as an extra cost. The cost for this is an extra £106,512.35.

### *Pavilion tender*

Members are advised that the contract has been awarded to T&B Contractors. The contract price is £995,968.37

### *Scope of the Scheme*

The works include an all-weather pitch and changing facility with a community space, all weather pitch and car park refurbishment and extension. Members may recall that the demolition of the existing pavilion was removed from the planning application for reasons of timing and practicality. However as this project has progressed and the funding has been confirmed (and indeed increased by CBC) it is possible to re-introduce works to the existing pavilion.

The rear of the pavilion is of poor quality and requires demolition. The front area (changing rooms) are of reasonable quality. It is suggested that the rear be demolished but the front reconfigured to create an indoor grounds store area. The area to the rear would be used as an outside grounds store area including goal posts.

Drawings need to be completed and a planning application submitted. It is estimated that the cost of this work would be in the region of £100,000.

Members are referred to Appendix A (to follow). As will be shown this additional work falls within budget.

### *Operational Site Management*

In accordance with the decision at the February meeting of Environment & Leisure Committee<sup>1</sup> a meeting has been held with the Beds FA to discuss a draft lease. This will be presented to the Committee for formal approval in due course. However included at Appendix C is a draft lease example. The lease is based on the following: the Beds FA would be responsible for all matters relating to the management of the site including hires (bookings, fees etc), premises & facilities management, utility costs, repairs and upkeep, pitch sinking fund. The Beds FA is a not for profit organisation and would look to establish a fee structure to cover the costs of provision. The draft lease example will be worked on to reflect the intentions of both parties. In particular the following points are highlighted:

- the Plan referred to in Schedule 1 must reflect the correct area bearing in mind the other uses which are on this site
- detail how booking / hires are to be managed and by whom

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<sup>1</sup> 'To support the operational site management being undertaken by the Bedfordshire Football Association and for a draft agreement to be developed for formal consideration'

- the ability for HRTC to hold events on the site
- the hire charge to HRTC of the facility
- community / residents hire charges
- use of HRTC staff to provide grounds care on the whole site
- reference to any specific terms within the Football Foundation grant agreement.

It may be that some of the issues above will be operation matters and will not need to be included in the lease. Legal advice will be sort by both HRTC and the Beds FA.

#### **4. PROJECT FUNDING**

Please refer to Appendix A – to follow.

Of note it the fantastic news that the project has been awarded the full funding request from the Football Foundation, £956,400. This an amazing achievement by the council and the project team.

The funding available to this project will be shown in the first section of Appendix A.

An additional cost of £100,000 has been added to the Project Funding requirements to enable works to be completed to the existing pavilion. These works would include demolition of the rear of the building and a reconfiguration of the changing areas to provided internal and external grounds store areas.

The Project Funding shows a reduced borrowing requirement from £500,000 to £413,164.38. Additional funding sources are currently being explored which may reduce the borrowing requirement further and it is hoped that an update can be provided at the meeting.

#### **5. PROJECT TIMELINE**

Please refer to Appendix B.

Of note the Project Timeline includes a start on site date of July 2022 and a handover date of April 2023.

#### **6. COUNCIL VISION**

##### **Aspirations**

A1 To develop and enhance **partnerships** between HRTC, stakeholders, partners, community groups and residents

##### **Objective 3: A safe and vibrant town**

3.1 To reduce the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and crime levels

##### **Objective 4: Our community**

4.1 To create or enhance community facilities which support community development and cohesion

4.2 To enhance existing facilities to enable improved community use and accessibility



- 4.3 To provide activities for young people, families and older people
- 4.5 To provide high quality green spaces for leisure and recreation, healthier living, urban attractiveness, improved air quality
- 4.7 To support local organisations

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Implications**

- confirmation of the PWLB borrowing requirement to be shared with all members and once certain reported back to Town Council.

### **Legal Implications**

- The draft lease to be reviewed by the council's solicitors.

### **Financial Implications**

- The financial implications are significant and are outlined in the report.

### **Risk Implications**

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations..

### **Equalities Implications**

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

### **Press Contact**

- The news concerning the award of funding from the Football Foundation has been shared on social media.

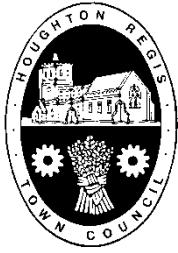
## **8. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

This is a significant project for this committee to have brought forward. The main risk to the project has now been overcome through the confirmation of the grant award from the football foundation. The project has also significantly benefited from substantial funding via Central Bedfordshire Council.

Works are due to commence in summer 2022. There is much to be celebrated with this project for our community.

## **9. APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>PROJECT FUNDING</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>PROJECT TIMELINE</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>LEASE DRAFT EXAMPLE</b>



## ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 7

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> September 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>TITHE FARM RECREATION GROUND SPORTS PROJECT UPDATE</b>
<b>Purpose of the Report:</b>	<b>To update members on the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project.</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Clare Evans, Town Clerk</b>

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### 1. RECOMMENDATION

**To approve the conceptional ideas for pedestrian and cycle links between Linnere and Tithe Farm Recreation Ground and for this additional work to be taken forward.**

### 2. BACKGROUND

This project comprises an all-weather pitch, new changing rooms and car parking on Tithe Farm recreation ground. The project is being developed and progressed in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and the Beds Football Association (Beds FA). Funding for the project is likely to come from the Town Council, CBC and the Football Foundation (FF).

The council has appointed a Bid Consultant and a Design Architect to support the project development.

### 3. PROJECT SUMMARY

Members are advised of the following:

#### *Land Registry*

An application to register the land was made to the Land Registry (October 2020). There were a number of legal complications dating back to the original transfer. Ultimately it was decided to apply to the Land Registry for a 'Good Lease', this is hopefully a simpler process. This application has been made. A 'good lease' once secured will satisfy the Football Foundation requirements.

#### *Planning*

The planning application was submitted to CBC late August and has been approved. Planning conditions are currently being discharged. Confirmation is expected imminently.

#### *Pitch tenders*

Members were previously advised that the contract has been awarded to Field Turf. The contract price is £761,334.12

The pitch tender included the car park extension and refurbishment as an extra cost. The cost for this is an extra £106,512.35.

#### *Pavilion tender*

Members are advised that the contract has been awarded to T&B Contractors. The contract price is £995,968.37

#### *Scope of the Scheme*

The works include an all-weather pitch and changing facility with a community space, all weather pitch, car park refurbishment and extension and the re-modelling of the existing pavilion into a store area.

#### *Operational Site Management*

In accordance with the decision at the February meeting of Environment & Leisure Committee <sup>1</sup> work is being undertaken on a suitable lease with the Beds FA.

#### *Pedestrian and cycle links to Linnere*

As members are aware some preliminary discussions have been held with the developers of Linnere over creating pedestrian and cycle links from the new estate into Tithe Farm Recreation Ground. Members have already expressed general support for this subject to the following:

- any design, alteration to the hedge / tree line, connection to facilities on the Recreation Ground would need to design out access by nuisance bikes;
- any costs incurred (whether relating to developer land or HRTC recreation ground land) would need to be met by the developer;
- HRTC require to see draft plans and ideas and any final plan is subject to approval by HRTC

Works to facilitate these links within Linnere would be covered by the developers. Works on the recreation ground would need to be covered by HRTC, however the Sustainable Transport team within CBC have offered the possibility of additional s106 funding to cover the costs (subject to approval of design).

There is a preference from CBC that any links created are barrier free, reference was made to the Busway where all of the A-frame barriers off the busway path were removed when it was upgraded as they prevented legitimate users from accessing the facility, including those on disability scooters and adapted bikes. As the level of legitimate use of the busway has increased it has helped suppress levels of nuisance motorcycle use.

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<sup>1</sup> 'To support the operational site management being undertaken by the Bedfordshire Football Association and for a draft agreement to be developed for formal consideration'

Members are referred to the draft design attached at Appendix C. the developers seem fairly confident that they can get a path through with little removal of any existing trees, however, until there is a levels and tree survey, they cannot understand the impact on tree roots.

At present further enquiries need to be made as to how this additional work would be factored into the overall site development and cost plan.

#### **4. PROJECT FUNDING**

Please refer to Appendix A.

Of note is the fantastic news that the project has been awarded the full funding request from the Football Foundation, £956,400. This is an amazing achievement by the council and the project team.

The funding available to this project will be shown in the first section of Appendix A.

An additional cost of £100,000 has been added to the Project Funding requirements to enable works to be completed to the existing pavilion. These works would include demolition of the rear of the building and a reconfiguration of the changing areas to provided internal and external grounds store areas.

The Project Funding shows a reduced borrowing requirement from £500,000 to £413,164.38. Additional funding sources are currently being explored which may reduce the borrowing requirement further and it is hoped that an update can be provided at the meeting.

Members are further advised of an additional grant source which has been applied for, Youth Investment Fund. Further information can be found here <https://youthinvestmentfund.org.uk/>

Due to a cross over with Community Services Committee a preliminary report was made to their meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

This fund is to create, expand and improve youth facilities and services. It is for large capital projects over £300,000 which are deliverable by 2025. The fund is looking for projects which are a fair way down the line. It was felt that the Tithe Farm Sports Project met the criteria and as such an Expression of Interest form was submitted for £413,000 to cover the anticipated HRTC loan for this project plus £70,000 for revenue funding to support youth development work from this base location but covering Tithe Farm and Parkside wards (the fund does not cover Houghton Hall ward).

The project has now been allocated a Relationship Manager and initial discussions have gone well. The council is being encouraged to prepare a Business / Project Plan for formal submission and consideration. The application process seems to be evolving and at present the process and timelines are not certain. However, work is progressing on a formal submission by the Town Clerk, the Community Development Officer and the Council's Bid Consultant, Castle Consultancy.

Members will be kept updated.

Funding from this source has not been included in Appendix A as it has not been confirmed.

## 5. PROJECT TIMELINE

Please refer to Appendix B.

Of note, the Project Timeline includes a start on site date of July 2022 and a handover date of April 2023.

## 6. COUNCIL VISION

### Aspirations

A1 To develop and enhance **partnerships** between HRTC, stakeholders, partners, community groups and residents

### Objective 3: A safe and vibrant town

3.1 To reduce the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and crime levels

### Objective 4: Our community

4.1 To create or enhance community facilities which support community development and cohesion

4.2 To enhance existing facilities to enable improved community use and accessibility

4.3 To provide activities for young people, families and older people

4.5 To provide high quality green spaces for leisure and recreation, healthier living, urban attractiveness, improved air quality

4.7 To support local organisations

## 7. IMPLICATIONS

### Corporate Implications

- Confirmation of the PWLB borrowing requirement to be shared with all members and once certain reported back to Town Council.

### Legal Implications

- The draft lease to be reviewed by the council's solicitors.

### Financial Implications

- The financial implications are significant and are outlined in the report.

### Risk Implications

- There are no risk implications arising from the recommendations.

### Equalities Implications

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage

and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

**Press Contact**

- The news concerning the award of funding from the Football Foundation has been shared on social media.

**8. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

This is a significant project for this committee to have brought forward. The main risk to the project has now been overcome through the confirmation of the grant award from the football foundation. The project has also significantly benefited from substantial funding via Central Bedfordshire Council.

Works are due to commence in summer 2022. There is much to be celebrated with this project for our community.

**9. APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>PROJECT FUNDING</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>PROJECT TIMELINE</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>TITHE FAMR LANDSCAPE IDEAS</b>

## Tithe Farm Recreation Ground

Cost Summary- Option C (Clubroom/ Remodell existing pavilion/ resurface existing car park)

31st August 2022

Project Reference: 324-1 - Football Development Centre

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Notes	£GBP
CBC s106 (1)	99,884.00
CBC s106 (2)	172,500.00
CBC s106 (3)	187,947.00
CBC s106 (4)	100,000.00
CBC Community Asset grant	25,000.00
HRTC deferred income	230,575.00
HRTC- EMR322	160,341.06
Football Foundation	956,400.00
Town Council PWBL	313,164.38
Shortfall	0.00

0 Project Budget	£	2,245,811.44
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		£GBP	Notes
1.1 Works Costs			
1.1.1 Pavillion	Taken from QS cost plan	567,072.00	Based on 4 changing room pavillion only (see adjustments for clubroom costs)
1.1.2 External works			
- Drainage	Taken from QS cost plan	109,500.00	
- External services	Taken from QS cost plan	19,000.00	Provisional allowance
- Roads/ paving/ landscaping etc.	Taken from QS cost plan	35,881.00	Excludes resurface of car park
1.1.3 Refurbishment/ part demolition of existing pavillion			See 1.2.12
1.1.4 Provisional Sums	Taken from QS cost plan	13,000.00	
1.2 Adjustments			
1.2.1 Omit prov sums for external services		19,000.00	Provisional Sum
1.2.2 New power supply		20,000.00	Provisional Sum
1.2.3 New water supply		5,000.00	Provisional Sum
1.2.4 Gas supply		-	N/A
1.2.5 Omission of drainage scheme		109,500.00	
1.2.6 Addition of revised drainage scheme		34,300.00	Reduced scope. Fieldturf to attenuate pitch to Anglian Water requirements.
1.2.7 Addition of grass-protecta car park		38,500.00	Reduce scope to fit budget
1.2.8 BREEAM		10,000.00	
1.2.9 Extra over for clubroom		213,087.00	
1.2.10 ASHPs		20,000.00	
1.2.11 Existing carpark surface and entrance		65,000.00	
1.2.12 Repurpose existing changing rooms		100,000.00	
1.2.13 Main contractors oh/p		12,508.55	
1.3 Main Contractor Costs			
1.3.1 Main contractor design fees	Taken from T&B tender	61,945.00	Development from RIBA Stage 4
1.3.2 PCSA costs	Taken from T&B tender	16,800.00	
1.3.2 Main contractors oh/p	Taken from T&B tender	25,775.86	Priced at 3.5%
1.3.3 Preliminaries	Taken from T&B tender	116,142.32	Based on 28 weeks
1.3.4 Contingency	Taken from T&B tender	30,000.00	
Pavillion Sub-total		1,365,011.73	
2 FTP			
2.1 FTP		761,434.00	PCH still have limited information on what is included within this figure at this stage
FTP Sub-total		761,434.00	
3 Statutory Fees			
3.1 Planning			
- Pre-App	Central Beds	1,258.96	
- Application fee	Central Beds	1,178.33	
- Discharge of conditions	say	190.00	Dependent upon approval
3.2 Building Regulations		-	Included in T&B tender and FTP tender
		2,627.29	
4 Professional Fees			
4.1 PCH fees to support of grant		5,000.00	
4.2 Client side Project Management/ Architecture/ QS/ Client side M&E on pavillion	6.5%	88,725.76	
4.3 Project Management for FTP/ Framework Administrator	RLF	-	Outside of project cost
4.4 Structural/Civil Engineer	Inertia	950.00	SUDS strategy for planning
4.5 M&E and Sustainability strategy	Banerman Consulting Engineers	2,560.00	To support planning and tender process
		92,235.76	
5 Surveys/Reports/Other Costs			
5.1 Topographical Survey	By JPP		
5.2 Geotechnical Surveys	By JPP		
5.3 Bid support	Castele	6,930.00	
5.4 Legal Fees		2,000.00	Provisional allowance
5.5 Furniture		-	Fixed furniture included
5.6 Land registry costs		TBC	
5.7 OS Maps		572.66	
5.9 Drainage to the existing car park		15,000.00	Potential planning obligation
		24,502.66	
6 VAT		-	Dependent on specialist advice
		-	
ANTICIPATED PROJECT COST	£	2,245,811.44	

## Tithe Farm Recreation Ground Sports Project

31/08/2022

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Project timeline	Target	Actual
Pre-application advice (submitted 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2021)	Summer 2021	Completed
Agreement of scheme in principle	7th June at Town Council Meeting	Completed
Supporting surveys/reports for planning	7th June 2021 to 25th June 2021	Completed
Preparation of planning application	25th June 2021 to 9th July 2021	Completed
Submission of planning application	9th July 2021 to 8th October 2021	Completed (submitted 18/8/21)
Development of scheme to RIBA stage 4 with M&E/Structural & Civils input	9th July 2021 to 20th August 2021	Completed. 18 <sup>th</sup> August 2021 to 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2021.
Preparation of final cost plan/tender documents	20th August 2021 to 3rd September 2021	Completed. 13 <sup>th</sup> September to 4 <sup>th</sup> October.
Co-ordination of tender package with HRTC/Contract Finder	3rd September 2021 to 10th September 2021	Completed. 4 <sup>th</sup> October to 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2021.
Out to Tender (open tender)	Open to 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Completed. 11 <sup>th</sup> October to 28 <sup>th</sup> January.
Tender Analysis	12 <sup>th</sup> November to 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Completed. 28 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2022. Recommendation is T&B and tender report issued 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2022.
Stage 2 Negotiations with lowest contractor/co-ordination with FTP and funding pack	22 <sup>nd</sup> November to 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2021	Foundation prepared to Award grant on first stage tender. Agreed in meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> February.
Planning Application determination date	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	Committee meeting 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2022.
Grant Award (Panel)	April 2022	Completed 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2022.



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Grant Award (Board)	May 2022	Completed 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
Discharge of any grant conditions	May 2022	Say by 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
FTP	May 2022	Say 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
Instruction to proceed		
Pavilion Instruction to proceed	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2022	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2022
FTP	June 2022	July 2022
Mobilisation		
Pavilion Detail design/ Discharge of planning conditions/ Stage 2 tender	June/ July/ August 2022.	June/ July/ August 2022.
FTP On site	July to September 2022	July to September 2022
Pavilion Sign off of Stage 2 costs	August 2022	August 2022
Prepare existing changing rooms planning application	September 2022	September 2022
Pavilion Mobilisation	October 2022	October 2022
Existing changing rooms application	October /December 2022	October /December 2022
Existing changing rooms application decision	December 2022	December 2022
Pavilion & Changing Rooms On site	November to April 2023	November 2022 to April 2023
Handover	April 2023	April 2023

# TITHE FARM LANDSCAPE IDEAS

22/06/22



# TITHE FARM REC LANDSCAPE IDEAS

Creating safe, accessible routes into Tithe Farm Rec, encouraging sustainable modes of travel, ensuring the routes are well lit, convenient, and safe.

- Provide new footpaths which connect Tythe Farm Rec into new green corridors within Phase 4
- Ensure footpaths can be used safely by pedestrians and cyclists
- Create a compliant route for wheelchairs and people with buggies
- Opportunities for new signage
- Opportunities for new seating
- Opportunities for additional tree planting

## Key

1. Improve access with steps and sloped route
2. New footpath network
3. New gateways with signage
4. New park trees
5. New boundary planting

## Constraint Considerations

- 3 metre level change
- Significant tree planting
- Cover over existing services



Existing aerial



New stepped access into Tithe Farm from Green Corridors



New accessible access into Tithe Farm from Green Corridors



Signage and wayfinding



Gateway opportunities



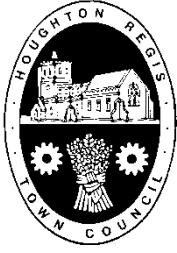
Better lighting



Footpath with info graphics



Generous shared routes



**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**Title:** HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

**Purpose of the Report:** To enable members to receive and consider the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan.

**Contact Officer:** Clare Evans, Town Clerk

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## 1. RECOMMENDATION

1. For the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee to endorse the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan
2. To request that CBC review and update the 2008 Town Centre Masterplan

## 2. BACKGROUND

Part of the Welcome Back Fund included the commissioning of a Town Centre Action Plan by HRTC. This Plan has been developed by Place Make in consultation with HRTC members and officers and has been approved by Town Council.

## 3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The Action Plan includes the following sections:

- Introduction
- Context
- Vision
- Delivery
- Acronyms

The Section Delivery includes an Action plan for future work split into short, medium and longer term actions. The Actions are broad ranging in terms of scope, deliverability and timescales.

This is a comprehensive and exciting Plan, and if taken forward will provide demonstrable benefits to the town as a whole and in particular the town centre.

The Town Council would like the Partnership Committee to consider this plan and to refer it forward within CBC.

It is suggested that support from CBC be secured initially to hopefully enable more detailed discussions to take place.

Within the Action Plan reference is made to the 2008 Town Centre Masterplan. The Action Plan suggested that this needs to be reviewed and updated. It is requested that the Partnership Committee support this review and update.

#### **4. HRTC COUNCIL VISION**

##### **Aspirations**

- A1 To develop and enhance **partnerships** between HRTC, stakeholders, partners, community groups and residents
- A2 To effectively and proactively **represent** our community
- A3 To positively **promote** the town

##### **Objective 2: A Greener Cleaner Houghton Regis**

- 2.3 To encourage sustainable transport including use of public transport, walking and cycling

##### **Objective 3: A safe and vibrant town**

- 3.8 To support local businesses and retailers

##### **Objective 4: Our community**

- 4.1 To create or enhance community facilities which support community development and cohesion
- 4.2 To enhance existing facilities to enable improved community use and accessibility
- 4.4 To help to protect and preserve historic gems
- 4.5 To provide high quality green spaces for leisure and recreation, healthier living, urban attractiveness, improved air quality

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Corporate Implications**

- HRTC and CBC would need to work together on implementation
- It would be appropriate to actively share this Plan with residents and stakeholders to seek their views and comments.

##### **Legal Implications**

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations

##### **Financial Implications**

- There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations

##### **Risk Implications**

- There is a risk to the town as an urban settlement in not addressing the shortfalls identified.

## **Equalities Implications**

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

## **Press Contact**

The decision relating to this agenda item will be communicated to the press, via the website and social media.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

The Town Centre Action Plan is a comprehensive and forward thinking plan which will be of great benefit to the town as a whole, to stakeholders and residents. It will serve to ensure that the town centre is fit for purpose as the town grows and develops. To deliver on the action plan will require a firm commitment from HRTC and CBC.

## **8. APPENDICES**

**Appendix A – Summary**

**Appendix B – Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan**

**Appendix C – Settlement Plan**



# Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan

Summary | May 2022

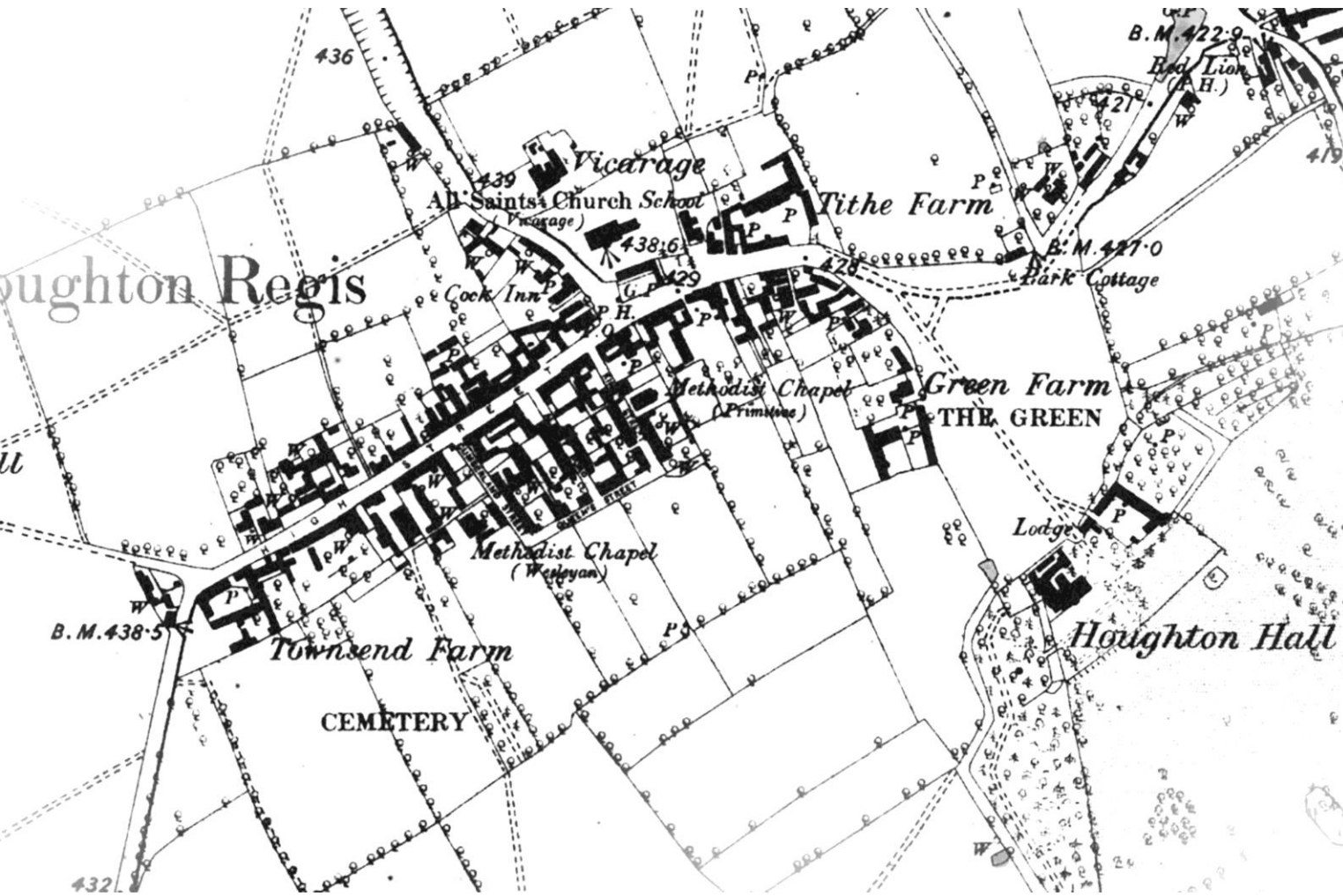


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European Regional Development Fund





*Saelig Hoctone, Hocton, Howgton, Kyngshouton, Kynges Houghton ...*



*... Houghton Regis has a rich history that extends as far back as the Neolithic and Iron Ages*

## Multiple indicators suggest that something special is happening ...

- While the Parish includes above average rates of single parent households, youth unemployment and children in income deprived households, it remains **10% safer than the average district crime rate** (*crimerate.co.uk*).
- Despite being strategically located in the middle of the Cambridge-Oxford growth zone, it has a particularly **strong sense of community and identity**:
  - An above average number of residents shop locally.
  - Half of all shops are independently owned.
  - 78% of residents work in Central Bedfordshire - 20% within 2km of their homes, 35% within 10km of their homes and 23% across the wider district.
- It is also one of the **most culturally diverse** towns in the district - 10% more so than the district average.
- Only 2% of commercial premises are currently available.



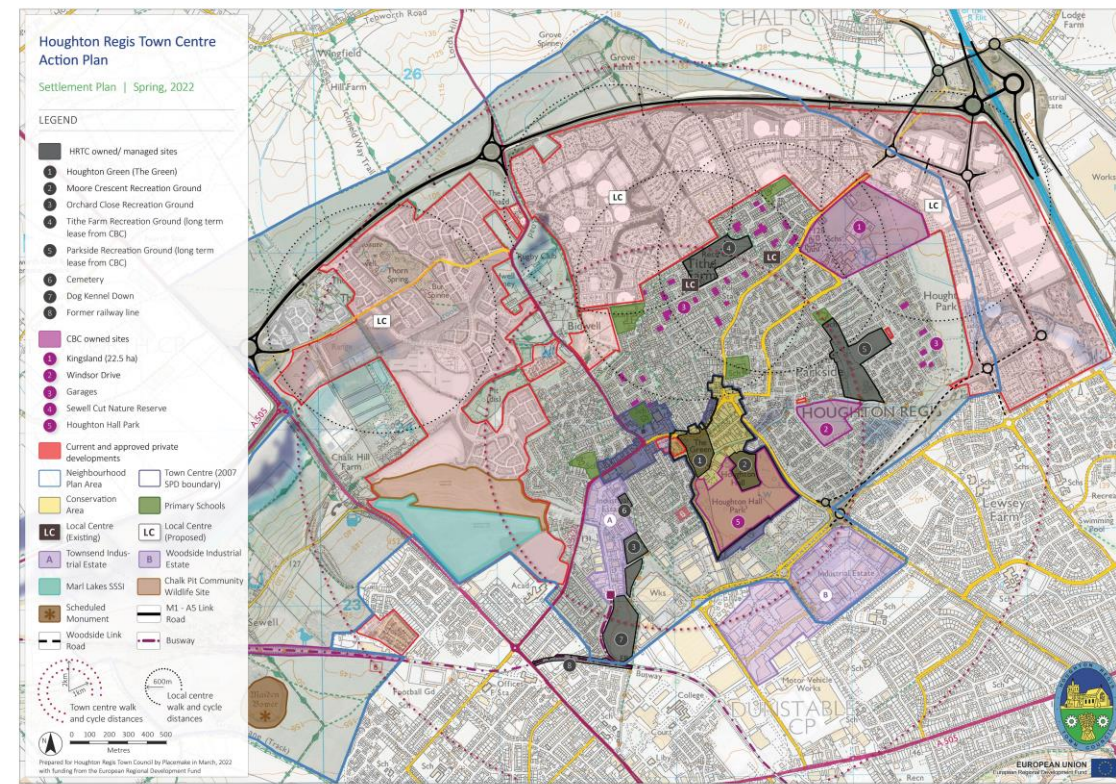
## *However, the town centre is straining ...*

- Since the 1970's, **town centre activities have contracted** to the limits of the shopping centre (Bedford Square).
- The shopping centre is privately owned and faces away from the rest of the town – unfortunately, **the face of historic Houghton is now the back of the shops.**
- There is **no core area of civic space.**
- According to the most recent benchmarking report;
  - Almost 70% of residents are concerned by the poor appearance of the town centre (45% above the national average).
  - 50% of residents are concerned by safety (30% higher than the national average).
  - 68% would not recommend a visit (40% more than the national average).
  - Footfall has dropped by 1/3 on pre-pandemic levels.
- It is **disconnected from the wider regional/ national public transport networks**, there is limited connectivity between the town's assets and the public realm is dominated by cars.
- Despite having multiple natural and physical assets, **tourism and hospitality are almost non-existent.**



## *Committed growth represents both a significant opportunity and challenge ...*

- Over the next 10 – 15 years, **Houghton's population will double from 17,500 residents to 34,300.**
- This will be more than present-day **Dunstable (34,000), Hitchin (33,350) and Letchworth (33,250)**, which each have more expansive and diverse town centre offers.
- It will also be **significantly greater than its Chiltern neighbours of Berkhamstead (19,000) and Flitwick (13,180)**, which have mainline train stations and direct links to London and Bedford.
- **New residents have already started arriving** to the expansion area – if these turn to Milton Keynes, Luton or Hitchin for their local amenity, social and community needs, there is a concern that the existing centre will continue to decline and the town will spilt into 'new' and 'old' communities.



## *Recognising the need for urgent action, the Town Council initiated the preparation of a Town Centre Action Plan*

- Prepared in 2022 and funded through the Welcome Back Fund.
- Intended to provide an overarching vision to guide decision making and engagement with stakeholders.
- Identifies short, medium and long term projects that can be completed by the town council and multiple stakeholders to reverse the gradual decline of the town centre.
- Highlights ‘action areas’ for further study – independently or through the revised Town Centre Maser Plan SPD, 2008.



*If the town centre is to cater for the needs on additional 16,400 residents, there is an critical need to **improve** and **expand** the existing town centre offer ...*

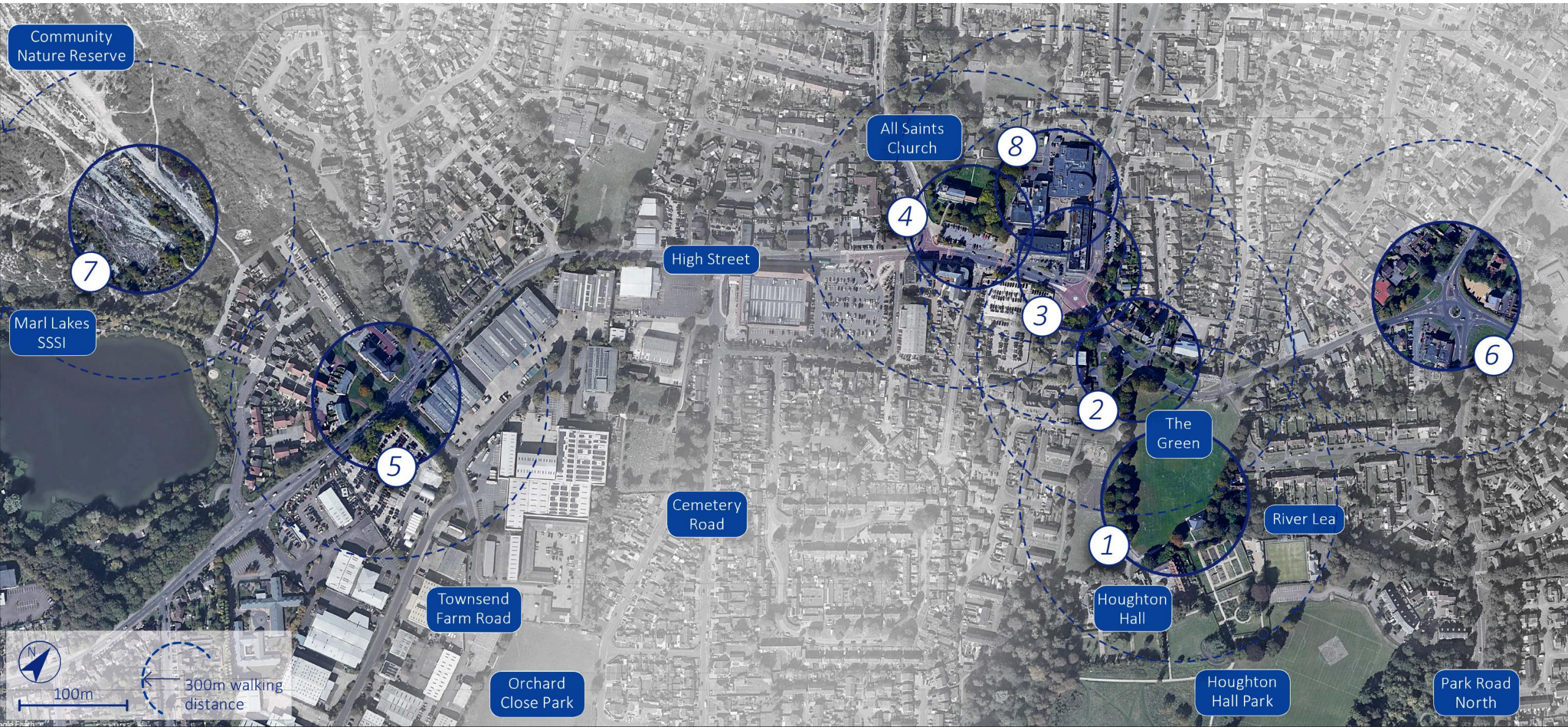
- Improve:
  - Efficiency of existing natural and built assets.
  - Levels of safety and visual appearance.
  - Offer: encourage visitors to stay longer than 1 hour (65% of all visitors leave within 60 minutes).
  - Connectivity – locally, regionally and nationally.
  - Identity – historic Haughton and a gateway to the Chilterns AONB.

Create:

- Additional accommodation for employment, retail, hospitality and tourism activities.
- Core area of civic space and a connected public realm.
- Leisure, recreational, education and community facilities.



*Fortunately, the foundations are already in place to provide a sustainable settlement of 34,000 residents with a strong sense of place and identity ...*



- 3 Pedestrian and cycle access along a desire line from The Green to Bedford Square.



At the moment, the link between The Green and the shopping centre is severed, limiting the potential for synergy and connectivity between the High Street and Houghton Hall Park.

Ideally, this link would follow the natural desire line (or as near as possible) and be treated as a signalised junction to maximise footfall.



- 4 Interface of the church yard, car park and the entrance to Bedford Square to create a shared surface, market place and an off-street waiting area for buses.

The absence of a core area of civic space in the town centre has been discussed throughout this document. While the shopping arcade has partially fulfilled this role, this suffers from poor visibility from the High Street, which limits its potential to function as a true market place.

From the plan that is included in Section 3.3, the area in front of All Saints Church appears to have been used for such activities. Centrally located and highly visible, this links the church with the pedestrian area and the library and aligns with existing crossings on the High Street.

While the area is currently used as a car park, the recent Benchmarking Report suggests there



to be an over provision of parking in the town centre. Additionally, the Conservation Statement recommends improvements to the public realm around the Grade I listed church.

The reinstatement of a market place on the site of the car park might be a long term ambition. However, in the short term, perhaps ten or fifteen spaces might be removed from the eastern side, together with the large planters next to these in order to create a central space.

This could be combined with repaving the full parking area for markets and events on particular days. If successful, the remaining spaces may be gradually removed over time.



Format	
1. Introduction	3. Vision
1.1 Introduction	3.1 Introduction
1.2 Role and Purpose	3.2 Vision Statement
1.3 Associated Documents	3.3 Objectives
2. Context	4. Delivery
2.1 Introduction	4.1 Phasing Plan
2.2 What is place making and why does it matter?	4.2 Catalyst Projects
2.3 Historic Houghton	4.3 Next Steps
2.4 Settlement Context	5. Acronyms
2.5 The Town Centre	
2.6 Constraints	
2.7 Opportunities	
2.8 Overview	

3 Vision	
3.1 Integrate existing employment areas as part of the town centre.	3.2 De-clutter the public realm and provide a core area of public open space for community events.
3.3 Identify opportunities to improve east-west connectivity and create alternative routes for movement.	3.4 Create a market place and an off-street waiting area for buses.





Thank You



# Town Centre Action Plan

Houghton Regis

Spring, 2022

*Cover image: Woodland Walk, Houghton Hall Park*

The document has been prepared for Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) by Placemake in March, 2022 with invaluable input from the Steering Committee, Town Councillors and the Town Clerk, Clare Evans.

The study has been facilitated with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), administered by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

Drawings and illustrations are generally by Placemake© unless otherwise referenced in captions. Aerial imagery by Google.

**EUROPEAN UNION**  
European Regional Development Fund



1. Introduction
  - 1.1 Introduction
  - 1.2 Role and Purpose
  - 1.3 Associated Documents
2. Context
  - 2.1 Introduction
  - 2.2 What is place making and why does it matter?
  - 2.3 Historic Houghton
  - 2.4 Settlement Context
  - 2.5 The Town Centre
  - 2.6 Constraints
  - 2.7 Opportunities
  - 2.8 Overview
3. Vision
  - 3.1 Introduction
  - 3.2 Vision Statement
  - 3.3 Objectives
4. Delivery
  - 4.1 Phasing Plan
  - 4.2 Catalyst Projects
  - 4.3 Next Steps
5. Acronyms



Houghton Regis Town Council  
Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY  
Tel: 01582 708 540  
Email: [info@houghtonregis.org.uk](mailto:info@houghtonregis.org.uk)  
[www.houghtonregis.org.uk](http://www.houghtonregis.org.uk)

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Saelig Hoctone, Hocton, Howgton, Kyngshouton, Kynges Houghton- the settlement that is today known as Houghton Regis (or Houghton locally) has a rich history that extends as far back as the Neolithic and Iron Ages.

During this time, it has been a Roman and Saxon settlement, a royal manor and an important component of Bedfordshire's hat making heritage.

While the nearby towns of Luton, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable grew as trading and transport hubs along the primary arteries of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, Houghton fostered a particular role as a local producer.

It prospered through the parish's fertile lands at the foot of the Chiltern Hills and the source of the River Lea and was adopted as the King's demesne land, providing for the royal households of the Saxon, Norman and Tudor periods (giving rise to the title, 'Kyngeshouton').

While retaining a focus on agriculture, the town has consistently repositioned itself to cater for different market trends and demand, from plaiting, weaving, duck breeding and small holding in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries to printing and engineering in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

According to Pat Lovering in 'Royal Houghton: The Story of Houghton Regis', the town's workforce was so adept at this that 'when factory inspectors visited Houghton in 1869, they found that every cottage in the village contained plaiters but that agriculture continued as before'. While, the 1851 Census records 82 straw plaiters at Puddlehill who quickly turned to smallholding and duck breeding once the plait industry began to wane!

This diversification, flexibility and ingenuity enabled the community to sustain itself during poor harvests while also keeping up-to-date with new manufacturing processes and technology.

During the 1950's and 1970's, Houghton was tasked with accommodating significant growth and expansion. According to the Conservation Area Statement (2008), the extent of this 'threatened its position and identity as a rural village strongly based upon agriculture to a larger residential settlement'.

However, while the arrangement of such development undoubtedly had an impact on the social and physical fabric of Houghton Regis, the town retained its self-sufficiency and a strong sense of identity.



*View of Houghton Court (Grade II listed) from Houghton Hall Park*

According to the 2021 Town Centre Benchmarking Study, over 50% of all shops are independently owned and 70% of residents shop locally. While, 78% of all residents still work in Central Bedfordshire; 20% within 2km of their homes, 35% within 10km of their homes and 23% across the wider district (Draft HRNP, 2021).

Presently, there are 17,500 residents in the Parish, including Bidwell, Sewell, and Thorn (Draft HRNP). However, committed development up to the A5-M1 link road represents another growth burst of 7,000 homes and 16,800 residents, doubling the scale and population of the current settlement.

Such expansion brings significant opportunities for historic Houghton. However, to harness these, it is important that the town centre can once again become the hub for all of Houghton Regis without damaging the particular character and sense of community that exists today.

This is clearly a delicate balance and it will take a long time to reverse the gradual contraction of town centre activities that has taken place over a number of decades. However, this document provides the first step towards regenerating and reinvigorating the town centre to cater for the daily needs of 34,000 residents.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.2 Role and Purpose

*‘Central Houghton Regis - a hub and a heart: aiming for a town centre which attracts people from across the parish and beyond.’*

Houghton Regis Draft Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2035

This Action Plan has been prepared for Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) with assistance from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Government’s Welcome Back Fund (WBF), administered through Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

It presents a long term strategy for the expansion of the town centre offer to meet the needs of an additional 16,800 residents while at the same time, minimising the impact on the existing community.

The significant increase in facilities that will be required from sports pitches and allotments to jobs and transportation is considered in greater detail in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan (HRNP).

This recognises the need for the town centre to become a ‘heart’ that will unify new and existing communities, ‘attracting people from across the Parish and beyond’. As the basis for engagement with stakeholders, it identifies opportunities for new accommodation within the existing urban fabric, including the two mixed-use clusters of ‘Town Centre East’ and ‘Town Centre West’.

This Action Plan is intended to support the aspirations of the HRNP and provide a particular focus on placemaking in the town centre. Or con-

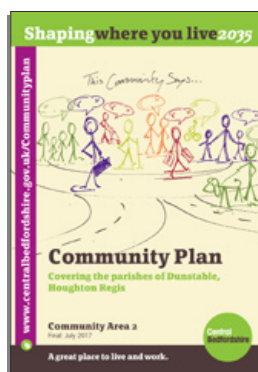
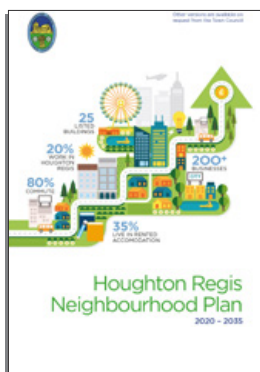
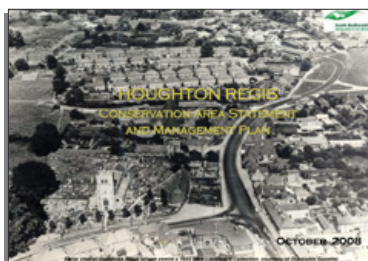
versely, how the overall offer can be improved by harnessing the value of Houghton’s assets, maximising opportunities and minimising constraints. This approach is discussed in greater detail in Section 2.2.

A Town Centre Master Plan was prepared in 2007- 2008 and is currently adopted by CBC as supplementary planning guidance (SPG). Conceived before the approval of new development in the expansion area, this is now somewhat outdated and the requirement for a revised strategy is noted in the Local Plan (CBC, 2015- 2035). However, with construction of new homes already underway and residents arriving, there is a pressing need for a holistic strategy that can be used to inform decision making in the town centre at this time.

The principal objectives of this document are therefore to:

1. Provide a viable and sustainable vision for the town centre as a ‘heart’ and a ‘hub’ for the expanded settlement.
2. Identify key objectives and a number of short, medium and long term actions to deliver this vision.
3. Coordinate engagement with stakeholders and the appropriation of funding.
4. Consider opportunities for new development and investment.
5. Assist in informing a future Town Centre Master Plan or Framework to replace the currently adopted 2008 strategy.

## Associated Documents 1.3



*Above: Sample of current policy and advisory material*

There is a wide range of statutory and advisory material available to inform a town centre strategy, from the aspirations of local residents and the Town Council to CBC's placemaking design guidance, the recently adopted Local Plan and a market assessment of existing retail and commercial activities.

The following material has been reviewed as the basis for the preparation of this study:

- CBC Local Plan 2015- 2035
- Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, CBC, 2014
- Local Area Transport Plan (LTP) Baseline Report - Dunstable & Houghton Regis (CBC, 2011)
- CBC Local Plan (2015-2035) – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Oct. 2016)
- Levelling Up Fund Application Form, CBC, 2021
- CBC Community Plan (July 2017)
- Houghton Regis Conservation Area Statement, CBC, 2008
- Our Vision: Our Town, HRTC, 2020- 2024
- Draft Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan, HRTC, 2020 - 2035
- Town Benchmarking Report, People and Places, 2021

This document is intended to sit alongside the Draft Neighbourhood Plan, which will shortly be presented to CBC for review and hopefully, adoption as a statutory document.

In time, it is hoped the Action Plan will provide a precursor to a revised Town Centre Master Plan or Framework Plan that can be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance for the duration of the Local and Neighbourhood Plan periods.

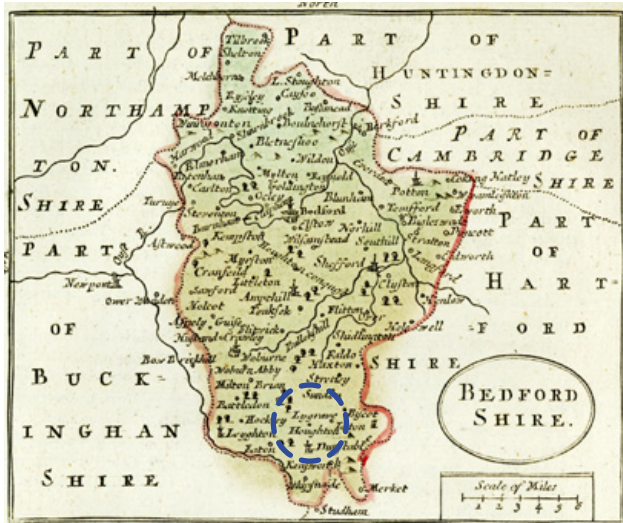
Of particular interest has been the results of the Community Plan (2017) and the Town Centre Benchmarking Report (2021), which provide an indication of current market forces, social trends and significantly, the aspirations of local residents.

Reference should also be made to Pat Lovering's 'Royal Houghton: The Story of Houghton Regis of Bedfordshire' (1986), which provides an interesting and informative overview of the town's unique history since the Norman Conquest and chronicle in the Domesday Book of 1086.



## 2 Context

### 2.1 Introduction



Above: Historic map of Bedfordshire (Grose, 1787) with 'Houghton' denoted by a blue circle



Above: Regional location plan

Something special is happening in Houghton Regis; while placemaking often involves creating a sense of place and identity, a number of indicators suggest these are already in existence.

According to the recently completed Benchmarking Report (2021), half of all shops are independently owned, an above average number of residents shop and work locally and only 2% of units are currently vacant. Such figures are particularly interesting given that they are based on data that was collected during the pandemic.

Additionally, while the Parish includes above average rates of single parent households, youth unemployment and children in income deprived households (CBC, 2021), it remains 10% safer than the average district crime rate (crimerate.co.uk). The town is also one of the most culturally diverse in the district - 10% more so than the district average (CBC, 2021).

Such statistics are often seen in reverse, where higher levels of diversity and lower levels of household income correlate with higher rates of anti-social behaviour and a break down in community and physical infrastructure.

The town's apparent self-sufficiency is also unusual given its strategic location, being close to London and the M1 and in the middle of the Oxford-Cambridge growth zone. This might have originated from the town's heritage as a local producer or because of a missing link in the regional transport network. Alternately, it could be owing to the safeguarding of demesne and ecclesiastic land, through which, Houghton has retained a variety of open spaces, a semi-rural character and a degree of separation from Luton and Dunstable.

In any case, it provides a good basis for the town's ability to integrate the projected increase in population and also, for the development of a sustainable town centre strategy.

## What is place making and why does it matter? 2.2



Yew Avenue, Houghton Hall Park

*‘Fantastic communities don’t happen by accident; they happen because members of these communities have a clear picture of how they want their place to be in the future and take action to make their vision a reality’.*

Councillor James Jamieson, Leader of CBC, 2020

In November 2020, CBC adopted a vision for how the district would be in 2050, being, ‘a great place to live and work... a place to prosper, a place to be proud of and a place to call home’. These objectives are clear and rooted in the principles of sustainable communities. However, the question is then, what constitutes a ‘great’ place?

There is a wealth of national and regional guidance to define this, from the National Design Guide (2021) and Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England, 2020) to CBC’s Design Guide and Urban Design (2014).

The NDG provides ten principles for ‘well-designed places’. Essentially, these ‘have ‘individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. The ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work to positively address environmental issues affecting climate’.

Character, community and climate are at the core of many definitions of ‘great’, ‘successful’ or ‘sustain-

able’ communities. There is a particularly strong connection between ‘character’ and ‘community’. Places with a clear and distinct identity also tend to have close communities. Ultimately, residents that are proud of their home town, city or village settle for longer and are more invested in it’s management and maintenance.

From the indicators that are noted in the previous section, for various reasons, Houghton Regis has fostered a strong sense of identity and through this, a close community. The basis for any visioning strategy would then be to strengthen rather than attempting to recreate this.

To achieve this, it is first necessary to understand what has generated a particular sense of place in the first instance and then, how this might be improved. These aspects are considered in greater detail through consideration of the settlement’s historic and physical context over the following pages.

## 2 Context

### 2.3 Historic Houghton



Above: Historic maps from 1800 to 1960

Houghton's past is brimming with significant events and occurrences that provide an impression of daily life throughout the history of Britain. Excavations at Maiden Bower, a Grade II Scheduled Ancient Monument, suggest Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity and Romano-British occupation while a number of Roman villas have been discovered at Puddle Hill. According to the Conservation Statement (HRCAS, 2008), finds in surrounding fields indicate settlement activity in the parish from the Stone Age.

For a number of years, Houghton was at the unhappy interface between Saxon and Danish occupied territory (Lovering, 1986). It became a Royal manor at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium with direct links to Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror (Lovering, 1986).

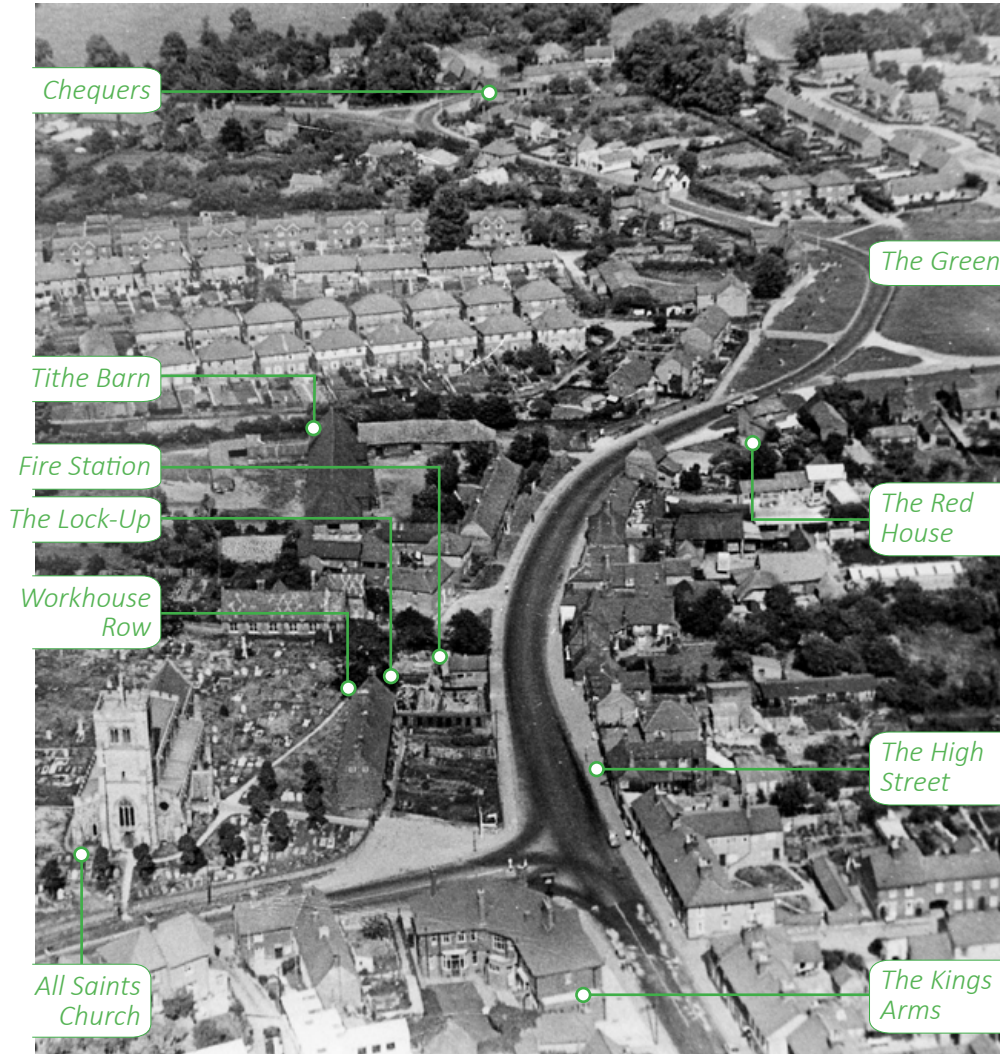
Since then, its history is intertwined with events that are rooted in British and International culture, from the naming of 'Vauxhall' - a London borough and car manufacturer to Hollywood's Golden Age through Gary Cooper, whose father was originally from the parish. Collectively, these have formed a special character and identity that distinguishes Houghton from any other place.

The town's physical form is also unique. The central core, which includes the High Street, village green and Houghton Hall, is now a designated conservation area. According to the HRCAS; 'the layout within the conservation area has changed little over the centuries. Centred on The Green, it is still largely based upon historic pre-urban roads and tracks'.

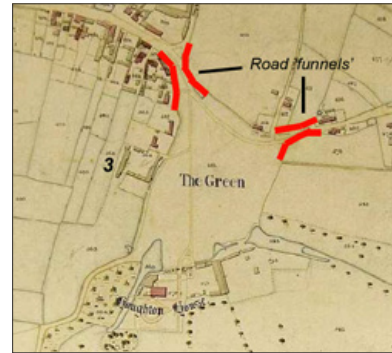
The Statement identifies a view from The Green to All Saints Church, a sense of enclosure along the High Street and active building frontages as characteristics of historic Houghton.

Another particularly interesting aspect is the funnelling of the High Street at either side of The Green, which was presumably intended to control livestock that would have been grazing on the common land. The effect of the narrowing and widening of the High Street around the Green can still be experienced today.

The aerial image that is included on the following page provides an impression of the character of the High Street sometime after the post-war construction of new homes at Tithe Farm but before the demolition of the Tithe Barn in 1964.



Above: Aerial image of the Conservation Area, presumably taken between 1945 and 1964 (Houghton Regis Heritage Society archives)



Above: Extract from the HRCAS showing the location of the two road funnels at The Green



Above: Historic images of the High Street (HRHS)

From this, the alternation between enclosure and openness is clearly apparent. This was achieved through a strong building line, which defined a series of open spaces, framed views and created active street frontages.

Unfortunately, the effect of this has been somewhat lost today. On the south side of the High Street, the current Morrisons supermarket and the recently completed mixed-use accommodation at Whitehouse Close by CBC maintain the historic building line.

However, on the north side, the removal of Workhouse Row and the old Fire Station have reduced the original sense of enclosure. While, through orientating the shopping centre away from the High Street, the active frontages that once provided passive surveillance and an attractive streetscape around a key node have been replaced by a 160m long blank facade.

## 2 Context

### 2.4 Settlement Context



In the Settlement Hierarchy of the 2015-2030 Local Plan, Houghton Regis is classified as one of eight ‘major’ service centres and one of five secondary service centres. Slightly smaller than the ‘Principal’ centres of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade, secondary centres are considered to be more local in character and offering. According to the Local Plan, these have ‘a range of shops including some national multiple retailers and many independent shops’ and ‘provide a range of services, facilities and leisure uses and (are) home to a number of businesses’.

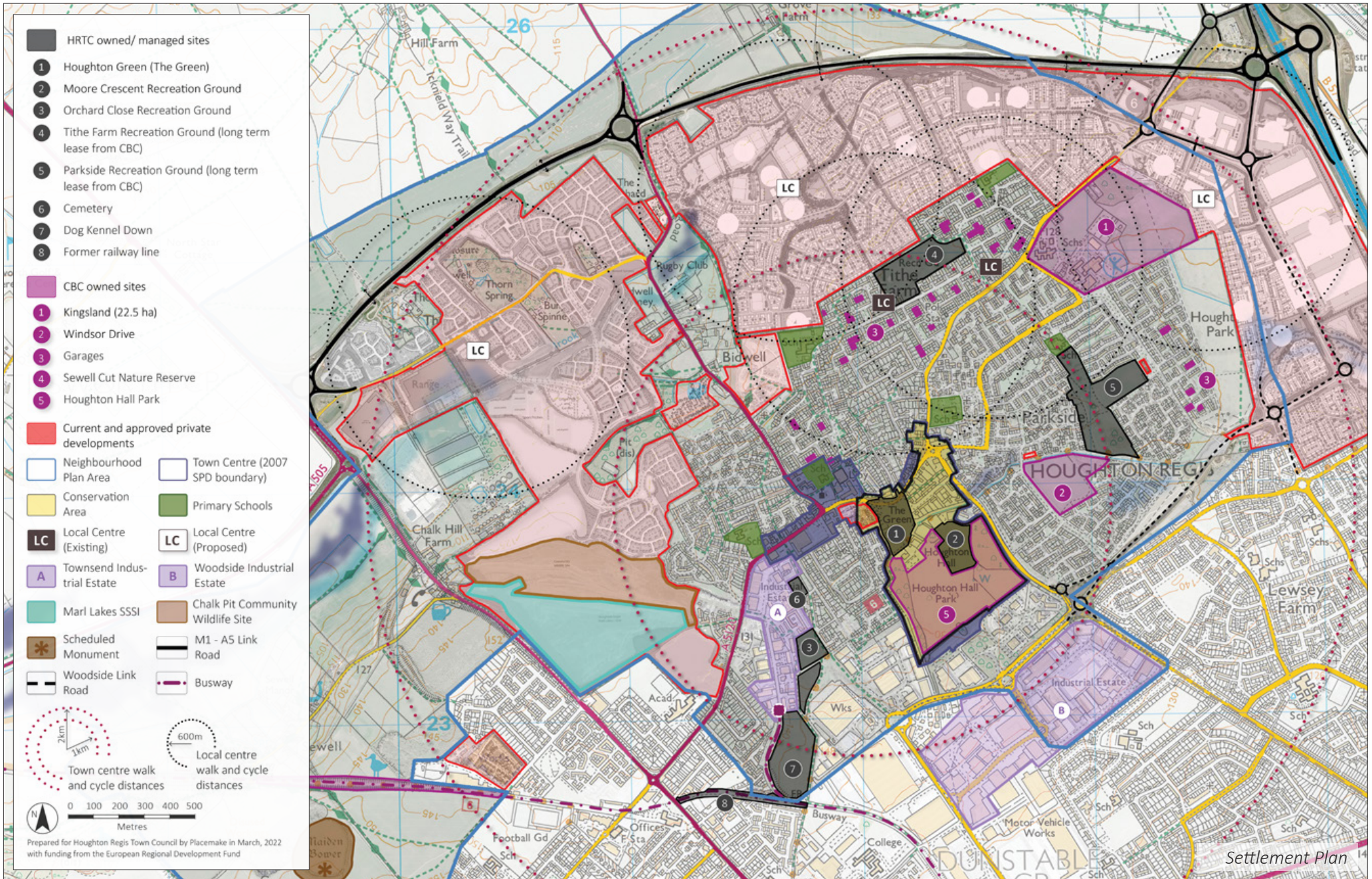
This impression is consistent with the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan for, ‘a ‘market town’ and local services offer - designed with smaller/ specialist retail as well as small/ medium food shopping’ and also, with the findings of the most recent Town Centre Benchmarking Study (2021).

The plan on the following page combines existing and committed development across the parish to provide an illustration of how this will appear in 10-15 years time.

The extent of committed development (denoted by a red boundary and fill), in relation to the scale of existing town is clearly apparent. Once completed, the urban area of the settlement will extend up to the new M1-A5 link road.

Fortunately, the town centre will remain relatively centrally located and within 2km of all homes. This is important to ensure that it can become a true ‘centre’ for all residents while also supporting sustainable modes of transport and reducing congestion.

The plan also shows areas that are under the ownership and management of the town council and CBC. Predominantly areas of open space, activities in these areas can be influenced more easily, thereby providing opportunities for short term gains. A good example of this is the cafe at Houghton Hall Park with similar facilities at Marl Lakes and The Green identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.



## 2 Context

### 2.5 The Town Centre

The Town Centre Master Plan SPD of 2008 provides a boundary for a central area that is shown on the figure to the right. This broadly corresponds with the limits of the conservation area in addition to All Saints Church and a 500m section of the High Street up the Mill Lane junction.

At the heart of this is Houghton Green - or, 'The Green'. According to the Conservation Statement; 'The Green reinforces village character, and is an essential element of the historic layout of Houghton Regis. It remains a strong central focus, established in early times, and the remainder of the village has evolved in relation to it'.

This is apparent from the plan, which shows a number of the town's key destinations within a 600m walking or cycle distance. These include a 1km section of the High Street, the Busway, employment activities at Woodside and Nimbus Park, the source of the River Lea and Orchard Close and Windsor Drive recreation areas. The Marl Lake, Parkside, Windsor Drive and Blue Waters Wood are all located within a 1km radius.

From the old images and historic maps in Section 2.3, the High Street appears as a spine of activity. However, since 1960, town centre amenities have gradually reduced to the extent of Bedford Square - a privately owned and managed shopping centre - and the immediate area around



this. Arranged according to a 1960's fashion, the shopping centre currently faces away from the High Street and The Green, thereby limiting the potential for integration with the wider town.

The Benchmarking Report (People and Places, 2021) provides a good health check of the current retail and commercial offer. From this, the town centre would appear to be under-performing in relation to the scale of opportunity that exists. For instance, although 70% of town centre users shop locally (26% higher than the national average) and 67% visit regularly, only 34% of all visitors stay for longer than an hour. Also, although over half of all shops are independently owned, there are no 'key attractors'.

Combined, these statistics indicate a demand for a more diverse, stimulating and engaging offer while there appears to be something that is currently deterring attractor outlets from investing in Houghton. According to the report, this could be owing to the perception of safety and visual appearance, which are both considered to be particular concerns for residents. Worryingly, 68% of residents would not currently recommend a visit to the town centre – 40% higher than the national average.

The report also identifies concerns regarding footfall, which has dropped by 1/3 on pre-pandemic levels and a potential surplus of parking provision. Conversely, 60-70% of visitors wish to see better public spaces and more community events. These aspirations accord with the CBC's Community Plan (July 2017), with residents expressing a desire for a market in some capacity.



*All Saints Church (Grade I listed heritage asset)*



*New shops and apartments on the High Street by CBC*



*Bedford Square Shopping Arcade*



## 2 Context

### 2.6 Opportunities

The town centre presents a number of exciting opportunities to improve and extend the current offer:

1. A strong sense of community and identity with an active and engaged town council.
2. A sustainable local economy with a particular character; an above average number of residents shop, live and work locally, only 2% of retail/ commercial units are vacant and the majority of shops are independently owned.
3. A rich history that tells a unique story; Saelig Hochtone, Houstone, Howghton, Kingeshoughton, Kynges Houghton and Houghton Regis.
4. A diverse, multicultural community; 10% more residents from black, asian and minority ethnic backgrounds than the district average.
5. A number of built and natural assets within close proximity; from a SSSI nature reserve and 42 acres of Green Flag parkland to a Grade I listed, 14th century church and a Grade II listed, Scheduled Ancient Monument.
6. An interesting and compact layout.
7. A semi-rural character with a number of open spaces.
8. Strategically located; less than 10km from an expanding international airport, 5km from a mainline train station with regular services to London, 3km from the M1 and at the edge of the Chilterns AONB.
9. Committed growth that will bring an additional 16,000 visitors to the town centre's amenities.
10. The basis for a sustainable transport strategy that is integrated with the wider regional network at Luton and Legrave mainline train stations.



Strong sense of community

## Constraints 2.7



*Poor first impression*



*Visual and physical barriers to connectivity and cohesion*



*Car dominated public realm and streetscape*



There are also a number of aspects that appear to be restricting the potential of the town centre;

1. Poor first impression whether arriving from along the High Street or the Busway; at present, it is too easy to drive through the town centre without realising.
2. From signage and advertising to hidden heritage assets, there is little indication of 'Historic Houghton'.
3. Town centre amenities have contracted to the immediate area around the shopping centre.
4. Insufficient activities to occupy visitors for more than an hour.
5. Limited commercial space for new and established businesses; only 2% of units are currently vacant.
6. Limited variety in the retail and hospitality offer while tourism is almost non-existent.
7. Closed frontages along main roads reduce safety by not providing any natural surveillance.
8. At present, the public realm is cluttered with various barriers to movement while there is no dedicated market square.
9. Car dominated streetscapes.
10. Limited physical and visual links between the town's assets; at present, these appear to be operating independently rather than as part of a stronger, unified offer.
11. Regional public and sustainable transportation is reliant on the guided busway that ends almost 1km from the heart of the town centre and Leagrave Station, which lies outside the parish area and involves a torturous route across the town.

## 2 Context

### 2.8 Overview

Results from the recently completed market study and the 2017 community survey suggest that the town centre is currently under-performing with demand for commercial, retail and hospitality space and activities outstripping supply.

In part, this is due to a lack of available space, caused by the contraction of town centre activities over the past 50 years. Where these extended along a 1km section of the High Street in the mid-20th Century, today's centre is limited to the shopping arcade and the immediate area around this.

The impact of this on the fortunes of the wider town is compounded by the poor arrangement of the shopping centre. Like many self-contained centres of the 1960's, this was originally planned to address a new shopping street - Bedford Square - rather than the High Street. As a result, the face of the town is currently the back of the shops.

This layout is contrary to contemporary planning ethos, which is based on providing active frontages that are visually stimulating and improve safety through passive surveillance ('eyes on the street'). Interestingly, according to the Conservation Area Statement, these were also prominent characteristics of the pre-war town centre.

Currently, blank façades, bin stores, parking and loading areas

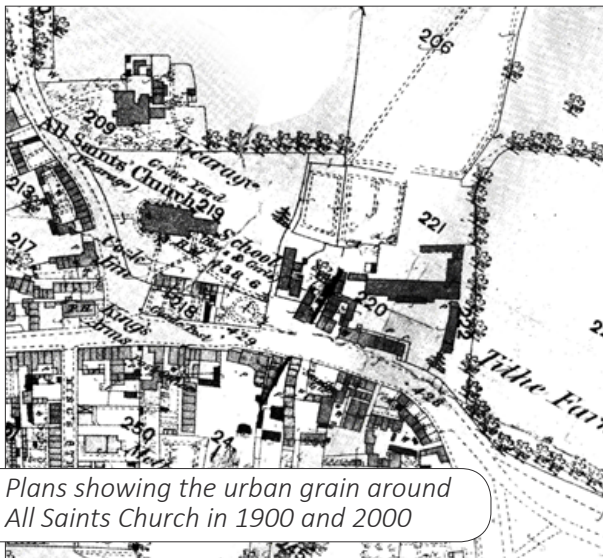
occupy a 160m long, prime commercial frontage at perhaps the most prominent location in the town.

The impact of this on safety and appearance is reflected in the findings of the market study and the community survey. Almost 70% of residents are concerned by poor appearance (45% above the national average) and 68% would not recommend a visit (40% more than the national average).

Without passive surveillance along long sections of the public realm, almost 50% of residents are also concerned by safety - almost 30% higher than the national average.

Appearance, safety and a lack of available commercial space are perhaps the most significant constraints that are holding back growth in the town centre. Through the combined effect of these, footfall has dropped by 30-40% on pre-pandemic level. Unfortunately, without change, this trend is likely to continue as residents seek a more engaging town centre experience elsewhere and businesses soon follow in search of greater footfall and consequently, sales.

At present, residents still appear to be committed to the town centre; almost 70% shop locally (26% higher than the national average) and 67% visiting regularly.



Plans showing the urban grain around All Saints Church in 1900 and 2000



Blank façades negatively impact safety and visual appearance in the shopping centre

New cafe, visitor centre and offices at Houghton Hall Park

Furthermore, 60-70% of residents would like to see the improvement of existing facilities, in particular, enhancements to the public realm for pedestrian and cycle movement and more community events.

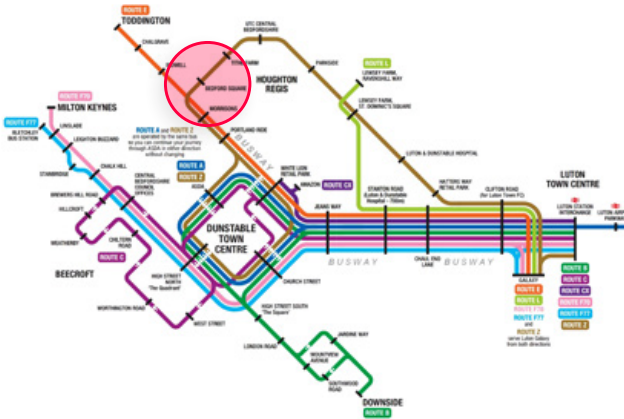
According to the 2017 community survey, residents also expressed a desire for a more expansive and efficient public transport network. This covers the two aspects of local and regional connectivity. An efficient local system will improve social cohesion between new and existing communities. However, there is a particular concern for Houghton’s regional connectivity.

For the public transport system to operate effectively, there is a need to fully integrate the local and regional networks. Currently, regional transport links are from Leagrave main-line train station, which provides direct access to Bedford and London, and the Busway, which provides direct access to Luton’s Central and Parkway station.

However, with the guided section of the Busway ending before the High Street and a torturous route to Leagrave Station, there is a fear that the critical link between the local and the regional/ national networks is missing.

## 2 Context

### 2.8 Overview



Above: Busway (guided and conventional) network



Above: End of the guided busway in relation to a 600m walking distance from the heart of the town centre

While limited regional connectivity may have helped to forge a particular identity in the town, it might also be restricting access to employment, education and training opportunities further afield.

Ultimately, there are a number of constraints and opportunities that can be considered to repair and reinvigorate the town centre. Significantly though, businesses and residents would still appear to be committed to the town centre and, it is assumed, would welcome positive changes.

Furthermore, Houghton has a special story that differentiates it from the neighbouring towns and has developed a particular character, a strong sense of community and a diverse demographic. It is interesting to note that while 48% of residents believe safety to be a negative aspect of the town centre (28% higher than the national average), according to crime records, the town is in fact 10% safer than the district average. This suggests that perhaps appearance is negatively impacting the overall perception of safety.

With the influx of an additional 16,800 residents

over the next 10- 15 years, Houghton's population will be the same as the nearby towns of Hitchin (33,350), Letchworth (33,250) and Hatfield (29,616), which each have more expansive and diverse town centre offers. It will also be significantly greater than its Chiltern neighbours of Berkhamstead (19,000) and Flitwick (13,180), which have mainline train stations and direct links to London.

To accommodate this growth, it will be necessary to develop a more fulfilling and engaging town centre experience that will occupy the attention of visitors for longer than 60 minutes. This will not happen by improving the retail provision alone but through grouping a series of complimentary activities and events to form a unified offer with greater synergy and footfall between these. For instance, a route from Nimbus Park to Marl Lakes would incorporate Houghton Hall Park, The Green, High Street, shopping centre, Busway, employment activities at Woodside and the Nature Reserve.

Additionally, given Houghton's heritage and diversity of assets, the potential for tourism is seemingly untapped.



*View across Houghton Hall Park; a Green Flag awarded area of public open space and the 'green lung' of Houghton Regis (CBC)*

Rather than attempting to replicate the offers of other towns, a sustainable, place-based approach focuses on strengthening Houghton's 'USP'. Within the preparation of this study, the following aspects have been identified:

1. Character: Houghton has a strong sense of community and identity.
2. History: Royal connections and heritage as a local producer since Roman times.
3. Form: a variety of open spaces along the High Street.
4. Assets: a variety of built and natural assets within close proximity to the centre.
5. Self-sufficiency: despite its strategic location, an above average number of residents shop and work locally, half of all shops are independently owned and only 2% of units are currently vacant.
6. Diversity: an above average number of residents from different backgrounds compared to other towns in the district.
7. Location: at the edge of the Chiltern Hills AONB - a nationally recognised area of natural beauty and destination for tourism.

Maximising the value of these characteristics is central to the long term vision strategy for the town centre as the heart of the extended settlement.

## 3 Vision

### 3.1 Introduction

---

*Royal Houghton has survived and prospered in many difficult circumstances over the centuries; the enormous growth of the area in the last three decades has undoubtedly presented a challenge to any faced in the past.*

*I am sure that the new town will not only meet that challenge in its own shrewd and inimitable way, but make from it a Houghton of which we can continue to be proud'.*

*Mrs. Pat Lovering, 'Royal Houghton: the story of Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire', 1986*

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This section provides an outline of a strategy to guide the development of the town centre as the heart of a settlement of 32,000 residents while at the same time, maintaining the particular sense of place and identity that make Houghton special.

It should be emphasised that it is not the intention of this document to replicate the 2008 Town Centre Master Plan SPD, which, according to the Local Plan, is due to be revised within the Plan period.

Rather, as noted in Section 1.2, the core objective is to establish an overarching vision for the centre as the basis for engagement with stakeholders and decision-making at a critical time that sees existing footfall diminishing at the same time as new residents are arriving to the expansion area.

In the first instance, a Vision Statement has been prepared with the intention of establishing a clear rationale that can be adopted by the town council as a common goal.

This aligns with the Neighbourhood Plan objec-

tives for the town centre as a 'heart' and a 'hub' and is specifically presented in a manner that can be copied and reproduced in isolation of this document.

Following this, ten objectives have been identified as the basis for the Phasing Plan that follows in the next section. These represent broad principles for the enhancement of the town centre in relation to the predominant constraints and opportunities that are outlined in the previous section, together with Houghton's particular assets and 'USP'.

The objectives provide the link between 'analysis' and 'delivery', where each is intended to strengthen a particular area or component that is currently under-performing.

The Phasing Plan in Section 3.2 outlines different ways that each objective can be delivered in the short, medium and long term.

As the town centre has been gradually contracting for the past half century, there is no 'silver bullet' that can instantly reverse the so-

cial, environmental and physical impact of this. Instead, transformation will occur gradually through a number of actions that are aimed at tackling different aspects of the town centre experience.

As a result, the nature of the projects that are outlined in Section 3.2 vary from cost effective ‘quick wins’ that can be delivered in the short term to long term, physical projects that will require a high level of investment and collaboration with multiple stakeholders to realise.

The core intent is that all short, medium and long term actions are coordinated to tackle existing blockages and maximise the value of the town’s physical and natural assets.



*Images:*

*Top left: The tuck shop next to the Red House and the old Free School (HRHS archives).*

*Top right: Cricket at Houghton Green in 2005 (HRHS)*

*Bottom: View towards across The Green towards Houghton Hall (HRHS)*



## 3 Vision

### 3.2 Vision Statement

*This section has been specifically prepared to be read independently from the body of this document.*

*In this manner, both short and long statements may be reproduced by HRTC for different purposes.*

*As a result, there is some duplication of text with other sections of this document.*

---

*A centre for all Houghton Regis: the social, retail, business and community hub of a sustainable town with a special history and character.*

---

Archaeological studies indicate the origins of a settlement in the parish since the Stone and Iron Ages. Through its fertile lands at the foot of the Chiltern Hills and the source of the River Lea, Houghton grew as a local producer during Saxon and Roman times and became the breadbasket for the royal households of the Norman and Tudor periods (giving rise to the title, 'Kyngheshouton').

Despite its strategic location in the middle of the Oxford-Cambridge growth zone and bursts of rapid expansion in the late 20th Century, the town has retained a strong local economy. At present, half of all shops are independently owned, an above average number of residents shop and work locally and only 2% of units are currently vacant (Town Benchmarking Report, 2021).

Extensive housing development of a particular mix and without sufficient supporting facilities hasn't been without impact. Today, these areas register above average rates of single parent households, youth unemployment and children in income deprived households (CBC, 2021).

At the same time, records show Houghton Regis to be 10% safer than the district average (crimerate.co.uk). Additionally, the town has a diverse, multicultural population and a proactive town council that places social cohesion at the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan and Vision Strategy.

The overall impression is of a sustainable, self-sufficient town with a strong sense of community and identity.

Improving facilities in particular areas is clearly a priority. However, equally pressing is the necessity to strengthen the town centre to cater for the needs of an additional 16,800 residents that will be relocating to the parish within the next 10-15 years.

Such expansion also brings significant opportunities for the local economy, particularly in the areas of retail and hospitality. While, given the town's variety of natural and built assets, the potential for tourism is seemingly untapped.

With a sustainable local economy, strong sense of com-



munity and semi-rural character, the ingredients for future proofing the town centre are already in place.

However, if Houghton is to avoid becoming amalgamated into a greater urban area with Luton and Dunstable or split between ‘new’ and ‘old’ towns, it is essential that the centre becomes a hub for all residents with a distinct identity, a diverse offer and better public transport connectivity.

To do this, it will need to achieve the following aspects:

1. A centre that caters for the needs of all residents, bringing together new and existing communities.
2. A busy, mixed-use hub for a sustainable local economy.
3. A unique sense of place and identity that is steeped in history.
4. A fulfilling visitor experience with a series of activities and attractions for day, night and overnight visitors.
5. A safe, attractive and stimulating environment.
6. A well-connected place – locally and regionally.

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*Images:*

*Top: VE Day celebration at The Green in 1945 (HRHS)*

*Bottom: Line dancers on the High Street at the Jubilee Carnival in 2006 (HRHS)*

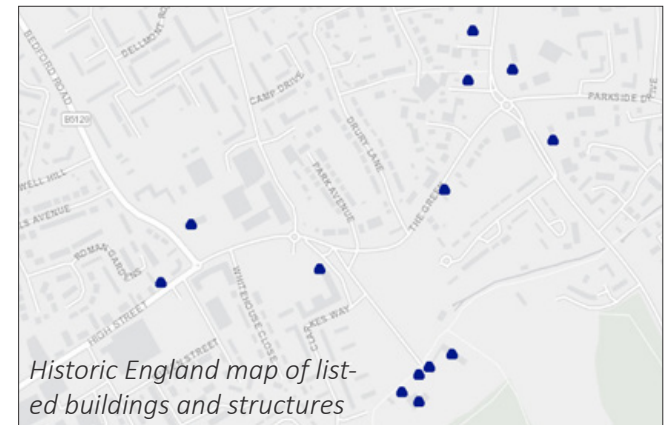
## 3 Vision

### 3.3 Objectives

Ten overarching objectives have been identified to guide the transformation of the town centre:

1. Historic Houghton: celebrate the town's rich history and build a unique sense of place and identity around this.
2. Unify the assets to provide a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre experience.
3. Welcome to Royal Houghton: improve the first impression through strengthening key views and gateways (road and bus).
4. Re-establish the High Street as a central spine with new opportunities to grow and diversify the commercial offer.
5. Integrate existing employment areas as part of the town centre.
6. De-clutter the public realm and provide a core area of public open space for community events.
7. Identify opportunities to improve east-west connectivity and create alternative routes for movement.
8. Develop an efficient public transport strategy that integrates local and regional services.
9. Strengthen the open space network to provide a series of spaces for different activities, support a semi-rural character and reflect the town's heritage as producer.
10. Establish a structure to assist and monitor delivery.

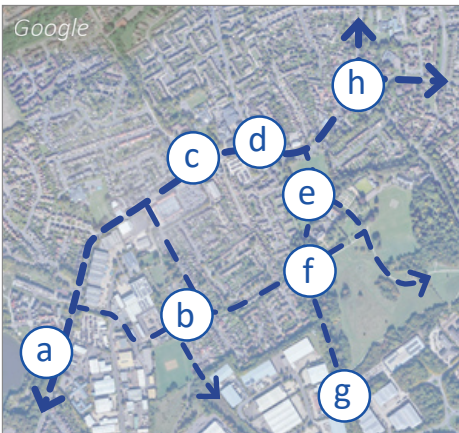
- 1 **Historic Houghton: celebrate the town's rich history and build a unique sense of place and identity around this.**



Houghton has many heritage assets and a long history that would be the envy of many settlements. However, for some reason, these aspects are not immediately apparent to visitors and the overarching identity is unclear.

Luton is known for its airport and hat manufacturing, St. Albans for the Abbey and Milton Keynes as a New Town. There is a need to clearly define what makes Houghton special- for instance, a local producer, royal manor or a gateway to the Chilterns - and consistently reinforce this message through branding, marketing, street furniture and signage.

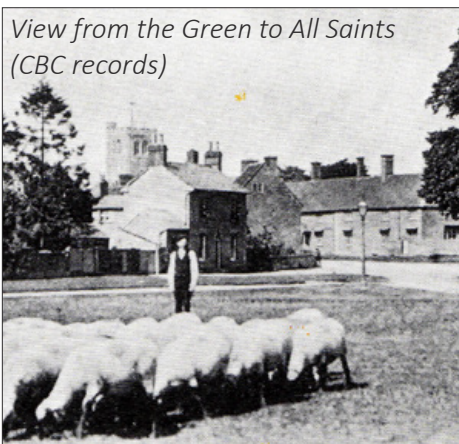
**2** Unify the assets to provide a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre experience.



A diverse mix of attractions are located within a 600m walk of The Green, including Grade II listed heritage assets, a Green Flag park, shopping centre, traditional High Street and employment activities at Woodside, Nimbus Park and Houghton Hall. A 1km cycle ride includes a nature reserve, SSSI and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

At present, these activities are all operating independently. However, integrating them as part of a unified offer would improve access, synergy and footfall for all.

**3** Welcome to Royal Houghton: improve the first impression through strengthening key views and gateways (road and bus).



*View from the Green to All Saints (CBC records)*

At present, visitors to the town centre are currently greeted by blank frontages and 'red flags', such as the weapon drop bin, empty planter boxes and commercial bins. This creates a negative impression from the outset while weapon drops, railings and surveillance cameras can have an adverse impact on security compared to more passive measures such as active frontages, increased footfall and soft landscaping.

Ultimately, if the town centre is to attract more visitors, it is essential to improve its front door and garden.

**4** Re-establish the High Street as a central spine with new opportunities to grow and diversify the commercial offer.



*Historic view along the High Street (HRHS)*

While the town centre extended from Townsend Farm (Mill Road) to the pond and coach houses at The Green, this has gradually contracted to the limits of the shopping centre over the past 50 years.

However, if it is to become the hub for an additional 16,800 residents, more public space and amenities are required. Within this, the High Street provides an opportunity to once again become a spine of activity through the settlement.

### 3 Vision

- 5 Integrate existing employment areas as part of the town centre.



With the exception of the some accommodation at Houghton Hall and along the High Street, the town centre limits exclude the commercial areas of Woodside, Cemetery Road and Nimbus Park (Town Centre Master Plan SPD, 2008).

Given that over 50% of residents work within 10km of their homes and only 2% of ground floor units are currently vacant, there is a fantastic opportunity for synergic activity between the town's employment, leisure and retail/ hospitality areas.

- 6 De-clutter the public realm and provide a core area of public open space for community events.

The public realm through the town centre is cluttered with various signs, bins, benches, bollards, planters and flags that are restricting pedestrian movement and opportunities for communal events.

In addition, since the area in front of All Saints Church became a car park, there is no longer a dedicated area of public open space that can provide as a market place or town square.

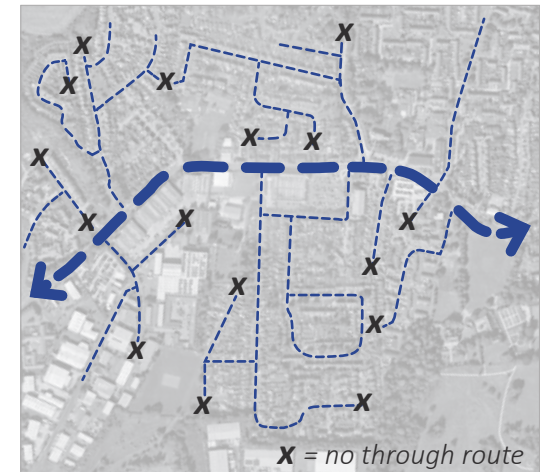


Historic urban grain and public realm

- 7 Identify opportunities to improve east-west connectivity and create alternative routes for movement.

With the exception of the High Street, there are no east-west vehicular links through the centre. As a result, all traffic is focussed along the High Street, which creates congestion at peak times and difficulties when sections of this are closed.

Creating these connections will enable the distribution of traffic across a wider network and release pressure on the High Street, while also improving access to employment areas and HH Park and stimulating pedestrian and cycle movement.



**8** Develop an efficient public transport strategy that integrates local and regional services.



An effective local service will significantly improve access to the town centre, support cohesion between new and existing communities and reduce traffic along the High Street. This should be integrated with regional connections at Leagrave Station and the Busway to facilitate access to wider employment, education and training opportunities. A central hub should be located around All Saints and the shopping centre with additional stops at the employment areas, library and The Green.

**9** Strengthen the open space network to provide a series of spaces for different activities, support a semi-rural character and reflect the town’s heritage as producer.

A prominent characteristic of Houghton is its open space network, which combines leisure and recreational areas with a Green Flag park, nature reserve and a SSSI. Collectively, this provides a semi-rural character that integrates with the wider Chilterns AONB.

At present, some spaces appear under utilised and without any clear purpose. However, considering these as a network of spaces with a different function and character will improve efficiency, use and access. For instance, where two recreational areas are located in close proximity, the function of one may be varied to include allotments, an ecology area or a skate or splash park.



**10** Establish a structure to assist and monitor delivery.



*Above: Hitchin Information Centre is a multi-purpose space that includes the Town Centre Manager’s office, tourist information, a shop and a gallery.*

The nearby towns of Hitchin, Biggleswade and Letchworth that have similar populations to Houghton after expansion each have full or part time Town Centre Managers.

The dedicated role of these is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the town centre and work with local residents, businesses, stakeholders and contractors to consistently monitor and improve the town centre offering.

## 4 Delivery

### 4.1 Phasing Plan

The following table includes various short, medium and long term projects that will assist in delivering each of the objectives that are noted in the previous section. A number of these can be completed by the town council while others will require engagement with multiple stakeholders and investment to realise.

Through this approach, transformation will occur in a phased and coordinated manner and while long term projects might generate the greatest single impact, there are multiple short and medium term interventions that can be completed to realise the common objective.

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Historic Houghton: celebrate the town's rich history and build a unique sense of place and identity around this.</b>			
1	Town Council approval of the identity and vision strategy.	*		
2	Coordinated branding and marketing to enforce a clear and consistent message.	*		
3	Promote activities and events that will specifically support Houghton's identity as a local producer and a gateway to the Chilterns AONB. For instance, a farmer's market, flower show, urban farm or the beginning of walking, cycling or trekking routes into the Chilterns.	*		
4	Identify any historic dates or events that can be celebrated - for instance, a village fete or cricket matches on The Green.	*		
5	Identify any other heritage assets that might be eligible for listing.	*		
6	Identify potential funding mechanisms for improving heritage assets or access to these - for instance, Maiden Bower and All Saints Church.	*		
7	Prepare a map of attractions in the town centre.	*		
9	Review the appetite for a 'Britain in Bloom' campaign or the potential for a formal event by an organisation such as the Royal Horticultural Society at Houghton Hall Park and The Green.	*		
10	Develop a tourism strategy with a series of activities for day and overnight visitors.		*	
11	Instal signage on floors and walls to increase awareness of heritage assets or activities and events that took place at particular locations.		*	
12	Establish a centrally located tourism/ heritage office with space for exhibitions.		*	*
14	Physical restoration of particular heritage assets.			*
15	Review and update the 2008 Town Centre Conservation Area Statement SPD.			*

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Unify the assets to provide a stronger, more robust and engaging town centre experience.</b>			
1	Define the main links between key destinations and identify opportunities to improve these or form new connections.	*		
2	Review the appetite for a collective organisation of business owners and operators, for instance, the Houghton Regis Business Association or Forum, with a single point of reference for ease of communication.	*		
3	Establish regular channels of communication with local business owners and operators and monthly/ bi-monthly meetings to identify opportunities for synergy.	*		
4	Review the potential for greater public access to privately owned assets. For instance, a licence for a hospitality or leisure offer at the gravel pit lake or 'Open Door' weekends with guided walks around the Red House, Houghton Hall and All Saints.	*		
5	Refresh surfaces and planting along existing key routes.	*		
6	Initiate feasibility and technical studies for physical improvements along new or existing key routes, for instance, resurfacing or new signage.	*		
7	Update and expand the 2008 Town Centre boundary to incorporate surrounding activities.		*	
8	Implement new surfacing and signage along key existing routes.		*	*
9	Implement the construction of new links.			*
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Welcome to Royal Houghton: improve the first impression through strengthening key views and gateways (road and bus).</b>			
1	Initiate Action Area Plans for the west and eastern gateways.	*		
2	Engagement with stakeholders to identify long and short term solutions for improving the elevation of the shopping centre along the High Street and Tithe Farm Road.	*		
3	Instal temporary screening of blank facades around the shopping centre through posters, planting or render.	*		
4	Improve existing conditions at the back of the shops and parking. For instance, surface treatment, lighting and communal bin stores with screening.	*		
5	Remove the weapons bin from the entrance of the shopping centre and any outdated signs or sign boards.	*		
6	Identify a series of key views across the town. For instance, from The Green to All Saints Church or the top of the Chalk Hills to Houghton Hall.	*		
7	Initiate a feasibility and options study for extending the guided Busway up to the High Street.	*	*	
8	Establish a central hub for tourism and information.		*	
9	Initiate feasibility studies for new seating and resting areas that can take advantage of key view corridors.		*	
10	Initiate physical works at the eastern gateway.		*	



## 4 Delivery

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Welcome to Royal Houghton: improve the first impression through strengthening key views and gateways (road and bus).</b>			
11	Simplify and coordinate signage, surface treatment and street furniture along the High Street.		*	
12	Identify opportunities to reinforce the connection to agricultural production and a semi-rural character. For instance, hanging baskets, formal street planting and informal meadow planting/rewilding along key routes.		*	
13	Depending on the result of the feasibility study, improve paving along Townsend Farm Road and a new interchange at the guided Busway or, develop a new interchange closer to the shopping centre.		*	*
14	Initiate physical works at the western gateway.			*
15	Renew surface treatment and street furniture along the High Street.			*
16	Initiate feasibility studies for the improvement of surface treatment, planting and street furniture on the approach to the east and west gateways.			*
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Re-establish the High Street as a central spine with new opportunities to grow and diversify the commercial offer.</b>			
1	Repair any damaged pavements, tarmac, signage and lighting along the High Street.	*		
2	Initiate an advisory campaign to improve street frontages along the High Street, possibly coupled with grants for businesses or land owners as an incentive.	*		
3	Initiate long and short term measures to improve the shopping centre elevation along the High Street and Tithe Farm Road.	*	*	*
4	Engagement with CBC and landowners along the High Street to review opportunities for additional accommodation and active frontages.	*		
5	Initiate a feasibility study to review the potential for designed cycle routes along the High Street.		*	
6	Identify opportunities to diversify the existing commercial offer and provide a more sustainable mix with a greater provision of offices, retail and multi-purpose space.		*	
7	Review all signage, surfaces and street furniture along the High Street and identify components that can be renewed or replaced.		*	
8	Develop new commercial accommodation along the High Street with a focus on retail accommodation at ground floor and offices/ multi-purpose space above this.			*
9	Renew surface treatment and street furniture along the length of the High Street.			*

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Integrate existing employment clusters as part of the town centre.</b>			
1	Update and expand the 2008 Town Centre boundary to incorporate adjoining commercial activities.	*		
2	Review the appetite for a collective organisation of business owners and operators with a single point of reference for ease of communication.	*		
3	Establish regular channels of communication with local business owners and operators and monthly/ bi-monthly meetings to identify opportunities for synergy.	*		
4	Engagement with stakeholders to identify opportunities to diversify the mix of commercial accommodation nearer to the High Street.	*		
5	Develop a programme of quarterly or bi-monthly job fairs and training events to encourage synergy between local businesses, residents and other amenities in the town centre.	*		
6	Improve pedestrian and cycle routes between the High Street and employment areas.		*	
7	Renew paving and signage along Townsend Farm Road and Park Road North.			*
<b>6.0</b>	<b>De-clutter the public realm and provide a core area of public open space for community events.</b>			
1	Engagement with CBC to establish a timeframe for updating the 2008 Town Centre Master Plan.	*		
2	Engagement with CBC and stakeholders to review improvements to the existing public realm in the shopping centre.	*		
3	Remove the weapons bin from the entrance of the shopping centre and any outdated signs or sign boards.	*		
4	Develop a programme of quarterly/ bi-monthly events on the full or eastern section of the car park at All Saints Church.	*		
5	Prepare an Action Area Plan for the car park at All Saints and the interface between the church yard and the pedestrian arcade.	*		
6	Initiate the revised Town Centre Master Plan study, including a section with guidance regarding suitable materials, street furniture and the treatment of shop frontages.	*	*	
7	Review the potential for off-road bus stops near to the Action Area Plan.		*	
8	Detail design of a new market square in the Action Area Plan.		*	
9	Initiate construction of 'Market Place' or 'All Saints Square'.		*	*
10	Develop a programme of monthly/ bi-monthly events in the new market square.			*

## 4 Delivery

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Identify opportunities to improve east-west connectivity and create alternative routes for movement.</b>			
1	Consultation with CBC's technical teams to identify opportunities to improve east-west vehicular connectivity away from the High Street.	*		
2	Prepare feasibility studies and conduct engagement.	*		
3	Identify potential sources of funding and investment.		*	
4	Prepare technical design.		*	
5	Initiate construction.			*
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Develop an efficient public transport strategy that integrates local and regional services.</b>			
1	Engagement with CBC's technical teams to review the potential to extend the Busway up to the High Street, develop an interchange around All Saints church and square, improve links to Leagrave Station and identify routes for local services.	*		
2	Initiate a transport study to identify and appraise options for an integrated and sustainable public transport strategy.	*		
3	Identify potential sources of funding for technical design, construction and operations.	*		
4	Engagement with local operators to identify opportunities to improve the use and efficiency of the existing system.	*		
5	Advertising and information campaigns to improve awareness of local and regional services.	*		
6	Initiate a feasibility study to review the potential for automated signs at bus stops.	*		
7	Maintenance of existing bus stops.	*	*	
8	Technical design of new routes and stops.		*	
9	Install automated systems and seating at the most commonly used or evenly spaced stops.		*	
10	Initiate construction of new routes and stops.			*
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Strengthen the open space network to provide a series of spaces for different activities, support a semi-rural character and reflect the town's heritage as producer.</b>			
1	Initiate a review of the use and function of different open spaces and pedestrian and cycle links between these.	*		
2	Initiate a review of the extent and condition of Public Rights of Way (PROW) that connect to the wider network - in particular, towards Sewell/ Maiden Bower and the Chiltern Hills AONB.	*		
3	Engagement with CBC's ecology, landscape and PROW teams to consider opportunities to improve the efficiency and biodiversity of existing spaces.	*		
4	Review the potential for rewilding some areas with meadow planting and natural habitats.	*		
5	Review the appetite for a 'Britain in Bloom' campaign or the potential for a formal event by an organisation such as the Royal Horticultural Society at Houghton Hall Park and The Green.	*		

No.	Action	Delivery (years)		
		1 - 3	3 - 5	5 - 10
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Strengthen the open space network to provide a series of spaces for different activities, support a semi-rural character and reflect the town's heritage as producer.</b>			
6	Foster closer links with the Chilterns AONB, including a formal walk from a new visitor centre at the Marl Lakes SSSI.	*		
7	Review the potential for improvements to the Marl Lakes as has happened at Houghton Hall Park and identify opportunities for funding and investment to facilitate this.	*		
8	Prepare a map of local walks and cycle routes to promote use and awareness.	*		
9	Integrate The Green into the Park Run circuit and initiate regular 'Park Walks' from The Green.	*		
10	Develop an annual programme of events at The Green, from Park Runs and Walks to exhibition cricket matches and Christmas and farmers markets.	*	*	
11	Develop an Action Area Plan for The Green.	*	*	
12	Improve the River Lea corridor and Lilly Lane.		*	
13	Improve the interface between the Kitchen Garden, pavilion and River Lea with an opportunity for a resting place, sign post, information panel or kiosk.		*	
14	Provide a turning space for vehicles at the end of Redhouse Court and parking spaces along this for access to Houghton Hall and Park from the north.		*	
15	Resurface Redhouse Court with a more sensitive, semi-permeable material such as stone setts, cellular grassed paving or a resin bonded aggregate with a swale along one side.		*	
16	Initiate development of a new visitor centre and Green Infrastructure at Marl Lakes to establish this as key area of open space in the district.		*	*
17	Improve surfaces, boundaries and furniture along PROW and bridleways.			*
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Establish a structure to assist and monitor delivery.</b>			
1	Approval and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.	*		
2	Engagement with CBC to review the pros, cons and impact of forming a Business Improvement District (BID).	*		
3	Initiate the revised Town Centre Master Plan study with a design guide section.	*		
4	Review the potential for a dedicated Town Centre and Evening Economy Manager on a full or part time basis.	*		
5	Establish social media platforms to promote events and activities.	*		
6	Establish a physical presence for the Town Council in the town centre, potentially connected to a tourist information facility and a small shop selling local and 'Royal Houghton' branded produce.		*	
7	Review and update the Town Centre Action Plan.			*

## 4 Delivery

### 4.2 Catalyst Projects

- ① The Green: pavilion, source of the River Lea/ Houghton Brook, access to Houghton Hall Park and the treatments of Redhouse Court and Lilly Lane.
- ② High Street frontage of Bedford Square and the view from The Green to All Saints Church.
- ③ Pedestrian and cycle access along a desire line from The Green/ Redhouse Court to Bedford Square.
- ④ Interface of the church yard, car park and the entrance to Bedford Square to create a shared surface, market place and an off-street waiting area for buses.
- ⑤ Junction of Townsend Farm Road and the High Street as a western gateway, including the connection to the Busway.
- ⑥ Junction of East End Road, Park Road North, Windsor Drive and Sundon Road as an eastern gateway to the town centre and approach to Houghton Hall Park and Nimbus Park.
- ⑦ Formal access and visitor centre at Marl Lakes SSSI.
- ⑧ Interface between Bedford Square and the library/ health centre

A number of action areas have been identified across the town centre as the basis for further study.

Strategically located at prominent intersections or focal points, these represent opportunities to improve connectivity between destinations, footfall and/ or visual impact.

A holistic approach combining urban, landscape and built form treatment should be considered for each place that will require engagement with different stakeholders and authorities to realise.

Where implementation might represent a long term process through securing funding and regulatory consents, temporary measures can be considered for quick wins and short term gains.

Additionally, each catalyst area can be treated as a separate project that can be phased and delivered independently. However, the use of common signage, paving and street furniture is recommended to maintain a unified impression.

The general location of each action area is identified on the following page with a short description and impression of potential character and treatment to follow.

*Adjacent page:*

*Plan to show the location of catalysts projects*



## 4 Delivery

### 4.2 Catalyst Projects

- ① The Green: pavilion, source of the River Lea/ Houghton Brook, access to Houghton Hall Park and the treatments of Redhouse Court and Lilly Lane.



The Green plays an essential role in tying the town centre together; it is the historic heart of Houghton and an integral connection between Houghton Hall, the Park and the High Street.

Retaining an open area for events and activities such as a fête, a fair or playing cricket is important. However, strengthening the edges of Redhouse Court and Woodlands Avenue will frame the central space and guide cycle and pedestrian movement around this. The interface of Lilly Lane and the River Lea, the Kitchen Gardens and The Green provides an opportunity for a seating area and kiosk for a farm/ flower shop or a cafe that can integrate the surrounding activities.

- ② High Street frontage of Bedford Square and the view from The Green to All Saints Church.

The view from The Green to the High Street and the tower of All Saints Church was a characteristic of historic Houghton. Coupled with the gentle sweep and narrowing of the High Street through the road funnels at either side of The Green, this would have created a strong sense of arrival to the town from the east.

Unfortunately, this view is now occupied by the back of the shopping centre and a landscape of commercial bins, roller shutters, blank façades and parking. These present a series of 'red flags' for visitors and a negative impression from the outset.

If the town centre is to have any chance of accommodating the increased population, it is essential to improve this view through screening or remodelling the built form while also providing an opportunity for a prime commercial frontage at a prominent location.



- 3 Pedestrian and cycle access along a desire line from The Green to Bedford Square.



At the moment, the link between The Green and the shopping centre is severed, limiting the potential for synergy and connectivity between the High Street and Houghton Hall Park.

Ideally, this link would follow the natural desire line (or as near as possible) and be treated as a signalised junction to maximise footfall.



- 4 Interface of the church yard, car park and the entrance to Bedford Square to create a shared surface, market place and an off-street waiting area for buses.

The absence of a core area of civic space in the town centre has been discussed throughout this document. While the shopping arcade has partially fulfilled this role, this suffers from poor visibility from the High Street, which limits its potential to function as a true market place.

From the plan that is included in Section 3.3, the area in front of All Saints Church appears to have been used for such activities. Centrally located and highly visible, this links the church with the pedestrian area and the library and aligns with existing crossings on the High Street.

While the area is currently used as a car park, the recent Benchmarking Report suggests there

to be an over provision of parking in the town centre. Additionally, the Conservation Statement recommends improvements to the public realm around the Grade I listed church.

The reinstatement of a market place on the site of the car park might be a long term ambition. However, in the short term, perhaps ten or fifteen spaces might be removed from the eastern side, together with the large planters next to these in order to create a central space.

This could be combined with repaving the full parking area for markets and events on particular days. If successful, the remaining spaces may be gradually removed over time.





## 4 Delivery

### 4.2 Catalyst Projects

#### 5 Junction of Townsend Farm Road and the High Street as a western gateway, including the connection to the Busway.

At present, it is too easy to pass through the town centre without realising. Additionally, there is a need to begin expanding the central area for the doubling of the population.

The junction between Townsend Farm Road and the High Steet provides an opportunity to establish a gateway before the curve in the High Street towards the shopping centre. Additionally, this location would incorporate the Busway and commercial activities at Woodside while also being within 200m from the Marl Lakes and the nature reserve.

Ideally, this would be coupled with an extension of the Busway up to the High Street to improve regional connectivity both to and from Houghton.



#### 6 Junction of East End Road, Park Road North, Windsor Drive and Sundon Road as an eastern gateway to the town centre and approach to Houghton Hall Park and Nimbus Park.



The location of the current roundabout at Chequers presents a similar opportunity to strengthen a gateway to the town centre from the east.

Historic maps show this to be an important hub within the town (East End), with the chantry farm, a couple of inns and ponds, which were presumably used for cleaning wagons, watering livestock or as part of the natural drainage system for the River Lea.

Such a gateway would also support wayfinding to Houghton Hall Park and Nimbus Park, assisting in the integration of these as part of the wider town centre offer.

7 Formal access and visitor centre at Marl Lakes.

The Marl Lakes SSSI and community nature reserve represent an invaluable area of ecology and biodiversity within 300m of the High Street. Integrating these into the town centre significantly expands the offer and creates a north-west anchor of open space to synergise with Houghton Hall Park at the south-east.

Additionally, this area provides an opportunity to improve integration with the wider Chilterns AONB landscape, drawing nature into the heart of the town. The provision of a similar offer to the visitor centre/ cafe and parking at Houghton Hall Park would help to establish this as a destination, perhaps coupled with a heritage, arts or wildlife centre.



8 Interface between Bedford Square and the library/ health centre.

In the absence of a designated area of civic space, the area in front of the library has assumed this role. However, activity within the space and footfall across this is restricted by changes in level and a collection of bollards, planters, lighting poles and trees.

Furthermore, the space is dominated by a long, blank elevation that provides no passive surveillance or visual stimulation. It is perhaps the treatment of this area that is generating the concerns of local residents for safety and appearance that are noted in the Benchmarking Report.

However, strategically located along the pedestrianised shopping street and in front of a busy destination in the library and health centre, transformation of this area can have a significant impact on the character of the town centre. Additionally, if treated correctly, it would improve access to shops, provide a space for communal activities and seasonal events and create valuable commercial frontages.



*Existing conditions: a missed opportunity to stimulate activity and footfall*



*Letchworth town centre*



*Hitchin town centre*



Marl Lakes that is similar to the current facility at Houghton Hall Park.

- Public transport operators (with CBC) to review the potential to improve and integrate local and regional services and the opportunity for a transit hub along the High Street.

In addition to engagement on these aspects, it is hoped the Draft Neighbourhood Plan can be submitted to CBC as a matter of priority for review and adoption as a statutory planning document.

It would also be of value to consider how the action areas and catalyst projects that are outlined in Section 4.2 might be phased and delivered. In the first instance, this will involve identifying relevant stakeholders, potential funding and investment mechanisms and feasibility with CBC's technical departments as the basis for further consultation and study.

BID	Business Improvement District
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
HRCAS	Houghton Regis Conservation Area Statement, 2008
HRNP	Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan 2020- 2035 (Draft)
HRTC	Houghton Regis Town Council
PROW	Public Rights of Way
NDG	National Design Guide, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
TBR	Town Benchmarking Report, People and Places, 2022



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placemake.

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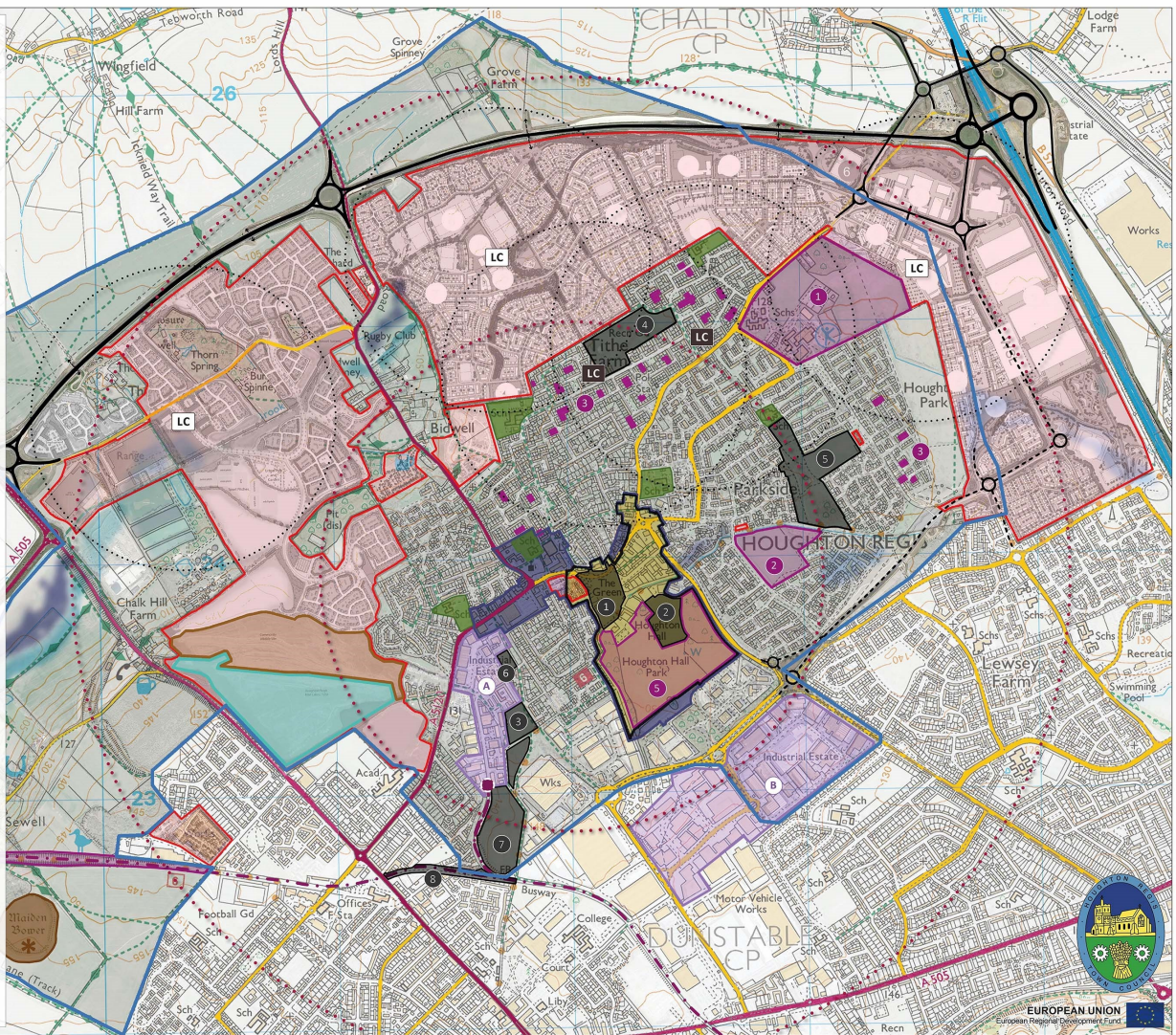


# Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan

Settlement Plan | Spring, 2022

## LEGEND

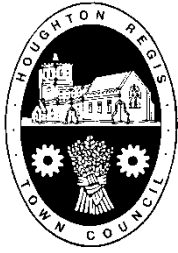
- HRTC owned/ managed sites
- 1 Houghton Green (The Green)
- 2 Moore Crescent Recreation Ground
- 3 Orchard Close Recreation Ground
- 4 Tithe Farm Recreation Ground (long term lease from CBC)
- 5 Parkside Recreation Ground (long term lease from CBC)
- 6 Cemetery
- 7 Dog Kennel Down
- 8 Former railway line
- CBC owned sites
- 1 Kingsland (22.5 ha)
- 2 Windsor Drive
- 3 Garages
- 4 Sewell Cut Nature Reserve
- 5 Houghton Hall Park
- Current and approved private developments
- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Conservation Area
- LC Local Centre (Existing)
- LC Local Centre (Proposed)
- A Townsend Industrial Estate
- B Woodside Industrial Estate
- Marl Lakes SSSI
- Chalk Pit Community Wildlife Site
- Scheduled Monument
- M1 - A5 Link Road
- Woodside Link Road
- Busway
- 0 100 200 300 400 500 Metres
- 0 100 200 300 400 500 Metres
- 0 100 200 300 400 500 Metres



Prepared for Houghton Regis Town Council by Placemake in March, 2022 with funding from the European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Regional Development Fund



## TOWN COUNCIL

## Agenda Item 15

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**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Title:** Dunstable Market Charter

**Purpose of the Report:** To provide members will information in regard to Dunstable Town Councils Market Charter and associated implications for Houghton Regis Town Council when holding events

**Contact Officer:** Clare Evans, Town Clerk

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### 1. RECOMMENDATION

To note the report.

### 2. BACKGROUND

There is an historic Market Charter that covers the provision of markets in Dunstable.

It is understood that Central Bedfordshire Council, through delegated powers, have accepted that Dunstable Town Council shall operate and promote its Charter Market.

Officers from Houghton Regis Town Council always inform Dunstable Town Council of upcoming events that contain stalls and therefore could constitute being classed as a market.

Earlier this year Dunstable Town Council were informed of an event Houghton Regis Town Council were proposing to hold, the Easter Egg Hunt, which also contained stalls. This time the response from Dunstable Town Council was to charge Houghton Regis Town Council £50 for a licence for this event, as the event was in conflict with a craft market they were holding and thereby in conflict with the market charter. As the number of stalls were kept to a minimum, under 5, Dunstable Town Council waived their fee for this event.

Officers from Houghton Regis Town Council understand that Houghton Hall Park Visitors Centre have been charged a fee for once monthly events that were being held at Houghton Hall Park. These were Craft/Farmers Market type events.

Members will find attached a copy of Dunstable Town Councils Market Rights Policy.

### 3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Dunstable Town Council have confirmed that Houghton Regis Town Council events that are established as a community event, i.e. the Carnival, would not be charged. However, should the Town Council hold any event that does not fall within the remit of Dunstable Town Councils Market Rights Policy a fee may apply. This could also apply to events such as the Carnival in the future, should the number of stalls increase or indeed the type of stall holders change i.e. commercial.

Dunstable Town Councils Town Centre Services Officer has confirmed that the list of proposed events, provided by Houghton Regis Town Councils Civic and Events Officer, at the beginning of the year are considered and should anything seem to conflict with the Market Rights Policy, the Civic and Events Officer is informed.

Dunstable Town Councils Town Centre Services Officer stated that Dunstable Town Council is keen to work with Houghton Regis Town Council and will try, wherever possible, to avoid charging Houghton Regis Town Council for a licence to hold their event or even worse case scenario, to refuse a licence all together.

### 4. COUNCIL VISION

#### **Aspirations**

A5 To ensure the **council** is fit for purpose and efficient in its delivery of services

#### **Objective 4: Our community**

4.3 To provide activities for young people, families and older people

### 5. IMPLICATIONS

#### **Corporate Implications**

- There are no corporate implications arising from the recommendations.

#### **Legal Implications**

- Breach of Charter

#### **Financial Implications**

- Suitable budget provision to cover cost to Dunstable Town Council should a fee apply.

#### **Risk Implications**

- Reputation – there is a reputational risk should an event take place that conflicts with the Charter where a licence has not been issued.

#### **Equalities Implications**

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage



and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

**Press Contact**

The decision relating to this agenda item should be communicated to the press, via the website and social media.

**6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

Under the Market Charter Dunstable Town Council has the right to charge for or refuse to issue a licence for an event in Houghton Regis, if the event conflicts with their policy.

Members may wish to refer to the guidance contained within Dunstable Town Councils Market Rights Policy when considering a list of events or changing the style of an historic event.

**7. APPENDICES**

Appendix 'A' – Dunstable Town Councils Market Rights Policy